



The
Thomas Hardye
School

Newsletter

CHRISTMAS #2
2025





Welcome

The longest term ends with the calendar year, and I hope all our students and their families can look back on both with satisfaction. Certainly, our Year 11s and 13s deserve a rest after their mock examinations this month, and both should be very proud of their preparation, focus and stamina in what was an exacting process. They should be confident that rewards will be reaped in the summer and come back with a clear sense of where to direct their energies in their final full term.

Our students, and those of other schools in the Wessex MAT, have been involved in more fantastic music events this autumn, and it was great to see our large theatre so full for the Winter Concert. The Thomas Hardy Singers end the term with the traditional Carol Concert at St Peter's Church and there is no finer way to enter into the seasonal spirit. I also very much enjoyed the rather less seasonal, student-devised drama production of 'A Leather Apron' performed in our studio at the end of November.

This is also a good opportunity to thank all parents and carers for their engagement with our recent survey on students' mobile-phone use, as this is something which we

are increasingly concerned about as a school and it was important to get your views. It will come as no surprise to know that we are considering a change in policy, and this is largely driven by the increasing evidence of the detrimental impact of access to these devices during the day on our students' concentration, social skills, and well-being. We have, over the last few years, noticed increased disruption to lessons, social issues, and instances of unkind or inappropriate communication linked to mobile phone use, and we must always ensure that our school is a safe and calm environment where learning comes first. We will obviously keep you fully informed of any changes well in advance.

Next term we will be moving over fully to the Arbor system, which will replace Classcharts. All schools in the Wessex Multi Academy Trust have moved over already, and we are the last to take the plunge. Those of you with children in other MAT schools will already be familiar with Arbor, which replicates ClassCharts' function as a tool for communication, seeing your child's homework, attendance and conduct log. Mr Walker, assistant headteacher, is overseeing the transition, and hopefully downloading the app and logging on will be straightforward once he sends out the instructions on how to do so.

Finally, it wouldn't be an update from me without mentioning reading, and my pretext this time is that 2026 is the National Year of Reading in the UK. You can find out about the research, the events and the benefits at <https://www.goallin.org.uk/> and we will be supporting it in lessons and through library events throughout the year.

The event is timely, with research not only tracking the decline in the amount we all, and especially our children, read, but also the effects of that decline. The complex ideas of history, philosophy, music, the sciences, mathematics and everything else cannot always be condensed into a short-form video or AI summary, and I have no interest in a future where those ideas are only available to a minority. Whilst the challenges of inspiring children to read have never been greater, the rewards of doing so remain substantial and sustained. If you have a reluctant reader at home, perhaps 2026 can be the year where they find that author or that book which opens the way to a lifetime of reading and all the associated benefits.

With that, we bid farewell to 2025.

On behalf of all staff at The Thomas Hardy School, may I wish you and your family a happy and restful Christmas and New Year.

With all best wishes,
Nick Rutherford
HEADTEACHER

Newsletter design,
editing & layout:
Caroline Lester

COVER IMAGE: Christmas Concert
Photograph courtesy of Mr Trevorrow
More on Music on pages 8 - 9

Thanks to all contributors for their help with this issue

Classics



ROMAN HISTORY ON OUR DOORSTEP

Earlier this month, the Classics department took a group of 20 sixth form students to visit the Roman Town House in Dorchester. We were able to see the remains of the ancient underfloor heating system and walk across some of the mosaic floors.

After this, we visited Dorset Museum where we were able to see some of the finds collected from the Town House site over the years. Our students were able to develop their understanding of Roman Britain and learn more about the history of Dorchester, or 'Durnovaria'.

A Level Classical Civilisation is the study of ancient Greek and Roman myths, literature and history. If any student is interested in finding more about the subject, they are welcome to speak to **Mr Ayre** or **Mr Bewley**.

Mr Ayre



History

FOUR DAYS IN BERLIN

During the October half-term, our Year 13 Modern History students enjoyed 4 days exploring the historic city of Berlin. We again teamed up with Ferndown Upper School. Our tour of the city does encompass tourist hotspots such as the Brandenburg Gate and the former East German TV Tower, but it also provides students with a holistic understanding of German history from 1871 and its unification, right up until 1990 and reunification.

