



# NEWSLETTER

Holmes Chapel Comprehensive  
School & 6<sup>th</sup> Form College



Issue: 195

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> November 2025



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*Dear all*

I hope this newsletter finds you well. At this time of year and especially as we approach Remembrance day, I want to take this opportunity to reflect on our school values of learning, ambition, pride and belonging that underpin everything we do at our school and how they are linked strongly to the British values that are the foundation of our community and which we are building precious young lives and shaping the adults of the future.

Our commitment begins with Learning. We strive to cultivate a vibrant, challenging environment where every student is encouraged to be curious, resilient, and dedicated to their studies. This dedication to growth and knowledge acquisition is the engine of ambition, driving our children to set high personal goals and achieve their full potential.

Central to a successful school and community is a strong sense of Belonging. Our school and college is so much more than just a place where lessons happen; we are committed to ensuring that every individual, student and staff alike, feels safe, respected, welcome and included. This is fostered by prioritising relationships of trust and understanding, by listening to each other and working together. Our community is built on the qualities of caring and kindness and we must all embrace the fact that trust, mutual respect and understanding should be at the heart of all of our actions and behaviours. We also champion tolerance, the acceptance of different faiths, cultures, heritage, beliefs, and ways of life as a non-negotiable principle. It is through understanding and respecting difference that our children will grow into open-minded and responsible global citizens. Finally, we want every child to feel pride. Pride in their achievements, pride in their effort, pride in being a member of our school community and proud to be part of British society and all that it stands for.

Our daily commitment to British values is bound to the profound significance of Remembrance. The act of remembering those who served and sacrificed is a powerful demonstration of the values we cherish and teach every day. The qualities of caring, kindness, and especially tolerance are fundamentally woven into the fabric of Remembrance. When we pause our school day on the 11<sup>th</sup>, we are honoring a history where diverse individuals came together to uphold democracy and freedom for all. Their sacrifice allows us to enjoy the strong community we have today, built upon mutual respect. Remembrance deeply reinforces the importance of relationships of trust and understanding. The bonds forged by those who have served show us the power of cooperation and trusting each other under extraordinary pressure.

Reflecting on the past is a powerful act of learning, inspiring the ambition in our young people to be responsible citizens who actively contribute to a peaceful future. By observing Remembrance, we instill deep Pride in our national story and ensure that our children, the adults of the future, understand that peace is a precious achievement, maintained through vigilance, empathy, and respect. It is a moment where all of our values come together to reflect on the past and commit to a better future.

By embedding these values into our curriculum and daily school life, we are ensuring our children are equipped not only with academic qualifications but with the essential character traits needed to contribute positively to modern Britain and beyond.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to nurture these vital qualities in your children.

Warm regards

**Nigel Bielby**  
Executive Headteacher





## Curriculum Matters

### The Homework Advantage: Boosting Success at our school - a request for your feedback

Homework often sparks debate (too much, too little etc.), but research consistently highlights its crucial role in secondary education. Well-designed homework assignments significantly contribute to student achievement and the development of essential life skills.

Studies show that regular, relevant homework reinforces classroom learning, helping students solidify their understanding of complex concepts. It provides opportunities for independent practice, which is vital for mastery and retaining information long-term. Homework cultivates discipline, time management, and problem-solving abilities – skills invaluable for future studies and careers. It also encourages responsibility and self-reliance, empowering our students to take ownership of their learning.



### Want to know more about the research evidence?

**Educational Endowment  
Foundation (EFF)**  
Click here

**Department for Education  
(DFE) Study**  
Click here

**National Foundation for  
Educational Research (NFER)**  
Click here

### How can you help us improve?

Last half term we introduced Satchel One to support how we set and monitor homework. This half term our aim is to quality assure **how much** homework students are receiving and seeing how this aligns with every subject's homework policy. To support this, we are keen to know from your point of view, as parents, **how much** homework your child is being set, **how much** they are doing and **how this compares** to last year. Please follow [this link](#) to complete a brief (1 minute) survey on this.

## Raising Attainment Focus

### Sixth Form

#### Year 12

Year 12 targets are currently being set based on prior attainment, national benchmarks and staff insight. These will be released as part of the Year 12 Interim package on 26th November.

All targets are set at an realistically aspirational level in order to push our students to achieve their best. They are not set in stone and can change as each student works their way through their course, evidencing their achievement and potential through classwork and assessments.

