



Principals Update – 25th November 2022

Welcome to the latest edition of our blog.

This week Year 13 have been completing their first prelim examinations of the year, in readiness for their A Levels this coming summer. Good luck to all our Year 13 students with these examinations. We have also been providing advice on UCAS and on possible future career pathways, as you will see in this blog.

Year 11 have now received their prelim results and now know clearly what they need to improve between now and the summer in order to improve their grades. Next week we have Year 11 Parents Evening via Teams on Thursday 1st December and we look forward to meeting with all parents of our Year 11 students so we can share the results with you and, most importantly of all, explain what they need to now work on.

Other year groups have been busy with other initiatives in school this week as you can see this in this edition of the Blog.

In the last edition I shared the fantastic news that the University of Exeter has now accredited Holcombe as an Advanced Thinking School. This week we have received our trophy which will soon sit very proudly in our reception area. Here are our fantastic Thinking Ambassadors with the award and here is a link to the press release with full details.

[Aspire & Achieve Together, Holcombe Grammar School](#)



Classcharts

The vast majority of parents have now signed up to Classcharts. Not only is this a fantastic way for parents to keep track of your child's progress in school but this is now the main way that we want parents to inform us of absences. More details are on the next page but please can I again ask that if any parents have still not signed up that you please do so.

Student Voice

We value the positive relationships that we have with our students and we take many opportunities to listen to their feedback. In recent weeks we have had Year Council meetings which then culminated in the main School Council meeting. A summary of this can be seen at the end of this blog.

Christmas

The festive season is nearly upon us. We are looking forward to putting our tree up in school soon as we start to countdown to the end of term. In this blog you will see our publicity re: Christmas Jumper Day which we are running in support of Save the Children on Thursday 8th December. On this date students in all year groups may wear a Christmas Jumper in addition to their regular uniform. We are still expecting students to be in normal school uniform on this date but those who choose to wear a Christmas Jumper may do so.

We are also hoping to be able to hold our first Carol Concert for 3 years on Tuesday 13th December. Details are found in this blog and we hope to see many of you there.

We will also be providing a Christmas Dinner for students in the last week of term which students will be able to choose to enjoy, should they wish to. Finally, let me remind all parents that our last day of term is Friday 16th December with dismissal at 12:30pm

My very best wishes to you all for the next 2 weeks and I will look forward to updating you further in our next blog

Mr L.Preston
Principal

Key Dates 2022 -

- Thursday 1st December - Year 11 Parents Evening
- Thursday 8th December - Christmas Jumper Day
- Tuesday 13th December - Carol Concert
- Friday 16th December - Last Day of Term 2 finishing at 12:30

Key Dates 2023 -

- Monday 2nd January - Bank Holiday
- Tuesday 3rd January - First Day of Term 3
- 3rd-6th January - Year 12 Prelims
- 9th-13th January - Year 11 Language Orals
- Thursday 12th January - Year 9 Parents Evening
- Thursday 19th January - Year 13 Parents Evening
- WC 23rd January - Year 11 Prelims
- WC 30th January - Year 11 Prelims
- WC 30th January - Year 10 Work Experience
- Friday 10th February - Last Day of Term 3

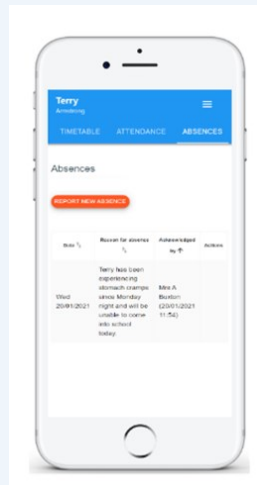
Class Charts Reminder

Many thanks to all parents who are able to let us know in detail why students are late or absent from school, please continue to do so by 8am on each day of absence. We have made some changes to our absence reporting. We now expect all lateness and absence to be reported through our classcharts software, this is to enable swift and accurate processing of this information, as well as removing the need for you to confirm voice messages with written evidence. Through classcharts, written reasons can be sent directly to our attendance office, and medical evidence can be attached directly where appropriate.

