



NEWSLETTER

Holmes Chapel Comprehensive
School & 6th Form College

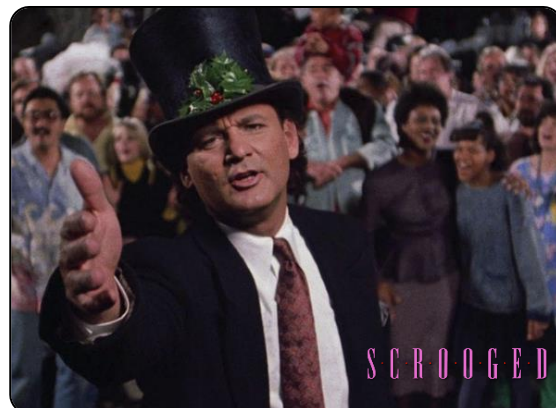


Issue: 183

Date: 19th December 2024

Dear all

In the 1988 version of the film *Scrooged*, Bill Murray, playing the main part of Frank Cross, says this about Christmas 'it's the time of year when we all act a little nicer, we smile a little easier, we cheer a little more. For a couple of hours out of the whole year, we are the people that we always hoped we would be!' The quote represents Frank Cross's epiphany about the true meaning of Christmas, when he transforms from being cynical, greedy, uncaring and selfish to someone who embraces the spirit of Christmas and realises that all people can choose to be better, kinder, more caring, more welcoming, inclusive and more generous. This film adaptation of 'A Christmas Carol' is an old film now but it's one of my favourite Christmas movies because it makes me think about what Christmas means. For many people, the Christian significance of this time of year is perhaps less central to the celebration but religious or not Christmas is a time to be grateful, generous, welcoming, kind and caring.



At the end of a long autumn term, I'd like to thank every one of you, our families, who have been with us throughout, supported us along the way, trusted us, engaged with us, helped us and valued us. Our school is a great place to be and this term has been one of the best in the 16 years I have served this community. Things feel good here and there have been so many points of joy, celebration, fun, success, progress and achievement. There have been countless occasions over the last 15 weeks when the little interactions and conversations that I and all of my colleagues have with the children remind us of the privilege and fulfilment that we all feel when we reflect on what we have chosen to do with our lives. Working with children.

I also know that, like in any big family, there are bumps and lumps along the way, the road is rarely straight and there are sometimes unexpected twists and turns, issues to resolve both big and small and challenges to face. But, just like in a family, talking and listening, understanding and caring, seeking ways forward and ways to heal any hurts is what helps all of the children in our school grow, thrive, learn, be happy, fulfilled and well rounded. We seek to create a safe, inclusive place where they are welcome, where they belong and are valued and where they can be proud of themselves, each other and their community.



At the heart of our school is the core business of ambitious teaching and learning and I am immensely grateful to our fantastic team of teachers, teaching assistants and welfare support staff who are here to educate your children, promote the highest standards and bring out the very best in each of them. We should all be ambitious for our children, challenging them to reach high, to be diligent and allowing them the space to struggle with big concepts and ideas. With our support we must encourage them to work their way to better levels of understanding, have deep levels of knowledge and the ability to apply it. This is critical in building their resilience, tenacity and capacity to be independent learners.



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And let's not forget that behind the scenes at HCCS there is a small army of colleagues who are the engine behind all that we do. They pay the bills, order everything we need, clean the school, mend and build things, monitor health and safety, decorate rooms, install and manage complex IT systems, cook for us, help recruit staff, provide invaluable support for teams and faculties, are experts in business management, organisational development, finance, governance and compliance. We have colleagues who are very experienced, well qualified and highly competent in welfare, counselling in safeguarding. These colleagues are like the blood in our veins and together they provide a complex network of services and support that allows our school to thrive and to be able to do its job. Just like our teaching colleagues, every one of them is valued and important and at Christmas I want to reinforce the immense gratitude I have for each of them. I am sure that you feel the same for these sometimes unsung heroes

In whatever way you celebrate at this time of year, have a great time over the holiday. I'm already looking forward to an exciting, happy, healthy and successful 2025 for everyone

Have a lovely Christmas

Nigel Bielby
Executive Headteacher



Curriculum Matters



We know that our children will learn most successfully when teachers and parents can communicate well with each other. We also know that a busy secondary school is a very different environment from a smaller primary setting and so sometimes it can be difficult to know how to get in touch about issues with your child's progress.