#### Year 13

Year 13 have just completed their first round of mock exams for this year and have certainly hit the ground running with their focus and preparation. The results for this mock exam season will be published as part of the Year 13 Interim package on 26th November. This will provide an opportunity for every student to recognise their current performance so they can use their study time in a focused way ahead of the next set of mock exams and, ultimately, their final exams.

There will also be a Year 13 Parents' Evening on 27th November where results, strengths and weaknesses can be discussed and clear actions for success implemented!



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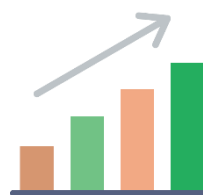
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## Curriculum Matters...Continued

### Year 11

Year 11 Mocks are coming up soon and they start on Monday 1st December. Individual class teachers will have shared information about mock content with classes (and via Classroom/Satchel One). We recognise that our parents and carers play a vital role in supporting our children. To help you help them - all of the information about Year 11 mocks [can be found here](#) - including timetable, information about the papers students are sitting and specific revision materials. Working hard for the mocks helps our students manage their workload for the summer. More information to support revision can be found on our [smart learning](#) pages.



Save the date - our **Year 11 results evening** will be on **Thursday 15th January**. We expect all students and parents/carers to attend this event.

### Year 10

Year 10 targets were sent home this week.

Our Year 10 team have been working exceptionally hard to ensure that Year 10 targets support students in recognising and ultimately achieving their potential. They are based on prior attainment, staff insight, and national benchmarks. They are a motivational guide, not a fixed prediction.

**Aspirational targets are not permanent.** They will be **regularly reviewed** during the academic year to ensure they remain realistically ambitious, and appropriate for each student. As teachers gather more evidence of progress, some targets may be refined accordingly.

We encourage you to speak with your child about their targets and how they can stay focused, organised, and committed to achieving their best possible outcomes.

### Assessments, reports and points of contact at Key Stage 3

Parents and students in years 7,8 and 9 recently received their first interim report. Later in the year when students have covered more curriculum content, we will report subject specific bandings, telling you how your child is progressing in relation to their potential. This will be the basis for the second interim report in the spring term.

At the start of this term, Heads of Year at our information evenings outlined a package of events and home contact points, designed in consultation with our parent forum groups last year. We have aimed to spread these events out, so there are at least two points of contact each term.

Things to look out for in the next few months include:

### Interim Report 2.

In term 2 we will report on individual subject performance and bandings, alongside an update on approach to learning, attendance, and behaviour/ achievement points. Year 7 and 8 interim reports are published on 12th February, and Year 9 on 16th January.

Continued....



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## Curriculum Matters...Continued

### Showcase evenings in year 7 and 8.

These are an opportunity for parents to come into school with their child, to talk to staff about their progress, and receive some key messages. We listened to feedback from parents who welcomed the chance of coming into school to have a look around and talk to us, in place of an online parent consultation evening. These events are planned to take place in March (Year 7 on 5th March, Year 8 on 12th March). More information on these will come to you in due course.

### Year 9

As well as a second interim report (published on 16th January), we have a number of activities to support students as they start the subject options process. These include a formal in school evening, with a chance to talk to option subject staff face to face, on 22nd January. We have also planned a core subject online parents evening on 29th January. More information on the option choice process will be available in the next few weeks.

## Keeping Our School Community Safe

### Testing, testing, testing.....

I would like to inform all parents and carers that On **Thursday 13th November 2025 at 9am** during tutor time, we will be testing a new incident alarm sounder in school. The alarm will eventually be used to indicate the start of a 'Lockdown' protocol. The sound will last for a few minutes and will then stop.



The test on Thursday is simply about testing the new sound and no action is needed from anyone. **Please reassure students that all is well and this is just a test.**

Tutors and parents are asked to make students aware of the test and the need for them to listen to the sound which is very different from any other alarm that we use in the school.

It would be helpful if you would please inform students that in the future, on hearing this alarm, they would be asked to come inside and stay inside the buildings until told otherwise. **Further information, guidance and training will be issued over the coming weeks.**

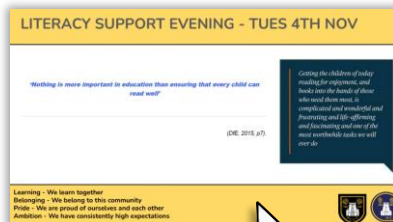
**Should the fire alarm sound at any time during tutor time then normal evacuation procedures will be started immediately.**

If you have any questions or concerns please email me directly [tony.halsall@hccs.info](mailto:tony.halsall@hccs.info)

## Literacy Intervention Support Evening

Thanks to all those parents and children who attended our Literacy Intervention Support evening on Tuesday 4th November. It was a pleasure to discuss how we support your child with their reading and discuss ways in which you can support them at home. It was wonderful to spend some time in our LRC too - lots of books were taken out.