If you access your child's profile on classcharts, you will see the Absences. Selecting this tab will display a list of absences that you have reported, once you have reported them. This includes when the absence took place, the reason for the absence and who acknowledged your absence report.

To report an absence, click on the Report new absence button. Next, enter the details of the reported absence into the form provided. You can also include up to 5 files in your absence report as supporting evidence. To do this, click on the Attach supporting evidence button and select the files of your choice. Click on the Submit button to send your pupil's absence report to their school. The absence can be edited and deleted until it has been acknowledged by a member of school staff.

This can also be used to report lateness too.



Attendance and Punctuality

We would like to remind parents that it is their responsibility for their child to attend school every day the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

It is equally as important for their child to be punctual and attend school on time. Registration opens at 08:40am, if a child is late before registration closes at 09:00am, a 30 minute detention will be given. If a child is late after registration has closed at 09:00am, a 1 hour detention will be given. We are constantly reviewing this system in order to find ways to encourage greater punctuality.

We understand that lateness can sometimes be due to unforeseen circumstances, and those will be taken into consideration. However, pre-warned train/ bus strikes and ongoing road works are not an unforeseen circumstance, and adjustments to travel plans should be made prior to the journey to allow for expected delays.

By attending school consistently and punctually, we are setting our students up to be their best selves, thank you so much for your ongoing support in achieving this with them.

Job Opportunity

Are you looking for a part-time job that fits around school hours or other commitments?

If yes, then please visit our Trust careers page where you will find details of lunchtime support roles across our local schools.

Interhouse Competitions

Upcoming interhouse competitions will be Monday 5th December (Year 8), Tuesday 6th December (Year 7), Wednesday 7th December (Year 10), Thursday 8th December (Year 9) and Friday 9th December (Year 11).

- 8-10 students from each form will be involved in each activity, meaning that the vast majority of students will be participating in one competition, so no lessons will take place for that year group.
- Students to wear their PE kit to school on the day of their competition.
- Kit requirements – FOOTBALL = shin pads/ boots; BADMINTON = trainers.
- All competitions to take place during periods 1 & 2.

Christmas Jumper Day - Thursday 8th December

Christmas Jumper Day is Save the Children's annual event which raises money for children in the UK and across the world.

Open to all years 7-13, but must be worn alongside normal uniform including blazers, it is not an "Own clothes" day.

To wear your Christmas jumper all you need to do is donate £2 on +Pay.

Photo: Alex Bamford / Save the Children

CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY



**Save the
Children**



IS COMING, PEOPLE! AND

IT'S GOING TO BE EPIC!



Thinking at Holcombe – Year 7 Thinking Week

Last week, Year 7 took part in their dedicated Thinking Week, each period 1, Monday to Thursday. They enjoyed sessions on:

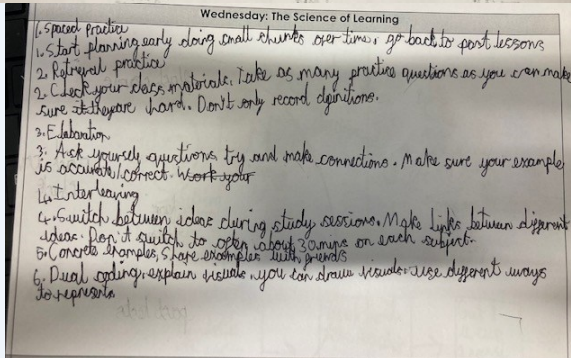
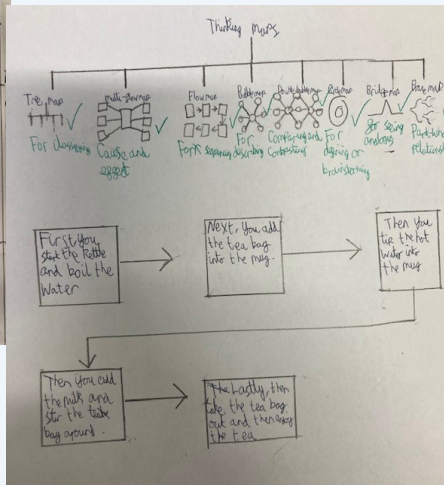
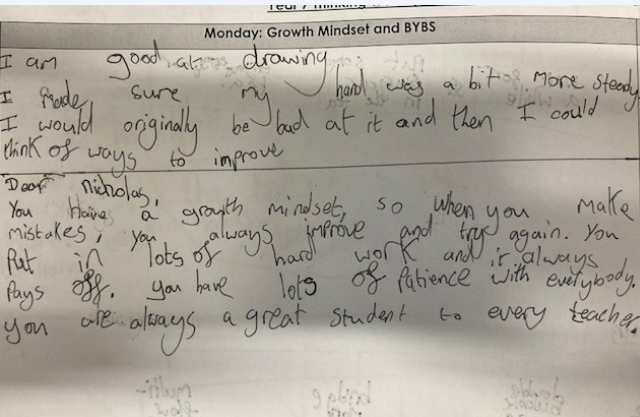
- Growth Mindset and Be Your Best Self (BYBS)
- Thinking Hats and Holcombe Habits
- The Science of Learning
- Thinking Maps