In response to feedback from our parents we have made two big changes this term.

Firstly, we have changed our approach to assessment from one focused on differentiated learning outcomes to one which is data driven and has at its core our intent that EVERY student should have the opportunity to succeed in learning an ambitious curriculum and that you should know how well they have remembered it. We are grateful for all of the feedback we received from parents both before we issued our interims and having received them. We are also very grateful to our teachers, who have worked hard to deliver this change in an exceptionally quick time. We will continue to refine our [approach to reporting](#) and use the newsletter and parent forums to keep you informed about this.

Assessment Overview				
Key Assessment Dates Click here to access information on our key assessment dates	Sixth Form Interim Glossary Click here to access our Sixth Form Interim Glossary	Key Stage 4 Interim Glossary Click here to access our Key Stage 4 Interim Glossary	Key Stage 3 Interim Glossary Click here to access our Key Stage 3 Interim Glossary	Reading Assessments Click here for information on our reading assessments

Staff List
(Please click on the images to email that particular member of staff)

 Mr N Bielby Executive Head Teacher	 Mr M Jones Deputy Head Teacher	 Mr T Mann Deputy Head Teacher	 Mr T Hildall Director of Operations
 Mr C Allford Director of Education	 Mr J Gurney Director of Inclusion & Culture	 Mr J Jones Director of Education	 Mr P Redford Director of Education
 Mrs I Wilson Director of Inclusion & Culture	 Miss C Holland Associate Assistant Head for Behaviour & Culture		

At our parent forum in November, one key piece of feedback you gave us was that it is difficult to find the contact details of key members of staff. To make this easier, we have now updated the [Our Staff page](#) on our website. To contact a member of our SLT, welfare teams or a head of subject, simply click on their photos or names and it will send you directly to their email address.

Both of the links above take you to updated website content. At the start of next term, our heads of subject will be working to redesign our curriculum pages so that everyone in our community can have a clear understanding of what our students are learning when and why we have made these choices. We are looking forward to unveiling this in the new year.



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None of these changes would have been possible without the engagement of you, our parents and carers, in our webinar and forum earlier this year. We would like to invite you to three more webinars, so please put the dates below in your diaries, they will all start at 4.30, online:

- **Wednesday 29th January** - how we group/band students and why
- **Wednesday 19th March** - how we ensure students' Personal Development
- **Wednesday 21st May** - how you can support your child in remembering the curriculum

We aim to invite you into school in June for a second parents' Quality of Education forum, so you can give us feedback to support the development of our curriculum, teaching and learning for the academic year 2025/26.

Year 11 Mock Preparation



Year 11s come straight back into mock exams on 7th January. Remember that timetable information and a link to our study skills programme can be found [here](#). While students should of course take the time for a break, away from your Christmas celebrations they need to be working to prepare for exams. As parents and carers, you can support them by ensuring they have a structured plan and the time to work quietly, away from distractions - mobile devices and music are not a revision aid! We will be contacting you in January about our plans for how we will support every student in the run up to the real thing.

Mental Health Support For Our Young People

As a school we are keen to ensure that our young people are able to access mental health support both during term time and during the holidays. It is often especially pertinent to know how you can access support over the Christmas period. The information below is aimed at ensuring that you know where you and your child can access this support at any time.

In school

During term time our welfare teams continue to offer our students support through our 'hubs'. In school, we have reiterated, through assemblies, how students can seek support if they feel that they need someone to talk to about how they feel.

If you are concerned about your child's wellbeing, you can contact their hub and speak to the Head of Year or their Welfare Manager via phone contact or the below email addresses

year7team@hccs.info
year8team@hccs.info
year9team@hccs.info
year10team@hccs.info
year11team@hccs.info
sixthform@hccs.info

In addition to this we continue to run expanded counselling services within school, where children can access additional support for their mental health. This is on a referral basis so please talk to us if you feel you would like to access this additional support for your child. We are happy to help.



Outside of school and during the holidays

We wanted to take this opportunity, as we are coming to the end of the school term to help signpost you to support and information that can be found online and by specialist charities across a range of mental health issues

Listed below are some links to some charities, phone lines, websites and to apps to help you as parents and carers to open up important conversations around mental health, anxiety and self harm. We hope that if required, this information and dialogue with your young person will help you to help them.



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Christmas Assembly 2024 – Headteacher's Address

Welcome to everyone at this year's Christmas assembly!

