

# HOULTON WINTER NEWS 2025



HOULTON  
SCHOOL



## Welcome from the Head of School

### Dear Parents and Carers,

**As we come to the end of a busy and rewarding term at Houlton School, I want to reflect on the many experiences, achievements, and opportunities our students have enjoyed. It has been a term full of energy, community spirit, and moments of pride - an inspiring reminder of what makes Houlton such a special place.**

A highlight of the term was our fantastic Children in Need Day. Thanks to the generosity of students, staff, and families, we raised an incredible £723.06 - a true testament to the kindness that shines across our community.

Students have also taken part in enriching experiences beyond the classroom. A group travelled to Berlin, exploring historic landmarks and the

Olympic Stadium. Others spent time with residents of Butlers Mews, enjoying games and quizzes, while another group visited Myton Hospice, performing for patients and families with empathy and compassion. We also came together for our Remembrance commemoration, where students showed respect for the fallen during the two-minute silence.

Our students have continued to excel across school life. Some enjoyed a magical trip to Lichfield to see the Cinderella pantomime; our sports teams shone in football and badminton; and Year 8 students strengthened their language skills by writing to their French pen pals. We were also delighted to welcome parents and carers for our first face-to-face Year 9 Parents' Evening and our first Parent Forum, where we shared ideas for the next steps in Houlton's journey.

Throughout the final week, Celebration Assemblies have recognised the achievements and personal successes of

students in each year group. As Christmas approaches, the school has also been filled with creativity and joy. Performing Arts students captivated us at the Winter Festival, we enjoyed our traditional Christmas lunch, and the Friends of Houlton School hosted a lively Year 7 disco. I also want to thank staff who donated gifts through our Selfless Santa initiative, supporting children facing a more challenging Christmas.

Finally, thank you to all our families for the warm welcome since September. I wish you all a peaceful, joyful festive season and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Warmest wishes,

**Lorna Pountney**  
Head of School





# Welcome from the Executive Principal

I just wanted to take a moment to thank the Houlton community for the welcome I have received since I joined the school at the start of this term. It has been genuinely lovely to get to know our students and staff a little more – and I am hugely excited by the opportunities on offer in 2026.

Houlton is clearly a school at an exciting point in its journey. Not only is the school gearing up for our first ever students to sit their GCSEs in summer, and our Year 11s should be praised for how they are stepping up their focus and pace, but building work for our primary is now underway and the sixth form plans are becoming a reality rather than a concept.

While this is a time of change on lots of levels, what I am particularly keen to ensure is that we continue to build and strengthen is our school's vision and ethos. These are the elements that will act as the glue that unites every part of our growing community.

What also makes this work so important is the feedback we have had from our parents and carers since September. The way that you have reached out to Lorna and myself to share your views and ambitions for our school has been hugely helpful, and something that we have taken great value in.

This is the type of relationship we are looking to nurture and encourage – so please do continue to share your thoughts and ideas. The only way we are going to truly thrive as a school community is through us all working in partnership together for our young people.

2026 is undoubtedly going to be a very significant year for Houlton, and I am delighted to be part of it.

Thank you to you and all of our brilliant staff and young people for all your support.

**Paul Brockwell**  
Executive Principal



## Performing Arts Winter Festival Shines Across Three Spectacular Evenings

Last week the very first Performing Arts Winter Festival lit up the school with three unforgettable evenings of music, drama and dance. With nearly 100 pupils taking to the stage, the festival showcased the very best of our students' creativity, confidence and collaboration.

Audiences were treated to a vibrant programme spanning all corners of the performing arts.

Fresh from completing their tour of local primary schools, our Year 10 students took to the stage with an energetic and entertaining pantomime performance that had the audience laughing from start to finish.

Our talented Year 11 students also delivered a dazzling selection of numbers from Chicago.

Their recent tour clearly helped hone their confidence, resulting in a truly polished show.

Adding to the excitement, the cast of Little Shop of Horrors gave a high-energy performance of their opening number - offering a thrilling sneak peek of what's to come in their full production later this year.

A festival highlight came from our Performing Arts Scholars, who presented Made By You - a unique, interactive performance where the audience decided the running order.

Their versatility and confidence shone as they adapted in real time, demonstrating impressive professionalism and skill.

Across all three evenings, the standard of performance was exceptional. Staff, families and fellow students were united in their praise for the hard work and dedication that went into every moment on stage.

Reflecting on the event, the Head of School shared: "The Performing Arts Winter Festival was a truly inspiring celebration of our students' talent. The passion, energy and professionalism displayed across all three nights made us incredibly proud. Our students continue to set the bar higher every year."

A huge congratulations to all involved, both on stage and behind the scenes, for making this year's festival such a resounding success.

**Mr Peter Bridgwood**  
Head of Performing Arts





# Festive Reading Recommendations

Reading is a fantastic way to get into the festive spirit – use this time over your winter break to get lost in a good book, relax and unwind.

### A Boy called Christmas – Matt Haig

You are about to read the **TRUE STORY** of **FATHER CHRISTMAS**. A heartwarming book about the magic of Santa and the joy of Christmas.

### Little Women – Louisa May Alcott

The story of the March sisters. A coming-of-age story of friendship and family. A classic read to sink your teeth into. Fall in love with the characters as you follow them down many different paths.

### The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe – C.S Lewis

What would life be like if it was always winter but never Christmas? Step into the wardrobe and find out! An action-packed

tale that will thrill you from beginning to end. Join the Pevensie siblings on their journey for freedom.

### The Lost Letters of Christmas – Lisa Renee Ruggeri

A tale of festive fun, surprises and mystery! Celebrating the true magic of giving.

### The December Witches – Jennifer Claessen

A festive fantasy that will have you wanting more, a tale of self-identity, friendship and community alongside some magic and destiny. A fantastic cosy read.