We arrived in an overcast but dry Berlin, then travelled to the West of the city, to explore the Kaiser Wilhelm II Memorial Church and

imagine life in a divided Berlin. A meal in the Hard Rock Café followed.

On Thursday, we travelled to Alexanderplatz, the former city-centre of East Berlin. At the DDR Museum, we could drive a virtual Trabant and experience a typical East German property layout. After an hour of shopping in the very large Alexa Centre, we took the tram to the outskirts of East Berlin to Hohenschonhausen. This site of the Stasi Prison reveals the extent of the police state in East Germany.

We returned to Alexanderplatz for some traditional German currywurst. The day finished with a very



I absolutely loved Berlin. I've been on a few residential whilst being at school but the Berlin trip has by far been the best one. Not only was it fun, but it also really impacted me as an A-level history student and I found that I learnt so much, which is what I think made the trip so special and memorable.

Catherine Hooley, Y13



competitive quiz. Quiz host Mr Taylor dressed for the occasion, with Hardye's and Ferndown students rivalling each other.

On Friday, we travelled to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, the 'model' camp used by the Nazis for all future camps and a key site in the development of the SS. We toured the remains of the camp, with a moment of reflection before departing.

Next on the schedule was the Olympic Stadium and its role in the propaganda front of Nazi Germany.



Departure day always comes around quickly but we still had time to explore. We headed towards Checkpoint Charlie, the Berlin Wall and the Topography of Terror. These visits highlighted the complexity and overlapping themes all within walking distance.

After four days of history and shopping, what better way to round off than with a visit to a chocolate shop!

For all students involved in this visit, it has been an unforgettable trip with many laughs, new experiences and foods eaten. Finally, whilst some of the sites we visit are not 'fun' or 'enjoyable', they are important, relevant and engaging. I am very glad to have been able to take our 2025 cohort to them.

Until next year, Danke!



Mr Baker

Sixth Form



RACING FOR SUCCESS!

In September and November, Year 12 student Hannah Lowe took part and won both of the Ladies' Karting Sprint Races at Dunkeswell Raceway. She also was awarded Sportsperson of the Year at South Coast Karting, where she finished 5th out of 48 in the Championship, taking several podiums along the way.



Having made the jump from rental karts to owner karts 6 months ago, she has competed in the Clay Pigeon senior IKR Championship, finishing in the top 10, out of 56. Along with the Ladies' Championship, and Clay Pigeon IKR next year, Hannah will be competing in the SuperOne series across the UK, formally known as the British Championship. This will see her compete against professional racing drivers.



The school is very proud of Hannah's success and wishes her well in her future endeavours. Hannah is currently looking for anyone who would be willing to help sponsor her along this journey.

For more details, please contact: Hannah:
hannah81racing@gmail.com

**Story & images courtesy
of Hannah Lowe**

Sixth Form



THE SKY'S NO LIMIT FOR LILY!

Year 13 student Lily Wilson was plucked from BA's Speedbird Z work experience program to have a flight operations insight day. This was at Heathrow in the flight training offices where Lily did multiple group exercises and heard from current pilots. The afternoon was spent in a simulator where Lily successfully landed an Airbus A320 into Heathrow Airport!

Lily said, "It was an amazing day and I learnt so much about the aviation industry. I hope to enter BA's pilot academy in the future to ultimately become a pilot."

Mr Hall

Images courtesy of Lily Wilson



Politics



WESTMINSTER CONFERENCE

On Monday 24th November, the Politics Department set off bright and early for a trip to London to attend a national politics conference. Around two thousand sixth-form politics students were present, giving us the chance to hear from—and put questions to—a range of politicians in Westminster Central Hall, including Zack Polanski, Richard Tice, and the Speaker of the House, Lindsay Hoyle.

Speakers explored major current issues such as the economy, the conflict in Ukraine, and concerns about Chinese espionage. A common theme throughout the day was the importance of young people engaging actively in politics.

After the conference, we walked around the corner to see Number 10 before heading to the Supreme Court. We'd highly recommend a visit—its museum is excellent, and visitors are able to see and even sit in the courtrooms.