Watch this space for more events to come!



Please click the image to view the presentation from the evening



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## Upholding Our Standards: The Path to Success

As we move through the term, we want to share a key message that has been reinforced with all students this week: the ongoing importance of high standards in all aspects of school life.

Through assemblies this week we have reinforced three key areas: **Preparation for Learning**, **Attitude to Learning**, and **Ready for Learning**. By focusing on these areas, we hope to encourage every student to maximize their potential and achieve success.

### 1 Preparing for Learning: Start Strong!

The foundation of a great school day is being prepared. We are urging all students to focus on two essential elements:

- **Punctuality:** Being on time for school and for every single lesson demonstrates respect for both their own learning and that of their classmates and teachers. A prompt start ensures students don't miss crucial instructions at the beginning of the lesson.
- **Uniform:** Wearing the correct school uniform completely and smartly sets a professional tone for the day. It removes distractions, fosters a sense of belonging, and shows that students are ready to work.

### 2 Attitude to Learning: Aiming for Excellence

A positive attitude is the driving force behind academic progress. We encourage all students to strive for the highest possible Attitude to Learning (ATL) grades.

Our focus is on students consistently achieving **Grade 1** or **Grade 2** in their ATL scores. These grades reflect students who are:

- **Engaged in their learning:** Actively participating in discussions and challenging themselves with new concepts.
- **Working Hard:** Putting in consistent effort both in class and with homework.
- **Taking Pride in their Work:** Ensuring all submissions are neatly presented, carefully completed, and reflect their best effort.

### 3 Ready for Learning: Every Second Counts

Once in the classroom, the priority is to make every moment count. **Being ready for learning** means eliminating distractions and being immediately focused.

- **Punctuality (In-Lesson):** Arriving at the lesson on time and quickly settling down with the necessary equipment is key.
- **Every Second Counts:** From the moment the bell rings until the end of the lesson, students should be fully engaged in the task at hand. This means listening carefully to instructions, transitioning quickly between activities, and using the full allotted time for productive work.

We recognise and truly appreciate the vital role our parents and carers play in reinforcing these high expectations at home.

Thank you for your ongoing support in ensuring your child is **punctual**, **wearing the correct uniform**, and approaching their studies with a **positive attitude**. This strong school-home partnership is what makes a genuine difference in student success and helps create an environment where every student can thrive



## Excellence in STEM: How Holmes Chapel is opening doors for STEM students

As your children move through the school, their focus shifts not just to exam success, but to standing out in an increasingly competitive landscape, whether applying to top universities or seeking competitive apprenticeships. We offer our Year 12 and 13 students various core enrichment pathways designed to ensure they are ready for life after school. Our STEM (Science, Technology [Computer Science], Engineering and Maths) students a pathway where they will gain an additional Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) that is focussed on Cyber Security and we support this with a range of real-world STEM engagement opportunities (which we also make available to some of the promising students in Year 10 and Year 11).

### Gaining a professional edge to enter the world of cyber-security

We encourage our STEM students to develop an interests around both computer science and engineering by exploring the **Cyber Security EPQ**, which is endorsed by the Chartered Institute of Information Security (CII Sec). This qualification is an investment in their future as well as gaining valuable UCAS points. We are also the only provider in the local area to offer this particular course.

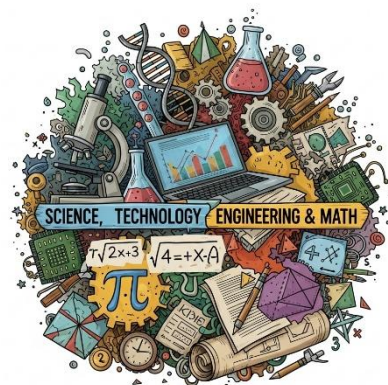
Unlike standard coursework, the EPQ allows students to conduct university-level research into a topic of their choosing, such as data privacy or ethical hacking. This independent process cultivates advanced research skills and critical thinking, demonstrating a genuine, self-directed passion for a field that is shaping our modern economy and is likely to be a key part of our national security in an increasingly uncertain geopolitical world.

The EPQ carries the equivalent UCAS tariff of half an A-Level. Success here—especially achieving a top grade—can significantly strengthen university applications, often resulting in lower conditional offers from highly selective Russell Group institutions. By choosing a their CII Sec approved project, students ensure their work is professionally relevant, giving them a meaningful head start over their peers in other local schools and colleges.