### Kringle's Emporium – Gemma Hatt

Step into a world of hidden wonders. The emporium is more than a shop of curiosities, it holds the key to save the magic of Christmas. Join Ben and his little sister Millie as they battle those who try to steal Kringle's powers and the school bullies that just won't go away!

### A Christmas Carol – Charles Dickens

This classic Christmas story will have you feeling festive in no time. A redemption tale with an eerie twist. Follow Ebenezer Scrooge

as he is visited by the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future.

### The Very Merry Murder Club – various authors

This gorgeous wintry and cosy crime collection brings together thirteen bestselling, award-winning and exciting debut authors. A series of quick reads to get you into the festive spirit – something for everyone.

### Snowed in at the Wildest Dreams Bookshop – Gracie Page (13+)

A fun and festive romantic comedy that you won't be able to put down! This book will make you think about all the things around us that we may take for granted. A cosy read for the festive period.

### Almost Midnight - Written by Rainbow Rowell. Illustrated by Simini Blocker (13+)

These two festive-themed stories are packed with heart, wrapped in hope and perfectly embellished with Simini Blocker's warm and witty illustrations. A must read for fans of romance.



## Christmas Jumper Day 2025

Festive fundraising for Save the Children took place on 17th December when students and staff came to school dressed in their jazziest jumpers! It was a fun day enjoyed by all and we raised a fantastic £313.78 for the charity. Well done everyone!





# Shining a Spotlight on the Arts: Our Journey to Artsmark Platinum

We are thrilled to share that our school is currently working towards Artsmark accreditation, the national award that recognises excellence in arts education.

This exciting initiative highlights our commitment to providing students with high-quality opportunities across art, music, dance, drama and creative media, and we are aiming for the prestigious Platinum status - a level that no secondary school in our area has yet achieved.

Artsmark is more than a badge of honour; it represents a school-wide culture where creativity is valued and celebrated. For students, this means increased access to a wide range of artistic experiences, helping them develop confidence, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, all while exploring their own creativity in a supportive environment.

Already, our students have benefited in many exciting ways:

- Performing Arts and Arts Scholars Societies for students with a talent and passion for performance and creation.
- LAMDA lessons and instrumental peripatetic lessons, giving students expert tuition in speech, drama, and music.
- Creative clubs, providing opportunities to explore different art forms and collaborate with peers.
- Preparation for extra performances, including our Winter Festival and primary school tours.
- Theatre trips throughout the year, offering inspiration from professional productions.



- Workshops with creative professionals, including street art and specialised dance sessions, helping students develop new skills and explore different artistic disciplines.
- Plans to establish a student-run radio station, giving students the chance to create and broadcast their own content, develop media skills, and share their creativity with the school community.

For parents, Artsmark status is a clear signal that our school prioritises a broad, enriching curriculum where the arts are embedded alongside academic study. It demonstrates our dedication to nurturing well-rounded young people who can thrive in a rapidly changing world, with opportunities to discover talents they might not have realised they had.

Achieving Platinum Artsmark will place our school at the forefront of arts education in the region, setting a benchmark for excellence and innovation. It also allows us to forge new partnerships with cultural organisations, bringing even more exciting opportunities to our students.

We are incredibly proud of the creativity and dedication shown by our students and staff, and this journey towards Platinum Artsmark is a testament to the vibrant, artistic community we are building together. With your continued support, we hope to achieve this outstanding recognition and provide our students with experiences that will inspire and empower them for years to come.

**Mr David Bird**  
Head of Acting

# Houlton School Earns Bronze Rail Safe Friendly Award

We're proud to share that our school has achieved the Bronze Rail Safe Friendly Certification, recognising our commitment to promoting vital rail safety awareness among students.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to keep our children safe and help reduce trespassing on the railways.



Discover our FREE rail safety videos and keep your children safe by visiting [railsafefriendly.com](https://railsafefriendly.com)

## THE RAIL SAFE FRIENDLY PROGRAMME

The Rail Safe Friendly programme has educated over **3 million young people** on the dangers of the railways.



SCAN ME

**DON'T LET YOUR CHILDREN BECOME THE NEXT STATISTIC**



**"I implore you to listen to Harrison's story"**

Simon Frazer, Principal, Guilsborough Academy

According to the **ORR Report**, April 23 - March 24 on UK railways:

<b>12</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>42%</b>
people died in accidents while trespassing	were struck by a train or tram	were electrocuted

According to **Rail Safe Friendly**, July 25:

<b>120+</b>	<b>11,000+</b>	<b>20,000+</b>
companies support the programme	schools in the UK have engaged	UK schools still need to be reached



# Berlin Trip: An Unforgettable Experience for Year 10 and 11

Our Year 10 and 11 students recently returned from an incredible four-day visit to Berlin, a trip filled with memorable moments. It was a fantastic opportunity for pupils to deepen their understanding of twentieth century history while experiencing one of Europe's most vibrant capital cities.

Day one began with a walking tour led by our brilliant guide Thomas who grew up in East Germany and brought the city's past to life with his personal stories. Students explored some of Berlin's most iconic locations including the Brandenburg Gate, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and preserved sections of the Berlin Wall. It was a powerful introduction to the complex history woven through the streets of the city.

On day two students visited Sachsenhausen concentration camp. This was an emotional experience which encouraged deep reflection and thoughtful discussion. In the evening spirits lifted with a visit to the Reichstag dome where students enjoyed spectacular views across the city and learned more about the Reichstag fire and the role it played in Hitler's rise to power.

Day three offered another thought-provoking insight into life under dictatorship as we toured Hohenschönhausen, the former Stasi prison. Students learned about the psychological methods used to intimidate and control prisoners which broadened their understanding of life in East Germany. The group then visited the Olympic Stadium to explore the stories behind the 1936 Games. The day ended on a high with a group meal followed by a trip up the TV Tower to enjoy the city skyline at night.