The sessions were designed and delivered by the Drive Team teachers - Miss Cook, Mr Claessens, Mr Rayner, Mr Wells and Mrs Banks, and supported by our fantastic student Drive Team – the Thinking Ambassadors - Dylan Patel, Taylor Mortimer, Harlem Hodges, Oyore Jacdonmi, Finn Dewane, Henry Milner, Josh Sanni and Jaden Benson.

Students have since been asked to complete a quiz to evidence their learning from the week, and how the sessions have boosted their confidence in all things thinking. So far, the results are very pleasing!

Below are some examples of student reflections and engagement in the sessions.

Great work again, year 7!




For Parents

About the app

The wink app layout is exactly the same as the adult dating app tinder.

You swipe left and right depending on if you like the look of someone's profile.

There is a private messaging function that allows you to send and receive images and messages from people that you have matched with.





App Store Description - Wink is the best place to make new friends from all over the world! It's as easy as swiping right and starting up a conversation with your potential new bestie.

Concerns


Some young people have had unwanted inappropriate pictures sent to them.

Some users are also pretending to be someone they are not (the way they look and age.)


Similar apps to wink:


Ensure your Children and Young People are aware of what to share and what not to share online. Below are some links to websites and videos that can help get the message across and guide them in the right direction.



<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>



Think U Know resource - <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>



Hectors World Videos (Primary School) - <https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/classroom-resources/hectors-world/your-personal-information-online>

Age Rating 12+
Infrequent/Mild Alcohol, Tobacco, or Drug Use or References
Infrequent/Mild Mature/Suggestive Themes
Infrequent/Mild Profanity or Crude Humour
Infrequent/Mild Sexual Content and Nudity





Medway Parents and Carers Forum's 2nd Annual Send Survey

This is your chance to tell us about your experiences with SEND services in Medway over the last 12 months.

The survey is anonymous and will help structure improvements moving forward. We will also this year be able to analyse responses from last year's survey to see where improvements are being felt by families.

Follow the link below or scan the QR code on your device for a chance to win one of our 3 £25 Amazon voucher prizes.

Prize draw T&C's can be found on www.medwaypcf.org.uk

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/G5JTJNLF>



Apprenticeship Degree Pathways with alumni Lauren Cook

Year 13s had the opportunity to learn from the experiences of Lauren Cook, who is successfully midway through an Apprenticeship Degree in Project Management, with Atkins UK. Lauren studied A level Psychology, Sociology and Geography at Holcombe, she kindly shared her experiences post A levels to inspire and support our current year 13s. A few examples of the feedback from the session below demonstrate the value of such engagement:

.. "It was really useful to be able to hear one person's own experiences and the whole process for apprenticeships. Learning the extra tips was especially useful when beginning the application process and knowing what to expect in the coming months"