### Building Confidence, presentation and leadership skills

Success on our STEM pathway is about more than just grades; it's about character and communication. Part of the broader course involves engagement with local primary schools, where our Year 12 students' work with local primary pupils and teach them to code on Microbits. This is part of building a strong future pathway of STEM students for local business. Crucially, we are encouraging local and national, business leaders/doctors and those involved in STEM fields to come in and explain to our students what working in their industry entails. This provides the perfect platform for building their understanding and links into these local employment opportunities. When our students mentor younger pupils, for example by teaching them coding principles using Micro:bits, they refine vital soft skills. They must be patient, clear, and communicative, transforming abstract concepts into understandable lessons. This leadership and communication practice is invaluable, regardless of the career path they choose.

Furthermore, our program connecting students directly with local STEM leaders, including Vets, engineers, business CEOs and doctors. These talks move learning beyond textbooks, offering a crucial window into how science, technology, and math are applied in diverse, professional settings. This exposure helps our students make informed decisions about their university courses and provides early networking insights, actively helping them map out their future careers with confidence.



IGNITE YOUR FUTURE  
WITH **STEM**



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## School Uniform Consultation

Over the coming weeks we intend to launch a full review of school uniform and dress code. This is an important process aimed at ensuring that our uniform is fully compliant with all current national guidance and is fit for purpose for a modern, progressive secondary school environment.

The last time we conducted a uniform consultation was just over three years ago. Although this led to a decision not to make significant changes to the uniform, we believe that this is something that should be reviewed regularly.

The review will focus on making sure our current uniform and dress code:

- **Meets all required national standards** and guidance.
- **Is practical and affordable** for our children and families.
- **Reflects the needs** of today's learning environment.

We believe that a well-designed uniform fosters a sense of community, equality, and pride, as well as being conducive to effective learning habits both in and out of the classroom. We are keen to hear your views on how we can best achieve this.

The consultation will run over the next few weeks, giving everyone time to share their thoughts and suggestions. The intention is to complete the consultation by Christmas, and following this, we aim to be able to communicate the results and any changes to our uniform during the Spring Term, ensuring that all stakeholders have time to prepare for any changes that may result.

We are keen to get the views of all stakeholders; students, parents, staff and Governors, to ensure that this process is as effective and informative as possible.

Further details on the survey, including how you can contribute will follow in the next couple of weeks.



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## Girls Football – Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November

Our U16 were against some tough opposition in Sandbach. The team worked tirelessly and never gave up. The girls were fantastic role models to the school community of Holmes Chapel and were very unlucky with some key opportunities missed and also let slip through losing in their league fixture to Sandbach 5 - 1. Onwards and upwards to the next game vs Congleton.



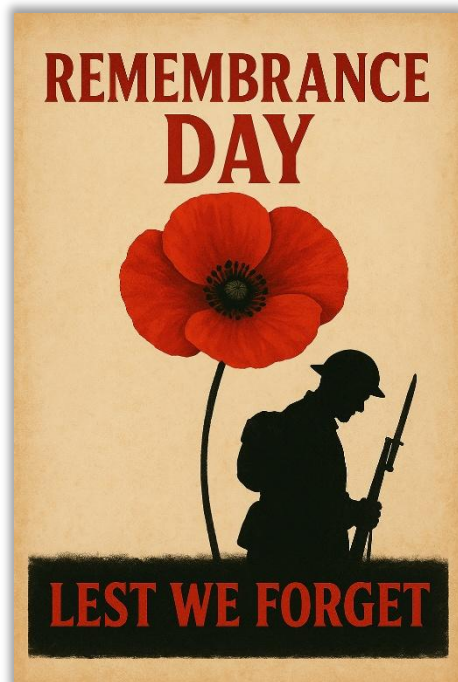




## Remembrance 2025

As you will know, this coming Sunday is Remembrance Sunday, where as a nation, we remember those who have lost their lives during the conflicts that Britain has been involved in during the last 100 years or more. During the course of the next week at HCCS, we will be engaging with the Remembrance theme through a number of activities and events, to ensure that our learners get the best possible chance to reflect on its important messages.