It was a brilliant day, and we all left buzzing with conversations about politics (even more than usual!).

Mrs Roper-Brown



GCHQ NATIONAL LANGUAGES COMPETITION

From 17th - 21st November, 21 Year 9 students in 7 teams took part in the GCHQ NLC. This is an online event where students have to solve language related puzzles, in order to score points and advance up the national leaderboard. With a maximum of 25 hours allowed per team, the competition was intense. Our top-placed team, **Jolan Jantou-Morris, Orson Mealor and Joseph Wyer**, came 191st out of 2734 teams. A really impressive achievement, well done all!

Mr Davison

Music

FESTIVALS & CONCERTS GALORE!

The Music Department has held or participated in nine events this term!

On 8th November, we hosted the Dorchester Young Musician Festival. Students performed in 15 classes throughout the day and were given feedback from our three wonderful adjudicators. In the evening, around 25 students performed in a celebration concert, which also included performances by the Concert Band and Rock & Pop Choir. The standard of performing was exceptionally high and we hope it was a truly inspiring event for both all who took part and all who were lucky enough to come and watch.

On 21st November, two professional singers from Gabrieli Roar visited school for a day of singing workshops. Over the course of the day, they worked with our 6th form performing arts students in a vocal health and technique class and a masterclass with the Thomas Hardy Singers. It was a brilliant and inspiring day!

On 30th November around 60 students took part in a big collaborative project at Poole Lighthouse. Students took part in a large orchestra, symphonic windband, string orchestra and massed choir, performing (amongst other things) Brahms's Academic Festival Overture, Marquez's Conga Del Fuego and Vivaldi's Gloria. The experience of performing at Poole Lighthouse was phenomenal and the audience were very appreciative. We are so grateful to Poole Society of Young Musicians who made the day possible and we hope for more collaborations in the future.



Music



On 3rd December we held our annual Christmas Concert. Most of the music department ensembles performed, which included orchestra, concert band, Rock & Pop Choir, A Cappella group and folk band amongst others. The standard of performance was incredibly high and it was a joy to see the students being so supportive of each other.

Click here to see a summary video of the event:

<https://youtu.be/OTC5JMbPzka>

Mr Trevorrow

IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT, OPPOSITE PAGE:
BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA TRIP; YOUNG
MUSICIAN FESTIVAL; POOLE LIGHTHOUSE; CHRISTMAS
CONCERT; ECHOTOWN RECORDING STUDIO;
ROUTES INTO MUSIC CAREERS CONFERENCE;
EVENSONG AT SHERBORNE ABBEY.

PE



ANOTHER ACTIVE AUTUMN!

It has been a great start to the year in PE, we have completed over 30 fixtures to date, with even more in the calendar in the new year!

Rugby

The 1st XV (see *image top left*) recently won the Dorset and South Wilts 10-a-side tournament at Swanage and Wareham RFC, competing against several schools across the County.

A special mention to **B. Page** and **H. Hannam** who represented Dorset and Wilts RFC, against Gloucester.

Girls' Football

There has been a great turnout to club so far this year. The Year 11 girls had an unlucky loss in the second round against three-time Champions. With fixtures for year 9 and Sixth Form happening in the new year, (see *image top right*).

Boys' Football



A great start to the football season from all years. Year 9 boys have made it to the quarter finals of the County Cup, after two impressive wins, (see *image top left, opposite page*). Year 10 boys had a confident win in the first round.

Badminton

After introducing an after-school badminton club, we saw excellent participation. Sixteen students rose to the challenge at the Area Competition, emerging as champions and securing their place in the County Competition.

Netball

Congratulations to the sixth form team who had their best result ever at the County Tournament, just missing out on a regional spot, (see *image bottom right, opposite page*). The Year 9s won their Area Tournament and progressed onto County, where they placed a respectable 3rd in their pool (see *image top right, opposite page*). They also had a great turnout at their inter-college Christmas competition with Team Napier coming out as champions.



Cross-Country

We have completed 3 fixtures, so far taking over 25 students each time. A special shoutout to **J. Liddicott** (Y9), **P. Jones** (Y9), **E.Kirkpatrick** (Y11) for their performance at the events, (see image above, bottom left).