On the final day students spent the morning at the Jewish Museum, a moving and beautifully designed space that helped students explore Jewish history and culture before beginning the journey home.

Throughout the trip our students were exceptional. Their maturity, respect and curiosity were noted at every location they visited. We would like to thank them for representing the school so brilliantly and extend our appreciation to the staff who gave their time and energy to make this unforgettable experience possible.

**Mrs Becky Cooper**  
Teacher of History





# Celebrating Diwali

At Houlton School, the spirit of cultural diversity thrives, fostering an environment where various traditions are not just acknowledged but celebrated.

Recently, the focus has been on the vibrant and illuminating festival of Diwali, igniting curiosity and engagement among students as they immersed themselves in understanding this significant celebration.

Diwali, known as the Festival of Lights, holds profound cultural significance for millions around the globe, particularly those of Hindu, Jain, Sikh, and some Buddhist faiths. It symbolizes the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and the triumph of good over evil. This auspicious occasion spans over several days, each marked with unique rituals, joyful gatherings, and the illumination of homes with diyas (traditional oil lamps) and vibrant decorations.

Students dove into expressing their understanding of Diwali through creative poster-making. These vibrant artworks became a window



into their interpretations and connections to the festival. Displayed around the RE department, they spread the spirit and importance of Diwali to everyone.

Let the light of understanding and respect for diverse cultures continue to shine brightly at Houlton throughout the year.

**Mrs Dupinder Ghatora**  
Head of Religious Studies

## Geography

# From Biomes to Earthquakes: A Term of Discovery in Geography

## Key Stage 3

### Year 7 – Exploring World Biomes

Year 7 students have now begun their new topic on global biomes. They are discovering the characteristics of major ecosystems such as tropical rainforests, deserts, tundra and grasslands. Students are learning how climate, wildlife and vegetation differ across the world and why these environments are so important for both people and the planet. This topic helps develop an early understanding of climate patterns, biodiversity and sustainability.

### Year 8 – Globalisation and Its Impacts

Year 8 have started their unit on globalisation, exploring how the world has become increasingly interconnected. They are examining the influence of major Transnational Corporations (TNCs), including McDonald's and other global brands, and discussing how these companies affect economies, cultures and environments around the world. Students are encouraged

to think critically about the benefits and challenges of living in a globalised world.

### Year 9 – Development and Reducing the Development Gap

Year 9 are currently studying global development, focusing on why inequalities exist between countries and what can be done to close the development gap. Recent lessons have included discussions on Fairtrade, aid, appropriate technology and sustainable development strategies. This topic encourages students to consider how individual choices and global actions can promote fairer outcomes for communities worldwide.

## GCSE Geography (AQA)

### Year 10 – River Landscapes in the UK

Year 10 students are working through the Rivers section of the AQA Physical Geography curriculum. They are learning about fluvial processes, river features such as waterfalls, meanders and floodplains,

and how these landscapes change over time. Students are also investigating the causes and impacts of flooding in the UK, alongside strategies used to manage river environments. This unit builds essential foundational knowledge for Paper 1.

### Year 11 – The Challenges of Natural Hazards

After completing their mock exams, Year 11 have now moved into the Natural Hazards topic for Paper 1. They will begin by studying tectonic hazards, focusing on contrasting case studies of the 2010 Chile earthquake and the 2015 Nepal earthquake. Through these examples, students will learn about the causes of tectonic activity, the effects on people and infrastructure, and the different responses and levels of preparedness between countries at different stages of development.

**Mr Charlie McDermott**  
Head of Geography



# A Magical Evening at the Theatre for Year 10 Performing Arts

Our Year 10 dancers and actors enjoyed an exciting and inspiring trip to the Lichfield Garrick Theatre to watch a sparkling performance of Cinderella.

The visit linked directly to their current work on the genre of pantomime, giving students the chance to see its classic features - slapstick humour, audience participation, exaggerated characters and bold storytelling - brought vividly to life on stage.

From the moment the curtain rose, the group were fully immersed in the magic of live theatre. The cast's energy, colourful costumes and clever choreography provided endless creative inspiration. Many students commented on how watching the timing, expression and stage presence of professional performers helped them consider new approaches for their own roles.

The trip was especially valuable as Year 10 prepared for their primary school tour of Rick Whittington.

What a fantastic term our performers have had!



## Dance

# BTEC Acting & Dance Students Shine on Pantomime Tour

Our talented BTEC Acting and Dance students recently took their skills on the road with a lively, modern adaptation of Rick Whittington.

Over several days, the cast toured a number of local primary schools - including St. Gabriel's, Henry Hinde Junior, Crick, Yelvertoft, Hillmorton, and Clifton - bringing energy, creativity, and plenty of pantomime fun to hundreds of enthusiastic young audience members.

The production featured a blend of engaging storytelling, strong character performances,



and dynamic dance routines, all created and rehearsed by the students as part of their course. Their hard work paid off: each school welcomed them warmly, and students and staff alike praised the professionalism, humour, and confidence shown throughout the performances.

The tour offered a valuable opportunity for students to experience life on the road, perform in a range of venues, and adapt to new spaces and audiences - essential skills for anyone pursuing a career in

the performing arts. Most importantly, they inspired younger children to get involved in theatre and dance, spreading the joy of performance with every stop.

We are incredibly proud of our students for the dedication, teamwork, and creativity they demonstrated throughout the pantomime tour. It was a fantastic achievement and a memorable experience for everyone involved.