- On Thursday and Friday this week, members of our Youth Council group have visited form groups selling poppies as part of the national Poppy Appeal
- Members of the Youth Council will also be attending the Remembrance services in Holmes Chapel this coming Sunday
- On both Monday 10th and Tuesday 11th November, we will be including some activities in form time associated with the Remembrance and Armistice theme, as part of our combined 'Thought for the Week' and Personal Development programme
- Our House assemblies next week will also include some focus on the Armistice theme



In recent years, children who are involved in uniformed organisations such as Cadets (Army, Navy, Air Force), and the Scouting movement (including Guides, Scouts and Explorers), have expressed a desire to be able to wear the uniform of their organisation as a mark of respect and commemoration for Remembrance Day. We are very happy for children in these organisations to wear their uniform proudly if they wish on Tuesday 11th November.

As always, as a school we would be very grateful for your support in continuing the conversations about these important themes at home.



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## Foyle Young Poets Award: Eleanor Bowden (13PR)

Eleanor was commended for the Foyle Young Poets award 2025, and attended the award ceremony in London Wednesday, where she received her certificate and prize and met the other poets.

She writes on Substack under the pen name **@avalynblakely**, and is planning to self publish her debut novel, "Unscripted", and poetry pamphlet next year.

Well done, Eleanor!







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## House Leaders Update

As a house team, we would love to update you on what's been going on around school this term, and the events that are coming up. Our school community raised a fantastic £393.90 at the annual MacMillan bake sale. Thank you to all staff, students and parents/carers who kindly donated cakes, helped run the cake stalls, or came to purchase a cake. A big well done to **Tatton**, who raised the most money with their cake stall!

Students have also taken part in a staff baby photo quiz. The competition was close, but **Moreton** came out on top. This has also been the second year running the house poem competition for National Poetry Day, where students worked together in their tutor groups to write a line for their house poem on the theme "play". Congratulations to **Capesthorpe**, this year's winners! Staff also participated in an interhouse netball competition at lunchtime, which had a great crowd of student spectators. Thank you to all the staff who took part and all students who came to support!



We would also like to inform you of an exciting leadership opportunity for students. We are currently looking for members of the House Council, where pupils will have their say in house events moving forward. This is a fantastic opportunity to contribute to the school community and have your voices heard, as well as developing skills to support them in the future. Any students interested should speak to or email their Head of House to express your interest; we are keen to have representatives from all year groups and all houses. Thank you so much to those students who already have - we have had lots of brilliant candidates!

This half term, the house team will be focusing on one of our school values in particular: belonging. To give back to our local community, we will be raising money for Middlewich Food Bank throughout this half term. From Monday 17th November to Monday 15th December, we will be collecting food donations at reception. Please donate freely by handing it to reception or sending your child in with donations.

Keep your eyes peeled for lots of exciting events this half term. In particular, we are launching a big Winter Event. Look out for Christmas-themed house competitions, fundraising events, quizzes and other festive activities!

Thank you for all your support of the house system and we are looking forward to seeing our students' continuing engagement with events.

Best wishes,

**Miss Lawrence, Miss Gudgeon, Miss Brown and Mr Gamble**



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## Learning Resource Centre News

### Accelerated Reader

The Accelerated Reader competition is really heating up among our Key Stage 3 (KS3) students, and we have some truly phenomenal news to share!

We are thrilled to announce that we now have our very first set of Millionaire Readers rolling in. Congratulations to:

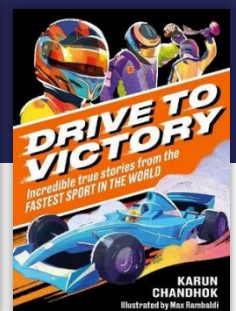
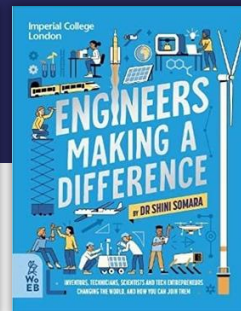
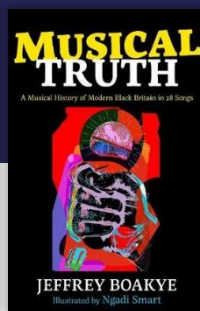
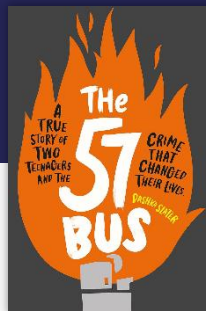
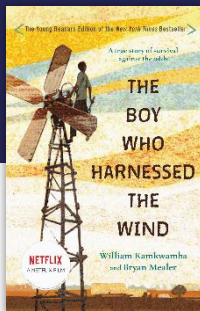
**Henry W-T (7JF)**  
**Sophie B (9KC)**  
**Elsie H (7JF)**  
**Poppy W (7HG)**  
**Sarah B (7AA)**



This is a fantastic achievement, proving their dedication and hard work of our students. To have read over one million words already is a spectacular milestone.