Sailing

Congratulations to **S. Taibjee** who has been selected for the British Sailing Transition Talent Academy in the iQFOiL.

Miss Leatherland

Fundraising

**COMBAT
STRESS**
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH



CHALLENGE FOR VETERANS' SUPPORT

PSHCE Education Co-ordinator and CCF Contingent Commander, **Mr Matthews**, is currently training for the Marathon Des Sables: Legendary (MdS), due to take place during the Easter holiday of 2026. He is raising funds for the military mental health charity Combat Stress. MdS is a 6-stage ultramarathon in the Moroccan Sahara in temperatures between 40 and 50 degrees celsius and is considered by many as one of the toughest footraces on the planet as participants have to be totally self sufficient during the race, carrying all food and equipment needed for the stages, only water and a communal tent are provided by the organisers.

During October half term Mr Matthews undertook what he termed a 'Minithon Des Sables' as part of his training where he ran 16km on Chesil Beach, 26km on Bournemouth Beach, 52km across the Purbeck hills and 21km around the hills of North Dorset.

Mr Matthews aims to raise £1000 for Combat Stress which supports veterans with ongoing mental health problems sustained as a result of conflict. You can donate to his JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/kevin-matthews>

Mr Matthews

Fundraising



CHILDREN IN NEED - A SHOW TO REMEMBER!

On Friday 14th November, the Drama Department brought the school together for an incredible Children in Need lunchtime concert that will be talked about for weeks! The event featured a dazzling mix of singing and dancing, with performances from beloved musicals such as *Cats*, *Annie*, and *Newsies*, alongside other crowd-pleasers.



The highlight of the show? A cracking performance of Backstreet Boys' "Everybody" that had the audience on their feet and demanding an encore! The energy in the room was electric, and the thunderous applause could be heard echoing through the corridors.

With around 300 students in attendance, the atmosphere was nothing short of spectacular. Thanks to the generosity and enthusiasm of everyone involved, the event raised approximately £125 for this worthy cause. A huge thank you to all the talented performers and supportive audience members who made this possible!

Miss Samways



STEM



RACE CAR DESIGN WINS JUDGES' CHOICE AWARD

Perry Allen, Peter Wyer, Ruby Pinto, Grace Ward, and Clerise Fouché participated in the Professional Class competition for STEM racing at the Southwest Regional Finals.

The competition required the students to design and build a race car, create detailed engineering and design portfolios, and set up a pit display. They then presented their work, which was carefully evaluated by a panel of expert judges.

Despite facing strong competition, the team excelled and earned the prestigious Judges' Choice Award. Congratulations to all the racers on their outstanding achievement!

Mr Davis

STEM



CEFAS: EXPLORING LABORATORY CAREERS LOCALLY

Sixth form students recently visited one of the largest employers of STEM professionals in Dorset, the Centre for Freshwater and Aquatic Science in Weymouth. Students were encouraged to consider careers in government laboratories in a series of talks outlining career paths into CEFAS, they were also able to chat with scientists about their cutting-edge scientific research and given a tour of the CEFAS laboratories.

Students were universally impressed with the visit, some commenting that they hadn't realised how nice laboratories could be and that they could really see themselves working there in the future!

Mr Lewis

THS Award



AUTUMN TERM UPDATE

The autumn term has been filled with hands-on learning, personal growth, and exciting new experiences.

YEAR 10: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Our Year 10 students have started their Personal Development unit. They also took on a series of physical and mental challenges at the Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre, from paddleboarding and climbing to archery. They also earned the British Canoeing Paddlesport Start Award.