Today is usually the only occasion each year when we are together as a whole school. Here at our school we have four values. Learning, ambition, pride and belonging. The most important of these four at this particular time is Belonging.

You may not know or maybe just don't realise it but we are all part of an exceptional school that is also a community. In a healthy community, some of the greatest things we can do is to show kindness, to show we care, to welcome everyone in, to be helpful and to understand each other. We should accept our differences, be polite and well mannered, show gratitude and be thankful.

At our school, over 150 staff come to work here each day and do all sorts of jobs because they care about you and care about your future.

- You have an amazing team of teachers who plan and deliver your lessons every day, five days a week for the full term. This means that each teacher has delivered over 660 lessons since September. Go and say thank you
- You are supported by the best learning support team and the best welfare and safeguarding team you could wish for. They help you in countless ways and work incredibly hard to help you learn and grow. Go and say thank you
- Behind the scenes are another group of staff who most of you don't meet. However, these are the people who work magic. They order everything we need, pay the bills, make sure we have lighting, heating and power. They clean the school, including your toilets, repair and build things, install and manage complex IT systems, cook for us, help recruit staff for us and are experts in administration, business management and finance. Without them, our school could not function

All of these people invest their time and commitment so that you have every opportunity to be happy, fulfilled, safe and successful. We should all be grateful to them.

Not long from now we will all go home for a well earned break but before that I want to remind you all of something beautiful about Christmas. It doesn't matter where you're from, what you believe or how you celebrate, Christmas is about togetherness. It's about giving and helping others, sharing what we have, lifting each other up. It's about showing care, and kindness. It's about making people feel special, welcome, wanted and valued and of course it is about spreading joy.

When people talk about Christmas, very often, they talk about what they want, what they will be given, what presents they will receive. This year, instead of focusing on what you want, ask yourself about what you will give. I don't mean presents. The most precious gift you can give involves you committing yourself and your time, to your family and loved ones. Here ten are Christmas challenges that will allow you to do this. None of them will cost you anything expect time, love, care and kindness

1. Spend an afternoon talking with one of your older relatives or family friends but ask them about their lives rather than tell them about your own
2. Turn your phone off and leave it alone for a whole day. Invest the time in having conversations and talking with the real live people you have around you
3. Go home and tell your folks you love them and volunteer to help out around the house
4. Without being asked, empty the bins, learn how to use the washing machine, fill up and then empty the dishwasher
5. Make a nice breakfast for your folks and do the washing up as well
6. Set the table and help clear the dishes without having to be asked
7. Tidy your room, put your laundry in the basket and take your own rubbish out
8. Bake something with your folks and nice and together, take to a neighbour who is on their own
9. Ask your folks to help arrange a visit to the local old people's home and spend some time chatting to the people who live there
10. Take some cupboard items to the local food bank and volunteer your time to help out





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So, as we approach this festive holiday, I encourage you all to engage in the true magic of Christmas. Take a moment to think of all the little acts of kindness, generosity, and gratitude that make the people around you feel cared about, safe, valued, loved and welcome.

We are a community that belongs together. We should have strong, meaningful ambitions for ourselves and each other. We have a strong sense of family, that means we have a safe, secure place where we all learn, grow and thrive. We should always be grateful to each other and be proud of ourselves, each other and our community.

Staff and students, I am so proud of all of you and so grateful to each of you. You are all very special people and the kindness and support you show me and that you show to each other every day makes our school a very special place.

Merry Christmas, have fun and see you in 2025

Supporting Your Y11 Child's Revision Over the Christmas Holidays,

As we approach the Christmas holidays, we'd like to support you with the important role you play in your child's preparation for their upcoming Year 11 Trial Exams, which take place shortly after the break. [Please refer to the letter sent earlier](#) this week with more details about these exams.

Mock exams are a valuable opportunity for students to assess their progress, refine their revision techniques, and build confidence ahead of the final GCSEs. [We have organised resources on our website to help guide you.](#)

Normally we suggest at least 2 hours per day on top of the normal school day but with school being out that number should rise. More important than the quantity of revision is its quality. Research has shown that "students believe...relatively ineffective strategies are actually the most effective." Below are a list of researched strategies to support students:

Highly Effective Strategies

1. Practice testing - using mock exams and mark schemes. Testing self using flashcards or other revision materials.
2. Distributed Practice - spreading study sessions over time, allowing for better retention and understanding compared to cramming.
3. Interleaving - not only distributing practice as above but mixing up the order of materials across different topics

Less Effective Strategies

1. Re-reading and highlighting
2. Summarisation - rewriting notes
3. Keyword Mnemonic - can be useful for learning languages but only in short-term

Source: [link](#)

To help your child make the most of this time, here are some ways you can provide support:

1. Help Create a Revision Schedule

Encourage your child to plan their revision by dividing subjects into manageable chunks. A structured plan ensures they cover all topics without feeling overwhelmed.