**Miss Frankie Connolly**  
Head of Dance

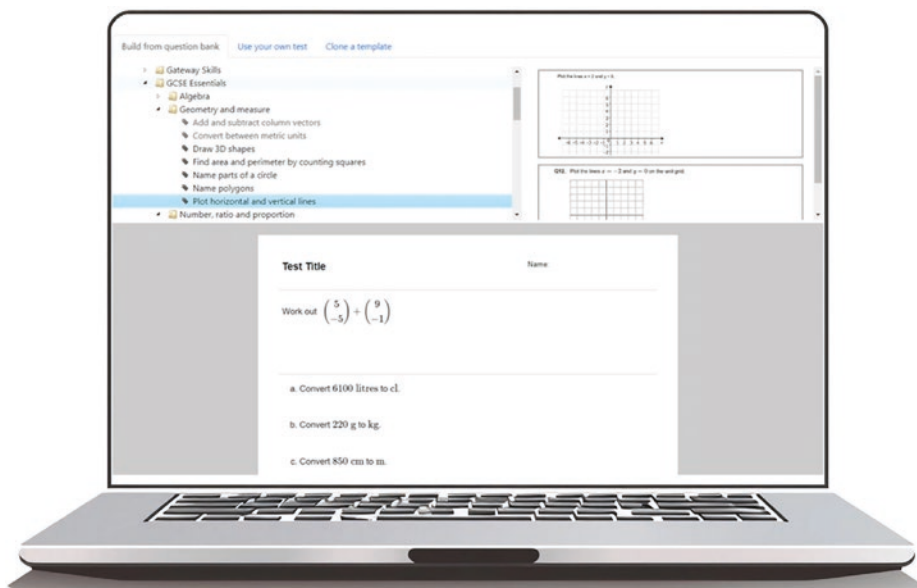


# MiniTest Launches School-Wide to Boost Assessment and Feedback

For the Year 11 mock exams, the Maths Department has been trialling a platform called MiniTest to securely scan and mark students' written assessments online.

This system helps us provide high-quality feedback and gives teachers valuable insights into students' strengths and areas for development throughout the year. We will now be rolling this out for all year groups for all topic tests and end-of-term assessments.

In the next few weeks, all parents and carers will receive an email inviting you to sign up to MiniTest. We greatly value parental involvement, and MiniTest emails will show which topics your child has understood and which may need further development. Each email will also include a link for you to view the completed papers.



In other news, well done to all the brilliant students who regularly complete their Sparx homework - and an extra congratulations to those who have been completing independent learning tasks on top of this. The five students who have completed the most independent learning tasks so far this year are: **Aveer (7W)**, **Ilja (7W)**, **Joshua (7A)**, **Savannah-Nicole (10M)**, and **Kieran (10M)**. Well done to each of you!

**Mr Ollie Jenkins**  
**Second in Maths**

# Top of the Bench Competition

Last month, a team of four students from Years 9-11 took part in the RSC Top of the Bench competition at The University of Coventry.

We sent two teams each with two Year 9 students along with a Year 10 and a Year 11. They worked together to solve a range of chemical problems, from writing equations to classifying materials. They had to be fearless when tackling unfamiliar topics and communicate effectively to ensure that their knowledge and understanding were taken into account.

The students also got to experience a university laboratory as part of an engaging and interesting tour. We were so proud of their enthusiasm and positivity; well done!

**Dr Jim Towey**  
**Head of Faculty: Science & Whole School Assessment**





# A Term of Growth and Creativity in Computing

As this term ends, we have taken time to reflect on the progress pupils have made so far. The Year 7s have developed strong ICT based skills in using computers and have got to grips with the Moodle system. They have also covered social media and E-safety as part of this, something that I am sure you will agree is of vital importance in the modern world.

Year 8 have continued developing their own choose your own path games chosen from one of four possible stories: the Cyclops, Scylla and Charybdis, the Lotus Eaters and Circe's Island. They have spent time

expanding the story, looking at how scripts can be created and they have also looked at cyber-crime including its risks and how to keep healthy when using computers. I am looking forward to introducing them to Python next year when we start crafting their story-based games.

Our Year 9s have started working on a creative iMedia unit this term, they have learnt how to identify a client's needs, produce sketches towards the final design and have looked at what makes a magazine cover appealing to the intended audience. Next term we will finish up these designs and then revisit and further develop their Python skills, before diving into the ethics and impacts of computers.

The Year 10 cohort have worked exceptionally hard delving deeper into the world of computers and covering a wide array of topics including Computers, Networks and Computational Thinking

alongside Python skills. They have also developed their skills when facing exam questions. Our Year 11s have worked well this year and have been revising for their mocks. We now move onto exam skills and working with Python to ensure they have high level skills for this part of the exams.

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



## English

# Strong Progress and Standout Work Across the English Department

### Key Stage 3

All of our Key Stage 3 classes are approaching the end of their Autumn Term unit.

**Year 7** have worked hard on Boy 87 and have been getting festive over the last few weeks as Shif (the novel's protagonist) visits London for his first Christmas.

**Year 8** have been working on creative writing to complement their study of The Odyssey. Our Year 8 Learning Journey works through Ancient Greece into Ancient Rome after Christmas as they will be studying Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.

Both Year 7 and Year 8 should be well versed in their use of Bedrock by now. Please encourage them to keep using it over the holidays. Year 7 and 8 classes are set 30 mins (minimum) of Bedrock work each week.

In **Year 9** the focus has also been on creative writing as students have been working on Narrative and/or Internet Blog Writing. The Year 9 Independent Learning Homework has been off the charts. Well done everyone!

Pupil of the Term is Iris W! She has a brilliant work ethic and has made wonderful progress since the start of the year. Also nominated for exceptional work were: Charlie F, Ethan O, Abigail O, Joshua M, Georgina G, Isla D, Eden M, Emma E, Deborah R, Lynette C and Shamus B.

### GCSE

In **Year 11**, students were generally impeccable in their English Mock exams. This round of mocks was vital in trying to ascertain what intervention is needed in the run up to the summer. The results will be analysed and intervention plans will be drawn up for January.