YEAR 11: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Year 11 students have been concentrating on their Vocational unit designed to equip them with essential skills for life after school. They have created their own CVs, explored interview techniques, and taken part in mock interview role-play sessions

In Design Technology, they have been making their own fabric key fobs. Additionally, students successfully completed a first aid course and have been awarded their First Aid Certificate

Mr Oliphant & Mrs Ridout

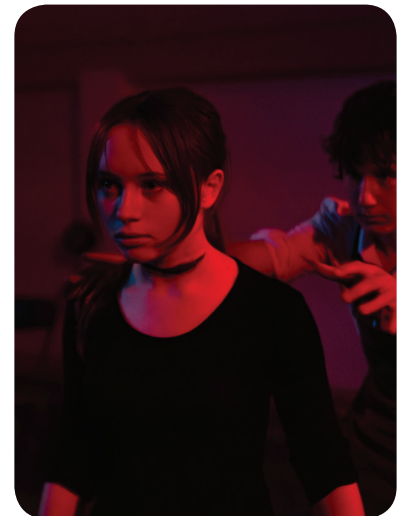
Theatre Studies



THE LEATHER APRON

On November 27th & 28th A-Level Theatre Studies students performed their version of The Leather Apron. This was a devised production based on the stories of Jack the Ripper and his canonical five murders.

Students worked with a prosthetics specialist to create gore and horror effects, as well as dramatised the murders through dance and movement. The department were incredibly proud of the brave performances and would like to thank the students for their creativity and dedication in creating this work.



Miss Higgins
Images courtesy of Ben Greening

Food & Nutrition



ROTARY YOUNG CHEF COMPETITION

On Friday 28 November, 5 students took part in the in-School heat for the Rotary Club's Young Chef Competition. The task was to create a 2-course meal in 2 hours using locally sourced ingredients. **Scarlett Daly, Ellen Brown, Emma Marques-Brown, Izzy Sutherland** and **Jenny Hulbert** created some fabulous dishes.

The Head chef from Al Molo, Guiseppe, along with his sous chef, Kyle, were very impressed with the standard and quality of the dishes served. John Adams, from the Casterbridge Rotary Club, also commented that the standard was particularly high this year.

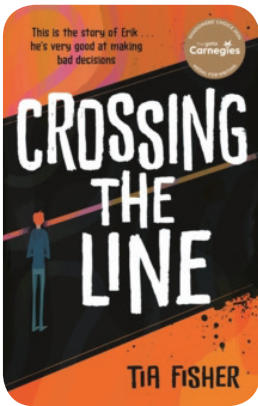
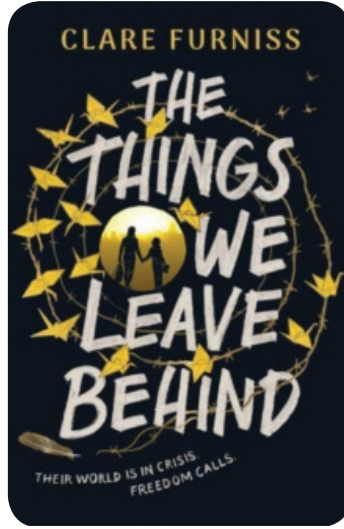
Ellen Brown was confirmed as the winner, although the scores were incredibly close!

She served homemade tagliatelle with a vegetarian carbonara sauce, alongside profiteroles with pistachio cream. She will now go forward to the next round and will be coached by the Al Molo team.

We wish her the best of luck in the competition.

Mrs Godwin

Library



DORCHESTER LITERARY FESTIVAL IN SCHOOL

The school organised and hosted the third school programme for the Dorchester Literary Festival which ran over four days in October. There are author events for students from KS1 to KS4 involving sixteen schools across Wessex MAT and beyond. We welcomed six authors during the festival who ran events at THS and other Trust schools.

Students in year 9 attended an event by critically acclaimed young adult author **Clare Furniss**, *see image top right*. She spoke about dystopian fiction and her novel 'The Things We Leave Behind' that imagines London as the epicentre of a refugee crisis, a devastating story which speaks to the present political moment.

In Year 10, students heard from

Tia Fisher, *see image top left*, who talked about her verse novel 'Crossing the Line' winner of the Yoto Carnegie Shadower's Choice Award. Written in stunning verse, this is a poignant story about seeking safety and asking for help in times of crisis.

The festival reaches nearly 3,500 students from years 1-10 and is free for every student to attend. We also offer book sales so that students are able to have a copy of the book signed by the author and this year we presold over 800 books which was brilliant.