### Book Recommendations

Non-Fiction books are a great way to engage readers and bring information alive. Below are some of our favourite Non-Fiction texts which are sure to engage a variety of teenage readers.



### Sparx Reader

### Sparx Reader

A huge well done to our Key Stage 4 students who have been working diligently on Sparx Reader to hone their comprehension skills!

Your dedication to improving your reading fluency and understanding is fantastic to see.

The competition has been fierce, and the leaderboards are buzzing! We are delighted to celebrate the students who are currently at the top. Keep up the brilliant work!

| Year 10                | Year 11                |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1st - Charlie R (10LJ) | 1st - Ashira O (11CPR) |
| 2nd - Georgie P (10RG) | 2nd - Abi H (11MT)     |
| 3rd - Jane D (10GB)    | 3rd - Sam R (11CK)     |



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## Student Achievements

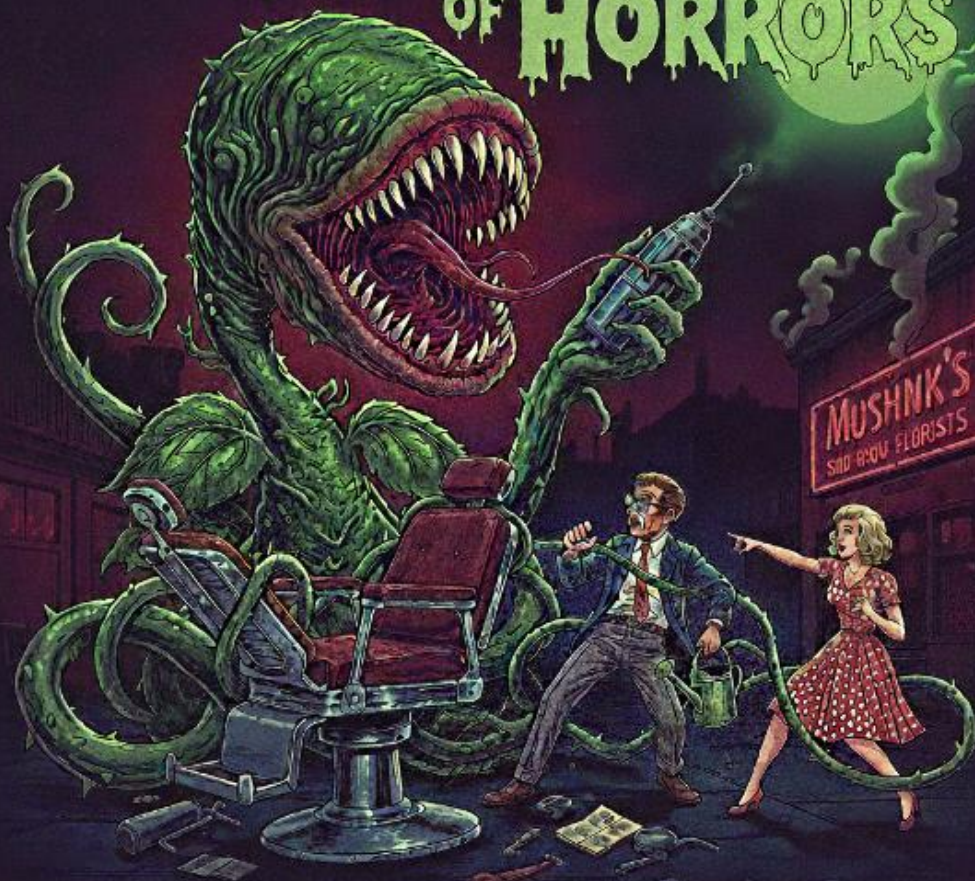
We love hearing about our students' achievements both inside and outside of school and are proud to share them! These achievements highlight the diverse talents of our students, and we encourage all parents and guardians to send us your news and photos, so we can share them with the wider school community.

If you have any student achievements you would like to share, please email details to: [achievements@hccs.info](mailto:achievements@hccs.info)



Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School Presents

## LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS



November 18th-20th, Tickets £12 adults, £6 students

The Arts Faculty have been working flat out since June to present our latest Musical, Little Shop of Horrors. The production will be staged in the theatre from Tuesday 18th November until Thursday 20h., Tickets **NOW** available from Reception