2. Provide a Quiet Study Environment

A calm, distraction-free space is essential for effective study. Support them in finding a consistent area where they can focus.

3. Encourage Balanced Breaks

While revision is important, so is rest. Regular breaks, physical activity, and time to relax can help maintain their energy and focus.

4. Offer to Test Their Knowledge

Ask your child questions, review flashcards, or quiz them on key topics. This helps reinforce their learning and builds confidence.

5. Keep Motivation High

Praise their efforts, celebrate small achievements, and remind them that these mocks are an opportunity to learn and grow, not just a test of ability.

6. Discuss Healthy Habits

Good sleep, healthy meals, and staying hydrated are just as important as revision. These habits can significantly impact their concentration and performance.

Your encouragement and support will make a big difference in your child's preparation and confidence. We wish all our Year 11 students the very best in their revision and success in their Trial Exams. Best wishes to your families over the Christmas Holidays!



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Some Useful Phone Apps;

There are many self-health apps available to help with mental health, stress, and mindfulness, including:



Calm Harm

www.calmharm.stem4.org.uk/

Friendly animated app that aims to help children and young people control the urge to self harm by using task based strategies. Offers tracking and goals to beat



Headspace

www.headspace.com/

A meditation app with a variety of themes, including falling asleep and fundamental meditation techniques



Calm

www.calm.com/

A well-known app with breathing techniques, calming exercises, and other offerings



MindShift CBT - Anxiety Relief

www.anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt/

Uses Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to help with anxiety, relaxation, and mindfulness

Please [click here](#) to see more Self-Health, Charity online help resources and additional information:

Rewards Trip

This term we invited students who achieved the highest number of achievement points in each year group to attend a rewards trip to Manchester. This was a successful evening where students had fun in the snow at the Chill Factor followed by a trip to the Trafford Centre to have tea and do some Christmas shopping.

Well done to all of the students who attended, you were great ambassadors for the school.

The Heads of Year and Welfare Team





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Year 7

We would like to congratulate our Year 7 students on completing their first term at Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School. We held a 'Celebration Assembly' on Wednesday to recognise all of the students who have displayed positive learning attitudes over the last 15 weeks.

Students received curriculum awards nominated by their teaching staff and awards for living by the school values along with positive punctuality, attendance and highest achievement point awards.

Congratulations to everyone who received an award and to all students who have engaged with our extra curricular activities this term.

We wish you a very Happy Christmas.

From the Year 7 Team



Year 7 Dance class performing in their final dance performance to end the term



7TG Winners of the inter-tutor Netball competition



7TG Winners of the inter-tutor Football competition



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Year 13 Class of 2023 Reunion

We were delighted to welcome back our ex students on Wednesday, for a chance to collect their Level 3 BTEC and A Level certificates, share stories, eat cake, and drink hot chocolate.

It was fantastic to see them again, and hear all about what they had been up to at University, or the world of work.





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Fundraising for Kenya

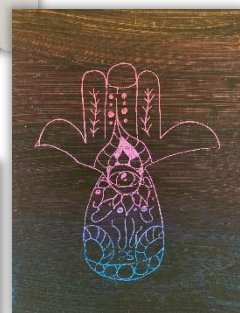
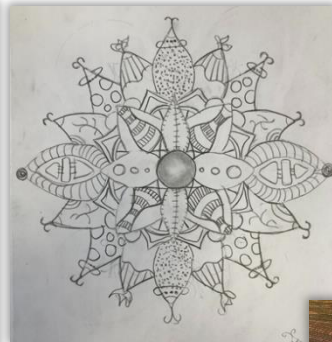
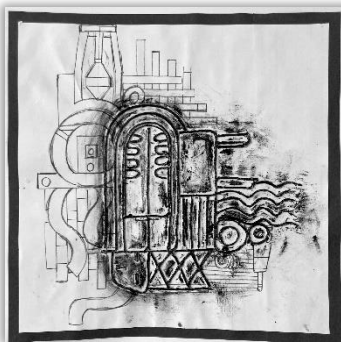
Fundraising for the Kenya 2025 trip has continued in full swing. Flights are now booked and with 7 months left until departure most students are well on their way to raising their funds.