GCSE English Language (AQA) Paper 2 Intervention will be after school and on an invitation basis only. GCSE English Literature Catch Up Booklets are available from English teachers and on Google Classroom.

Year 11 students have been presenting their Spoken Language talks this term and have outdone themselves with the confidence, creativity and hard work they have shown. Special mentions go to Eira P – The Need for Arts in School. Also, Caitlyn S whose speech: Sexual Violence: What can be done? was an incredibly brave subject to tackle. Caitlyn worked so hard and was so nervous about her presentation but persuaded the crowd with her research and arguments. Well done to all Year 11 students who have passed this unit.

After the Christmas break, topics will be: Y7 Poetry, Y8 Julius Caesar, Y9 Journey's End, Y10 An Inspector Calls, Y11 Macbeth.

Keep on reading!

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



# Year 7 Strengthen Their Understanding of Personal and Peer Safety

Year 7 have been working with the PHRSE department to deepen their understanding of how to keep themselves safe in and out of school. A key focus has been water safety through a lesson titled Have You Got Their Back?

The session examined how friends influence one another’s choices around water, especially when situations become less structured or supervision is limited. Students explored the practical steps that reduce risk, but they also interrogated the peer dynamics that can either heighten or reduce danger.

To consolidate their learning, students took part in a role play that required them to enact a conversation between peers faced with unsafe behaviour near water. This exercise required them to apply the principles they had studied: recognising hazards, speaking up with confidence, and understanding how supportive peer intervention can prevent harm.

The clarity and maturity students showed in these discussions highlighted the responsibility young people carry for one another. The work reinforced that safety is a shared endeavour and that speaking out early can make a significant difference.

Mrs Becky Cooper  
Head of PHRSE



## Business Studies

# Business Brilliance: Hands-On Learning

It has been a purposeful and engaging term in the Business department, with students across both year groups developing key knowledge and applying it through creative activities.

## Year 11 – Organisational Structures in Action

Our Year 11 pupils have begun their final GCSE topic, exploring how different organisational structures shape communication, delegation and decision-making within a business. To bring these concepts to life, students took part in

a practical challenge where they constructed both tall and flat organisational hierarchies using cups. This activity sparked excellent discussion around the advantages and drawbacks of each structure, helping students visualise how information flows and how roles differ depending on the hierarchy. The creativity, teamwork and thoughtful analysis shown by the year group has been fantastic to see as they move into the final stages of their GCSE course.

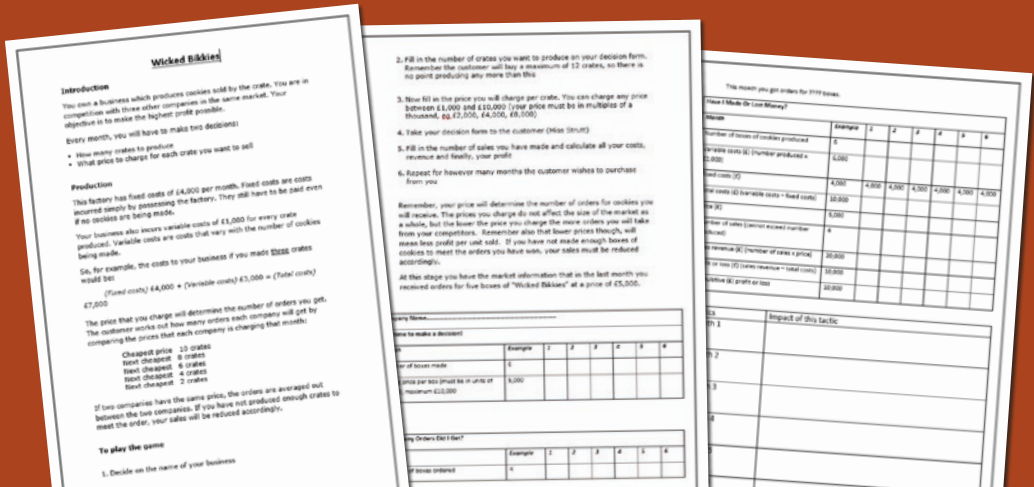
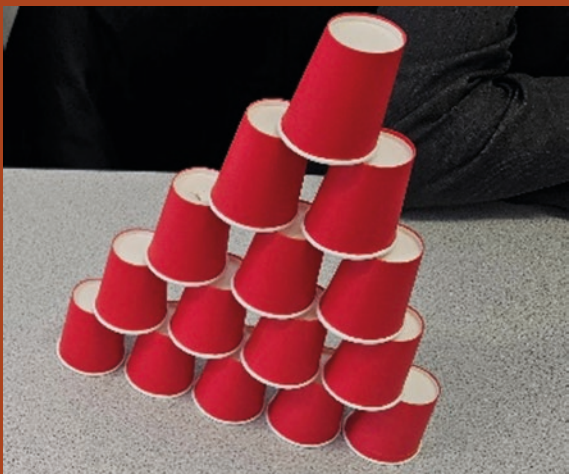
## Year 10 – Finance, Decision-Making and the ‘Wicked Bikkies’ Challenge

Year 10 have been diving into the world of business finance, learning about cash flow, sources of finance, revenue, costs and profit. To apply their new knowledge, students took part in the interactive ‘Wicked Bikkies’ simulation. Working in teams, they decided

how many crates of biscuits to produce and set their selling price - balancing risk, strategy and financial understanding. Their products were then ‘purchased’ based on demand, quantity and price, creating some tense and exciting tactical decisions! Winning teams in each class were rewarded with cookies and achievement points, but every student demonstrated excellent problem-solving and commercial thinking.

It has been a fantastic term full of enterprise, energy and growing confidence. We look forward to seeing students continue to think like business professionals as we move into the new year.