.. "The session was valuable as it changed my perspective of apprenticeship degrees and how beneficial it is, even if I want to go into a career in healthcare. I now am going to email certain companies to investigate such opportunities!. (Ore O)

.. "Lauren's talk encouraged me to apply for an apprenticeship degree as her personal experience has some similarities to the career path I want to take. She was very interactive and covered many aspects of the apprenticeship that employers may not share in their adverts, which was helpful. Lauren also talked about how you can still earn a degree and gain experience in job, which would be the ideal. Overall, it was a relaxed talk which was informative and useful as she had much common ground with us, year 13s". (Mia H)



Year 13 Law Applications and Pathways UCAS with Q&A Ms A Jhaj

This term, Year 13 had an opportunity to attend an afterschool Law UCAS focussed Q&A, with a Durham Law graduate, Ms Jhaj.

The students were engaged and asked probing questions which enabled a better understanding of the UCAS process and pursuing a pathway in Law. The following examples are of student feedback of the valuable opportunity:

"I found the law UCAS after school session extremely useful. I found it refreshing to talk to someone closer to my age about what university and personal statements should include. I found the advice about how to select universities extremely useful. I also found new avenues to conduct further research for the My Cambridge application, where I used an article from a recommended book. It was so useful as it helped form my application and gave an amazing insight overall into universities". (Haleena Benning)

"I found the law talk after school very beneficial. Miss Jhaj highlighted the rewards of studying law, but also the cons which gave me a realistic understanding and only made me want to study law more. She also kindly offered her revision techniques on how she gained such high A level grades which have given me insight on trying new revision methods. Her advice on writing a unique personal statement has also given me guidance on what to steer clear of which will definitely prove useful. I thank her for offering her time to enlighten us on her path of studying law as it has really helped me". (Ridhima P)

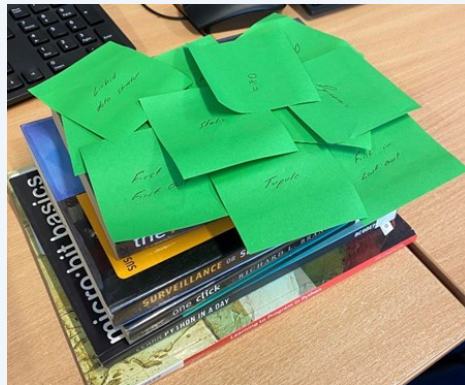
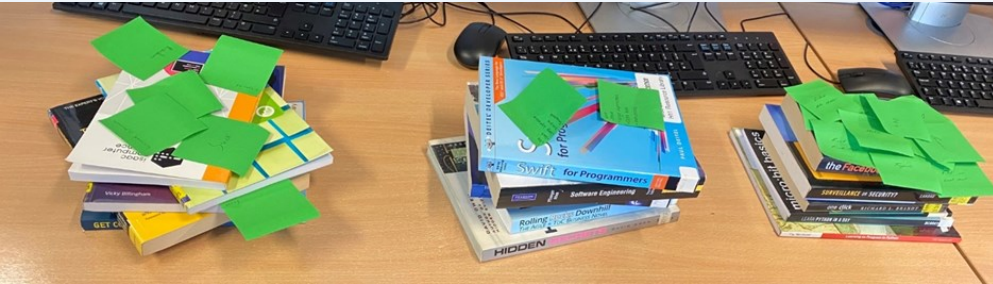
Bar Mock Trial

This week in preparation for the Bar Mock Trial the Law department had experienced barrister Shelly Glaister Young run a mentoring session with Y12 Law students. The session involved Shelly prepared by providing tips and tricks on what viewpoint to take for both the prosecution and defence in the trial. The first heat of the Bar Mock Trial will be running in January 2023.



Data Structures and the Synonym Problem

Year 12 Computer Scientists have been exploring data structures and their associated properties as part of their A Level studies. When entering their lesson this week, the students were met with a simple task... describe the data structure on their table using a single word or phrase. The aim was to get the students exploring the interweaving and ever-changing connotations of language and terminology within this unit of study.