Reading is such an important life skill and hosting in-person author visits such as these has a huge benefit for our students. We extend our thanks to Wessex MAT for sponsoring this programme.

Mrs Stevens

Governors' Update

We have had one full governing body meeting this term with another a few days before the end of term. Our focus in September was the external exam results, which continue to be very strong with some quite outstanding individual performances. Though there are always areas to improve, our students do really very well.

Governors visited the areas they are responsible for, including Special Educational Needs, Safeguarding, English, Sixth Form, Technology and Finance. The focus has been looking at the follow-up to our good Ofsted report.

I visit the school regularly and I am always extremely encouraged to see how engaged both students and staff are, an impressive learning environment.

I also attended the Remembrance Ceremony at 11am on 11th November outside the school's memorial gates. It is hugely moving to see our community of 2,500 stand in silence to honour the fallen from our school.

One governor attended the Sixth Form Open Evening as a parent and commented on the infectious enthusiasm of teachers and students presenting their A level subjects. It was a great showcase for our sixth form experience.

Another governor went to the recent Christmas Concert. She commented, "I loved the range of musicians groups and the students were clearly very talented AND having a wonderful time!" Music is one of the great strengths of the school.

Mr Moore, Chair of Governors

Communication & Support

Tips for effective communication

Contact the tutor first.

For most academic and general/social concerns, the child's tutor should be your first point of contact. Email addresses follow the format of last name and then initial, no space, e.g.

jbloggs@ths.wessex.ac

Please be clear, concise and respectful.

Respect staff's working hours:

Parents should be mindful of teachers' workload and should not expect a response to emails immediately. Many staff are part-time, and teachers are not expected to respond to emails outside of the usual working day.

Safeguarding & Guidance Leaders

Year 9 Mrs Kelly
ckelly@ths.wessex.ac

Year 10 Miss Gosling
jgosling@ths.wessex.ac

Year 10 Mrs Morgan
cmorgan@ths.wessex.ac

***If your concern is urgent,
please contact the school office:***

**Monday - Friday
8:30am - 4:30pm**

admin@ths.wessex.ac
01305 266064

Report an absence from 8.40am:

<https://www.ths.wessex.ac/for-parents/report-an-absence>

- **Family support and advice line** - 01305 228558
<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/family-help-in-dorset>
- **Samaritans** (116 123) -
Free, 24/7 support line for anyone struggling
- **Shout Crisis Text Line** - Text "SHOUT" to 85258 (24/7)
- **YoungMinds Parents Helpline** (0808 802 5544) -
For advice on supporting your child
- **Connection** - Dorset's 24/7 Mental Health Helpline
- **Call 0800 652 0190** (free, open to all ages) -
This NHS service offers round-the-clock support for anyone in Dorset experiencing a mental health crisis, including parents concerned about their children

Mrs Noble

CCF



THS REMEMBERS

THS paid their respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country during both world wars, and in conflicts since 1945, in the recent Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day parades. Commenting on the CCF during the Dorchester Remembrance Sunday parade, Mrs Miller said the CCF ‘were absolutely fantastic ambassadors for the school. Very professional and mature they demonstrated our values of respect, responsibility and resilience beautifully.’ Lord Lieutenants Cadet for Dorset, SSM Jessica Rose, joined HM Lord Lieutenant of Dorset on Armistice Day as her first official act in post.

Reflecting upon this season of remembrance, Mr Rutherford said, “The school remembrance service highlights so much of what makes Hardyes a special place; the respectfulness and maturity of its students, its deep links with the town and community of Dorchester and the immeasurable value offered by our cadets. Their professionalism and maturity elevates the service to something truly affecting, and I know how much they inspire other students and staff.”