Miss Emily Strutt  
Head of Business Studies

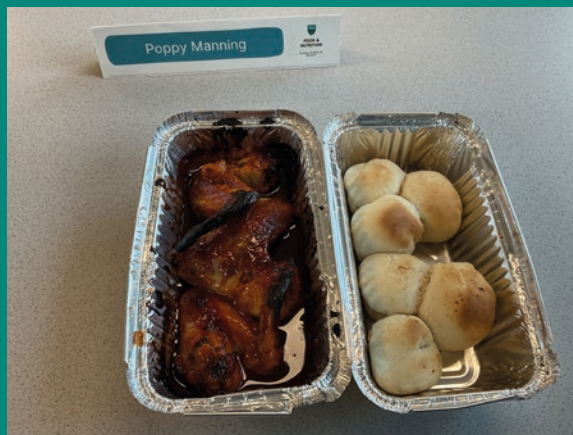




## Food Preparation and Nutrition

Our budding chefs in Year 10 have been busy learning how to portion a whole chicken and make cost saving recipes from each portioned piece.

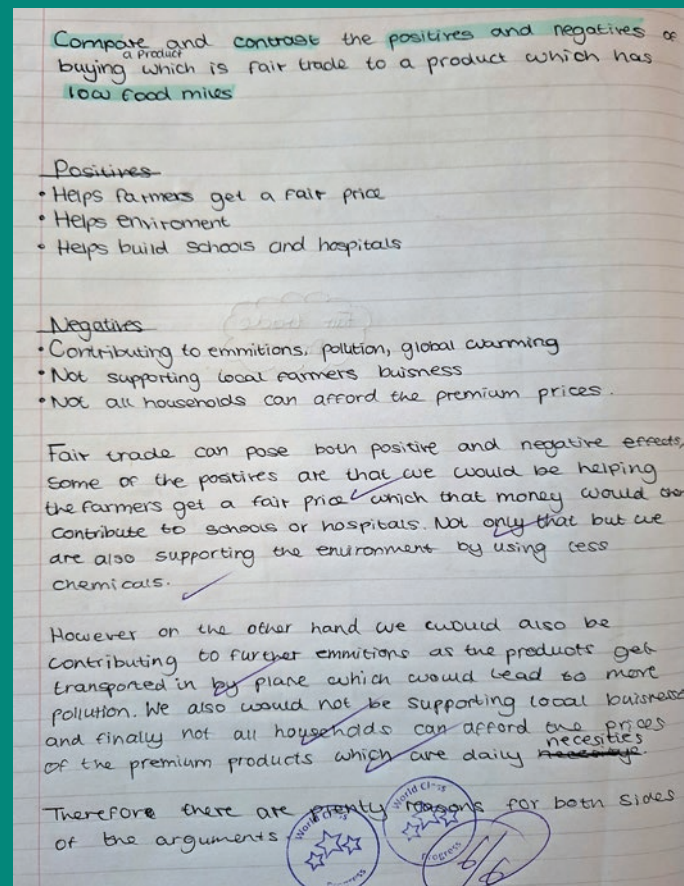
Here pupils have made BBQ wings with dough balls and chicken curry from two portioned sections of a whole chicken.



As an introduction to potential GCSE option choices, Year 9 have recently had a lesson based upon one of the areas of study undertaken.

They have looked at Food Miles and Food Provenance. In this lesson students have had a go at planning how to answer a GCSE question as well as answering one within a time limit. Opposite is Sienna S's concise response to the challenge, scoring 6/6!

**Mrs Baldeep Devgun**  
Head of Food and Nutrition



## Modern Languages

### French News

It has been an exciting and productive term in French, with students across all year groups engaging enthusiastically in their learning. From lively classroom discussions to creative activities, our students have shown great curiosity and commitment, building confidence in speaking, listening, reading and writing in French.

#### Focus on: Year 11

This term, our Year 11s have been making impressive progress as they approach the final stages of their GCSE journey. They are currently studying Module 7 of 8, focusing on the important topic of the environment. Lessons have been full of discussion, debate and ideas, giving students the opportunity to practise expressing their opinions and developing their vocabulary in meaningful contexts. In the words of our Year 11s, **"il n'y a pas de planète deux"** (there is no Planet B) and this powerful message has inspired much thoughtful conversation about how to keep our planet liveable for future generations.

Miss Cook, our wonderful language assistant, has been at the heart of our speaking workshops, supporting pupils to gain fluency, accuracy and confidence in their spoken French. Her expertise and encouragement have made a real difference, helping students feel prepared and motivated as they continue to refine their skills.

This term also saw Year 11 complete their mock exams in reading, listening and writing, an important milestone on the road to their GCSEs. These assessments provide valuable practice and feedback, helping students identify areas to strengthen before the final exams.

To support revision at home, we would like to remind students and parents that CGP revision books are available to purchase via ParentPay. In addition, **our Virtual Learning Environment offers a wide range of resources to support all KS4 students and can be accessed here: GCSE French VLE**. For parents wishing to explore more about the curriculum, our students are following the Edexcel 2024 specification, and detailed information can be found on the Edexcel website.

It has been wonderful to see our students' dedication, energy and curiosity throughout the term. Their achievements reflect both their commitment and the supportive environment within our Languages Faculty. We are excited to watch them build on this



progress as they move closer to their final exams in May, and we are here to support them along the way.

**Mr Matthieu Raffy**  
Head of Faculty: Modern Languages



# A Winning Half Term of Sport and Success at Houlton

It has been an action-packed half term in the Houlton PE Department, with students across all year groups embracing new sports, developing their skills, and representing the school brilliantly.

## Curriculum Highlights

Our **Year 11** students have been enjoying NFL activities, developing tactical awareness and teamwork through the fast-paced game. Year 10 have taken on the challenge of Gaelic Football and Aussie Rules, experiencing two exciting invasion games that really test agility and decision-making.