Lilly A has been busy baking cakes and making and selling handmade bracelets. Ian CM, Charlie M, Oliver J and Sam H ran the monthly bakes sale in school, selling out of all cakes in one break time!



Autumn Term in Art

Here are some of the artwork that some of our students have done from Year 7 to KS5.



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**Accelerated
Reader™**

Accelerated Reader

We'd like to remind everyone about the importance of our KS3 students participating in the Accelerated Reader (AR) program. As part of our school's reading initiative, students are expected to take at least one AR quiz every two weeks.

Regular quizzing helps reinforce reading comprehension, encourages consistent reading habits, and supports academic success. By completing these quizzes, students are also able to track their progress and set personal reading goals.

We encourage students to keep up with this expectation, and we thank parents for supporting their children in maintaining this valuable learning habit.

Careers Corner – *Jobs of the Week*



More good news for Friends of Goostrey Station!

Recently our photo with the caption Keeping Up Appearances was shortlisted for an award in the Cheshire Best Kept Station competition. The theme was Brightening Up Our Station. We've just heard that the same photo has also been shortlisted by Community Rail! The theme of their photo competition was Capturing the Essence of Community Rail. In both cases the winner will be chosen through a public vote.

This link will take you to the voting page of Cheshire Best Kept Stations

<https://www.bestkeptstations.org.uk/photocompetition/> Voting closes at 5pm on 28th December. We'll hear the result in February.

This link will take you to the voting page of Community Rail <https://communityrail.org.uk/community-rail-awards-2025-photography-competition/> Voting closes at 5pm on 22nd January. The result will be announced in March.

Previously our supporters helped FoGS to be successful in the Community Rail photo competition. We've won twice and came second on another occasion!



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Our family hubs digital offer is now live!

We have launched our family hubs digital offer - an online resource dedicated to sharing all the help, support and information that families need if they cannot access a physical family hub in the borough.

Family hubs bring council, health, and community services together, so that families with children and young people can access the right help and support, at the right time. The support is available for children and young people from birth up until the age of 19 (or 25 for those with special educational needs).

Over the past twelve months we've already opened five physical family hubs across the borough and are looking to develop further outreach provision through family hub 'connect' sites – offering the opportunity for more in-person support.

The family hub digital offer is a series of webpages which have been created through Livewell and have been developed to extend our outreach to families.

Through the site families can discover local events in the area and find out more about our SEND services and the various family support available depending on a child's age.

[Family Hubs \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](http://FamilyHubs(cheshireeast.gov.uk))

Year 11 Fitness Yoga in PE!!

It has been a great term with some of our year 11 classes giving some new fitness activities a try. We have been looking at raising mental health awareness and what activities students could be utilising in the run up to their exams. It was great to see all the students practicing and understanding the importance of Yoga and the health benefits it can bring.

Well done Year 11. *Mrs Mee*



Year 11 South Cheshire Netball Tournament - Tuesday 10th December

Last week saw the final Netball tournament of the year. Our year 11 team were busy revising, attending school sessions in preparation for their mocks so our amazing year 9 and 10 squad members stepped up. This was a fantastic opportunity to play some great netball at a higher level for the students. They had a great time, competing well against strong opposition particularly Sandbach and Brine Leas. Our students made us proud as always, showing ambition and pride in competing for school. The team came out 3rd overall, which was an amazing result. Well done!!

Mrs Mee



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Happy Christmas to all of our Netballers! Well done on your commitment this season!

Mrs Thomas, Mrs Mee and Mrs Colyer



Parent Workshop Understanding Self-harm

What:

We'll look at ways to support children and young people who self-harm and break down some of the stigmas associated with self-harm and thoughts of suicide.

When:

Wednesday 11th December 2024
10:15am - 11:45am

Where:

At Fellowship House, Park Road,
Congleton, CW12 1DP

Book now

Email:
FamiliesandCommunitiesTeam@Visyon.org.uk
Call: 01260 290000

Registered Charity Number 1107951
Registered company number 5250758



Visit www.Visyon.org.uk, or call 01260 290000, to learn more about how our charity supports children, young people and their families with mental health & emotional wellbeing across Cheshire East.



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