By the end of their 5-minute activity the students had not only managed to accurately and carefully construct a wide range of synonyms for the data structure (stack), but had also been able to identify where this has been seen and used in everyday life.

STARTER



- Around the room are several examples of today's data structure
- In pairs attempt to come up with as many phrases or words to describe the data structure as possible.

EXT – Where else, aside from the example given, would we see this data structure?

The students began this task timidly, with many unsure of how to describe the stack of books piled up in front of them, but after a few brief paired discussions the conversations and ideas readily began to flow. The images below show the structures and their analysis on the book stacks, which they took great pride in fashioning in the final few minutes of the task.

Throughout the remainder of the lesson the students were met with a variety of functions which can be carried out on a stack data structure and many used the starter book stacks to actively try out these methods. This real-world demonstration enabled all students to actively participate and develop their understanding of these structures.

School Council

Year councils have been meeting over recent weeks to discuss their impressions of ongoing changes in the school. The councils discussed how much they are finding challenge in different lessons, menu items in the cafeteria and the new improved behaviour systems. Lots of positive discussions occurred throughout all year groups. Students reported seeing increased use of teaching and learning devices commonly used across the school, such as retrieval practice, knowledge banks and no hands up. Many students also reported loving our reinvigorated Personal Development lessons, saying they enjoyed the ability to have more discussions and highly valued being with their tutor for these sessions, building on the positive relationships already in place.

This week, the whole school council met, with representatives from across different year groups. Representatives shared the views of their year groups and discussed where they feel the school is now and how they would like us to continue to develop. Students were very positive about our move to the new classcharts system, really valuing the discussions this is enabling with family about their successes in school. They were also really impressed with the lengths staff had gone to in order to improve the atmosphere around the school site, seeing the impact of more staff being on duty and an increase in security cameras. Students also discussed ways that they would like to improve the school site, how best revision can be supported and their preferred method of reward.

The school council will continue to meet each term and we will be updating all students on actions arising via assemblies and future blog posts.

Form representative do an excellent job as active citizens of Holcombe, upholding article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and should be applauded for this, the current representatives are:

(Whole School Councillors in Bold)

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Sixth Form	
Kareem Balogun	Honour Oshinowo	<u>Edric Kerr</u>	Ethan Kalsi	Henry Stephens	<u>Rihanna Parker</u>	Macey Sheller-Rollings
Illya Reha-Szidjaga	Gameli Hoedoafia	Ivan Uzorka	Rauri Blanchard	Matt Pearson	<u>Megan Courtney</u>	Oliver Smith
Louis Fiolka	<u>Teddy Sawyer</u>	Taylor Mortimer	Callum Reynolds	Sam Hall	Angelica Ezeugwu	Naomi Williams
Kosi Ohanukwu	Omotayo Oluwatomiwa	Finn Dewane	Isaac Turner	<u>Matt Johnson</u>	Ayo Ajakaiye	<u>Amy Ugbaja</u>
Ryan Barber	<u>Micah Ogunfemi</u>	<u>Chimdi Mgbemena</u>	<u>Mobolaji Osinowo</u>	Barayturk Aydin	Esther Faponnle	Emily Eaton
William Grant	Lohen Johnson	Arthur Winkworth	Toluwanimi Williams	Chris Labeodan	Donnel Zhanje	<u>Kavi Naidoo</u>
Adam Townsend	Matthew Hodgson	Basit Ajala	<u>Alfred Savage-Mansaray</u>	<u>Sahib Chodha</u>	Kofo Olori	Tutu Gbudamosi
<u>Chandranshu Mannava</u>	Joshua Sanni	Harry Pass	Jakub Sahely		Michal Mikolajczyk	Mazeed Towobola
Siji Adewolo	Henry Milner	Adebayo Oriku	Charlie Read		Tiffany Ishola	Aurys Stonkus
<u>Camron Harding</u>	Chris Bennett	Justin Edokpolor	Emmanuel Ndoh		Oliver Tomlin	Anita Rumenova
	Zack Crick	Theo Murray			Edon Hyseni	