**Year 9** have been working hard in Touch Rugby and Football, focusing on movement, communication and refining core skills. Year 8 have shown fantastic focus and competitive spirit in Table Tennis, while our Year 7 students have made a great start to the year by taking part in Tag Rugby and Football, building confidence and fundamental skills.



## Fixtures and Successes

A huge congratulations to both our U16 Girls' and U16 Boys' Football Teams, who have progressed to the next round of the County Cup. The girls secured an impressive 7-1 win and the boys strong 2-0 victory. Further information about the next round will be shared soon.



Our **Year 9** Futsal team came 2nd in their tournament at Rugby High and played some excellent football.

A special shoutout also goes to our Year 11 and 8 Boys' Badminton Team, who recently won their pools and qualified for the next round - an excellent achievement and a testament to their hard work.



## Extra-Curricular Clubs

Our after-school clubs have been thriving this half term. Volleyball Club has been particularly popular, while Netball and Girls' Football have also made a strong return. Students have also enjoyed Badminton, Table Tennis, and Yoga, providing something for everyone and helping students stay active and connected beyond curriculum lessons.

## PE Reminders

If a student is unable to take part in PE or Dance, please ensure they bring a written note from home rather than an email or phone call into reception. Unless they are unable to do so, students are still expected to get changed so they can take on an alternative role and remain engaged in the lesson.

## Celebrating Excellence

This half term we introduced our new PE Postcards, which are awarded to students who demonstrate outstanding effort, commitment, or improvement in lessons. We're excited to continue recognising the fantastic achievements of our students each week.

A huge well done to all students who have represented Houlton in fixtures or clubs this half term - we are incredibly proud of your enthusiasm, sportsmanship, and dedication

**Miss Abbie Hartfield**  
Head of PE



# DofE Celebration Event Rescheduled

We are currently completing some key preparations needed for our DofE Celebration Event. As a result, we have decided to postpone the event until Spring 2026.

This will give the best opportunity for everyone to get their evidence completed and receive their awards on the night. We appreciate everyone's patience and look forward to celebrating our young people's achievements early next year.

The deadline for submission of assessors reports will now be 13th February 2026.

**Mr James Hunter**  
DofE Manager



## Art & Design

### Students Shine in DT, Art and Photography

This term Year 8 and 9 students have been creating products made out of wood in their DT lessons. They have been using hand tools including saws and drills to make robot toys and salad servers from their own designs!

In Art, Year 7 have been learning about colour mixing and colour theory. The kiln has been in constant use as Year 9 have been

exploring the work of Grayson Perry and creating their own coil pots in clay.

GCSE photographers have made an excellent start to the course, familiarising themselves with the technical elements of the cameras and studio lighting.

We are looking forward to seeing what our creative students produce next term!

**Ms Ruth Woodcraft**  
Head of Art and Photography

## Social Sciences

### Year 10 & 11 Explore Key Topics in Social Sciences

This half term has been a busy and productive one for our Year 10 and Year 11 Social Sciences students, who have been exploring a wide range of important topics across Health and Social Care, Sociology, and Psychology.

Year 10 Health and Social Care students have been developing their understanding of the key challenges facing public health today. They have explored issues such as child dental health, the rising prevalence of obesity, and the spread of flu and other viruses. By looking closely at the causes and consequences of these challenges, students are beginning to appreciate the vital role that public health initiatives play in supporting community wellbeing. They have also

been encouraged to think critically about how lifestyle choices, access to services, and social inequalities can all influence health outcomes.

In Year 10 Sociology, students have continued to deepen their understanding of the main theoretical perspectives that shape the subject, including Functionalism, Marxism, and Feminism. They have been discussing how these viewpoints help us understand the structure of society and the debates that continue to shape social policy. Alongside this, students are developing their research skills and are currently planning their own sociological observation.

Our Year 10 Psychology students are approaching the end of their first topic - Memory. They have explored how memory works, why we forget, and what can influence our ability to recall information. Students are now examining the fascinating concept of false memories and considering how and why people can remember events inaccurately. This topic encourages students

to think carefully about the reliability of eyewitness accounts and the processes that shape human cognition.

Meanwhile, Year 11 Psychology students have now received detailed feedback from their recent mock exams. All students should have completed their action plans, identifying clear steps to strengthen their progress as they move towards their final exams. In class, they are studying the factors that influence human behaviour, including obedience and authority. This has led to discussions about Stanley Milgram's famous research and its relevance to understanding why people follow orders, even in challenging situations.

A great book for Year 10 and 11 Social Sciences students (and parents/carers!) to read during the holidays is "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat" by Oliver Sacks. It offers engaging, real-world case studies that link brilliantly to topics in psychology, health, and human behaviour.

**Ms Emma Clark**  
Head of Social Sciences





# Friends of Houlton School

As we wrap up the Autumn term, we would like to thank the Friends of Houlton School (FoHS) for everything they have done this year and share the incredible difference their support has made throughout 2025.

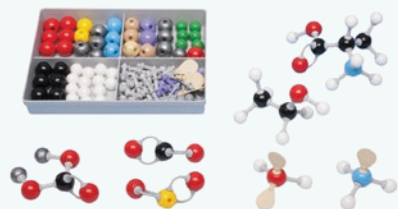
## What they have done this term

It's been a packed few months of fundraising and community-building. This has included:

- A Halloween Cinema Night for Year 7
- The Bake sales
- The 4th Annual Year 7 Christmas Disco
- A Wreath-Making Workshop
- Offering refreshments at school events like parents evenings and performing arts events.