Maj Matthews
Image Ms Brammer

CCF



CCF COMMITMENT REWARDED

THS CCF staff were recognised for their outstanding commitment to the Cadet Forces with a Lord Lieutenants Certificate of Meritorious Service recently. CCF Adjutant, Capt Gillian Copson, and Officer Commanding the RAF Section, Flt Lt Alex May, were both recognised by HM Lord Lieutenant of Dorset, Mr Michael Dooley, for their outstanding commitment to the Cadet Forces over the past 19 years. Former THS CCF cadet Flight Sergeant William Christian, who was Lord Lt Cadet for Dorset

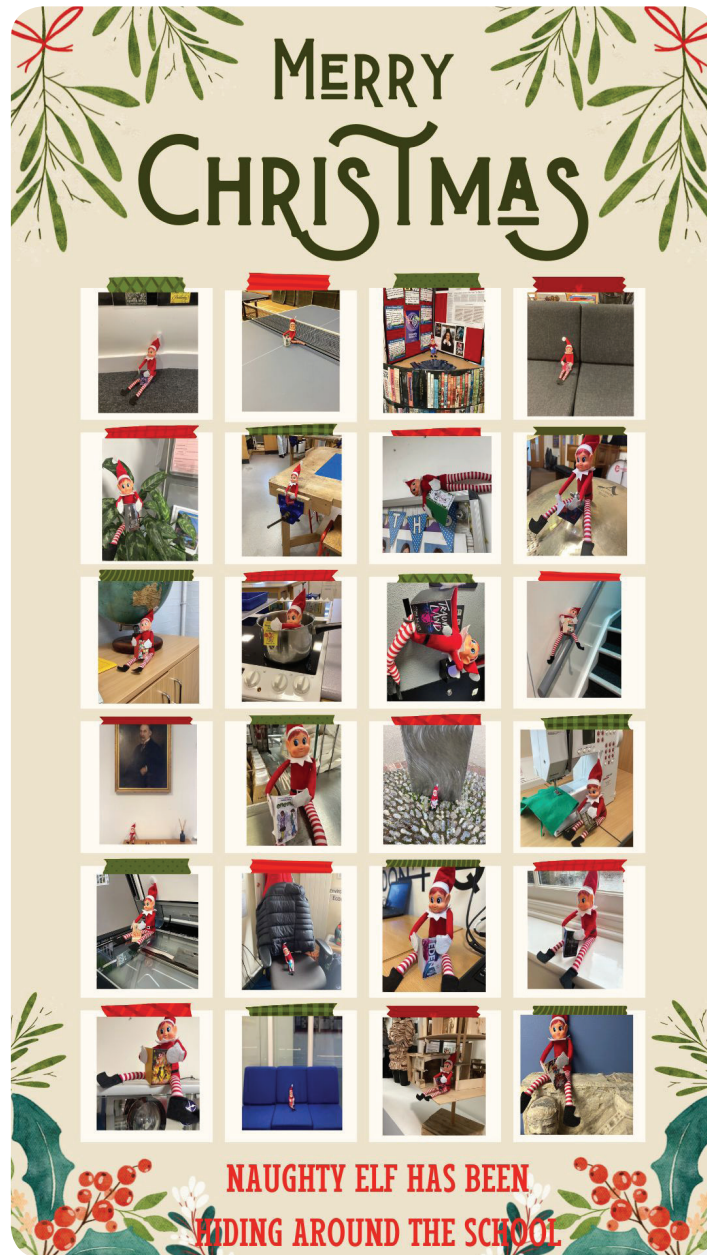
last year, spoke to the new Lord Lt Cadets about what he had learnt from the role, and current senior CCF Cadet WO2 (Squadron Sergeant Major) Jessica Rose (Y13) was appointed as CCF Lord Lt Cadet for Dorset for forthcoming year. Lord Lt Cadet is a significant honour and appointment for a member of the cadet forces with Lord Lt Cadets acting as aide-de-camp to HM Lord Lt on official military and civil events including royal visits to the Dorset area.



SGT BESWARICK ON BOARD!

Sgt Beswarick has successfully passed her basic induction course and has been appointed as a substantive Sergeant Cadet Forces Adult Volunteer. Sgt Beswarick endured freezing conditions on Dartmoor for two consecutive weekends to pass this essential training course.

Maj Matthews



ELF GRAPHIC COURTESY OF MRS STEVENS;
ELF PHOTOS TAKEN BY STUDENTS.



Dates

SPRING TERM

open for staff training only:

first day of term:

half-term:

last day of term:

Monday 5th January

Tuesday 6th January

Monday 16th February - Friday 20th February

Friday 27th March