Thanks to the generosity of our school community, FoHS has been able to support a wide range of curriculum and enrichment activities. In 2025, they have funded or pledged:

- Grand piano moving system, piano stool and dust cover – **£1,308**
- Headphones for computer rooms – **£358**
- Aprons for Food Technology – **£83**
- 4th Annual Spanish Language Play (Year 8) – **£558**
- Printing Press for Art – **£1,091**
- Brain Models for Psychology – **£126**
- Atom kits for science – **£248**
- Co-curricular Clubs Support Fund – **£500**
- Emotional Wellbeing Cards (5 sets) for PELs – **£75**



## Uniform Donations

If your child has outgrown their uniform, FoHS gratefully accept donations at school reception. They also have a small stock of second-hand uniform available for £5 per item.

Please email [hellofohs@gmail.com](mailto:hellofohs@gmail.com) with your requests.

## College Points



**Armstrong**  
21,151



**Dorsey**  
20,575



**Obama**  
23,966



**Shakespeare**  
25,208



**Winton**  
22,553



**Morse**  
21,699



# Houlton's primary offer

It is an exciting time for our Houlton family as we look forward to becoming an all-through provision next year.

This means that children will have the option to learn here from their first day of primary school until the moment that they head off to university or employment.

In preparation for this, building work has started on Houlton's brand-new primary building, with the opening of the provision planned for September 2026.

Earlier this month, we were pleased to welcome our local MP for a tour of the site. He found out more about how our pupils and students will still have their own distinct areas to play, learn and socialise – but they will also be able to benefit from shared resources, facilities and opportunities.

## Getting ready for Houlton's first sixth form students

In addition to opening the new primary provision, we will welcome our first sixth form students in September 2026.

As part of our collaboration with Ashlawn School, students will have access to a wide range of Post-16 courses and a host of personal development and employability opportunities.

Complementing our world class facilities across each curriculum area, sixth formers will also benefit from purpose-built Post-16 areas around the school.

This includes spaces to support them in their independent learning, work hubs and separate facilities for food and refreshments.

## Houlton admissions consultation – have your say

We invite you to share your views in our consultation to explore changing the admissions arrangements for Houlton School from the 2027/2028 academic year onwards.

This includes proposed adjustments to the priority areas covered as part of the school's oversubscription criteria.

The consultation is running until **Wednesday 21 January 2026** and we are inviting any member of our school's community to express their views about the proposed admission arrangements by completing [this survey](#).





# TLET Impact Report 2025

The Transforming Lives Educational Trust is pleased to publish its **Impact Report 2025**

From student attainment to staff wellbeing, the report highlights how the Trust has been making a difference across our communities over the course of the last year.

There is much to be proud of – all of our schools are developing, performance data has strengthened and we have celebrated incredible praise from Ofsted.

It has been a particularly remarkable year for Ashlawn School, which was rated 'good' across every inspection area in June 2025. The school was also recognised in the Top 10 Warwickshire Schools for GCSE results and more students than ever before secured their first-choice university following their sixth form studies.

In addition, in the early years, there has been a 14% increase in pupils achieving 'good levels of development' in the past two years; while combined Key Stage 2 outcomes were up 11% points in comparison to the previous year.

The Trust has also seen a marked increase in teacher retention, with staff sickness and absence rates also significantly lower than the national average.

2025 has also been a milestone year for TLET, with plans well underway to add both a primary offer and sixth form at Houlton School. The Trust is also currently consulting with the community to bring Henry Hinde Infant and Junior Schools together onto one site.

You can read more about the impact of our work [here](#).





# A Safe Christmas

Christmas is almost upon us, and there will be an absolute plethora of Christmas films and TV specials gracing our screens - it's important to look out for their age ratings before viewing.

The BBFC (British Board of Film Certification) released some fantastic videos explaining how and why they give the ratings they

do. The BBFC's website is a treasure trove of information including detailed case studies on their reasonings.

Whilst older films may seem like a safe choice, many older films are currently being re-classified especially if they are going back into cinemas. Jurassic Park for example, went from a PG to a 12A with its re-release into cinemas.

Information for the BBFC can be found at [www.bbfc.co.uk](http://www.bbfc.co.uk)

More information as to how the BBFC classify their films can be found here <https://tinyurl.com/yc76t2yf>

There is always someone that can

# HELP

**Parents and carers** – during the Christmas holiday the Safeguarding Team want to remind you that support is available.



## Warwickshire Family Information Service

Looking for some help and advice? Try visiting Warwickshire FIS website for lots of free advice and guidance available to all Warwickshire residents. [www.warwickshire.gov.uk](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk)

## Early help family support work

A service providing advice and guidance on parenting and all aspects of family life, children and young people's behaviour. You can speak to a family support worker over the telephone, **01926 412412, Monday to Friday between 9am – 4pm**. Alternatively, you may book a face-to-face consultation by telephoning the same number. For further information about this service, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/z9zp455b>

## Warwickshire Refuge

If you are experiencing domestic abuse of any kind, Warwickshire's Refuge regional Domestic Violence and Abuse Service can support you and your children to keep you safe. Call the Refuge's Domestic Violence and Abuse Service helpline on **0800 408 1552, Monday to Friday between 8:30am – 8:30pm** and speak with one of our support workers. [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

## Worried about your mental health?

Wellbeing for Warwickshire is a 'joined-up' support service for adult mental health that can meet a number of needs in a way, and a time and place, that suits people best. For ease of use, the service has a single phone number, **0800 616 171** and a single website [www.wellbeingforwarwickshire.org.uk](http://www.wellbeingforwarwickshire.org.uk) and these are available for Warwickshire residents 24/7, 365 days a year.

## Worried a child is at risk of significant harm?

If you have concerns that a child is suffering any form of abuse, neglect or cruelty please contact the Warwickshire Family Connect immediately by calling **01926 414144, Monday to Thursday between 8:30am – 5:30pm and Friday 8:30am – 5pm**.

If you need to get in touch out of the usual office hours, please contact the Emergency Duty Team immediately by calling **01926 886 922**.

If you think that a child is at immediate risk, contact the Police immediately by calling 999.





# HOULTON

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## SCHOOL

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