

Coombeshead Academy Newsletter



Autumn Term 2 - December 2025

Dear families,

As we come to the end of a busy and inspiring autumn term, I want to take a moment to reflect on the warmth, hard work, and spirit that make Coombeshead Academy such a special community—especially at this festive time of year. Our students continue to amaze us with their dedication, kindness, and enthusiasm, and it has been a joy to see them grow, achieve, and support one another over these past months.

The run-up to Christmas has been particularly magical this year. We have enjoyed a wonderful programme of events that has truly showcased the creativity and talent within our school. The school pantomime *Aladdin* brought laughter and joy to audiences, our Christmas Concert and Create Christmas show highlighted exceptional musical and artistic talent, and the Christmas Fayre was a fantastic celebration for students and staff. These events not only demonstrated the remarkable abilities of our students but also raised funds for our dedicated charity, Devon Air Ambulance. In addition, our Christmas-themed donations for the HITS foodbank have been overwhelming—together, we have created a generous collection of hampers to support local families in need. A huge thank you to everyone involved in organising, performing, donating, and supporting these spectacular events.

Our year 11 students deserve particular recognition. Their commitment to Lesson 6, their determination in preparing for their PPE exams, and the maturity they have shown in approaching their studies have been exemplary. They are setting themselves up for a successful year ahead, and we are incredibly proud of the effort and focus they have demonstrated.

At the other end of the school, our wonderful year 7s have brought so much hope and excitement into our corridors. They have thrown themselves into secondary school life with positivity and curiosity, settling in beautifully and

embracing every opportunity. Their energy is a true reminder of what makes this community so vibrant.

Throughout this newsletter, you will find stories and celebrations that highlight just how fantastic our students are—across all year groups and in so many different areas. I encourage you to take some time to enjoy these moments of pride; they reflect the hard work, talent, and character of our young people.

Looking ahead to the spring term, we will be placing a strong focus on making a fast start to every day and every lesson. This means punctuality, wearing full uniform—including blazers—with pride, and following routines during morning line-ups. These expectations are in place to support a calm, positive, and purposeful beginning to our learning, and we appreciate your support in reinforcing them. We are also very excited to be welcoming around 40 Chinese students to Coombeshead from 2–6 February 2026. This is a wonderful opportunity for cultural exchange, and we are looking for buddies in Years 8, 9, and 10 who would like to support our visitors during their time with us. We hope to make this a fantastic experience for the students joining us, while also giving our own young people a chance to learn more about Chinese culture and education.

Thank you for your continued support throughout this term—it means so much and helps our students to thrive. I wish you all a peaceful, joyful Christmas and a very happy New Year. We look forward to seeing everyone refreshed and ready for another successful term in January.

Best wishes

Mrs Helen Coulson
Headteacher

SAFEGUARDING

- **Front Door Team (previously MASH)** - Devon County Council Safeguarding Hub. If you are worried about a child or young person in Devon and want to speak to someone, or if you are a child or young person worried about your own safety - 0345 155 1071
- mashsecure@devon.gov.uk
- Outside of office hours contact Emergency Duty Team - 0845 6000 388
- **Childline** - 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
- **KOOTH** - The Kooth team provide free, safe and anonymous online support and counselling. The whole team are made up of friendly and experienced individuals who want to help. www.kooth.com
- **SHOUT/ Crisis Text Line** - Shout is the UK's first 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help. Free text 85258
- **Police** - 999 (emergency)/101
- **Chat Health** - Young people aged 11-19 can text a school nurse for confidential advice and support. Text 07520 631722 for advice on things like relationships, bullying, mental health, self-harm, drugs/alcohol.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING AT CHRISTMAS

The lead up to Christmas is a fun and exciting time, but for some young people it can be a very difficult time, and leave them feeling anxious, lonely or stressed. Young Minds is the UK's leading charity fighting for children and young people's mental health. Please follow the link below to find out more about the work that Young Minds does and the support it can offer to young people and their families.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Online Safety Information for the Christmas holidays

As we approach Christmas, more children will be in receipt of digital devices than ever before. Whilst we acknowledge the happiness, fun and entertainment that they can bring, they can also pose a number of dangers too.

Please find below, details of resources that will help families to encourage the safer use of digital devices over the Christmas period.

Family Agreement

Over the holidays, some children will want to spend the maximum amount of time online and playing games; this can lead to conflict. You may want to establish the expectations and set up a family agreement template. You may wish to use one such as the example from Childnet:

<https://www.childnet.com/resources/family-agreement>

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING AT CHRISTMAS

Advice by age

Some children may ask to be on certain apps. Many have age guidelines (0-5, 6-10, 11-13 and 14+). The following website has some useful information:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/>

Parental Controls

We are aware that sometimes ensuring that children stay safe can be a challenge. As parents you may want to follow these two simple steps to keeping your children safe online:

1. Look up the device on YouTube by using a simple 'how-to' query, e.g. 'how to restrict in-app purchases on Playstation 4'.
2. Look at the following site for help in setting up restrictions on devices:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/>

Gaming

Many children will want to use their break for gaming. This can cause challenges. You may wish to look at the following site for guidance:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/gaming/>

Once again, Internet Matters is a useful source of information for parents:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/online-gaming-advice/>

YouTube

There is a YouTube app or site for children (<13) and may be of use for primary aged children.

App: <https://youtube.com/kids/>

Web: <https://www.youtubekids.com/>

Social Media Advice

Once again, Internet Matters has a really useful hub for parents, it explains both the risks and the benefits:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/social-media-advice-hub/>

Citizens Advice

Simple ways to enjoy the festive season without overspending

Christmas can be a great time to relax and spend time with family, but it often comes with extra costs and pressure to spend more than we'd like. With household budgets already stretched, a bit of planning can make a real difference.

1. Set a Realistic Budget

Work out what you can comfortably afford to spend and stick to it. It's easy for small extras to add up, so keep a list of what you need — and what you don't. If you can, set aside a small amount each week to spread the cost.

2. Keep Gifts Simple

Children often remember the fun and attention more than what's under the tree. Low-cost or homemade gifts, or pooling together for a "Secret Santa" within the family, can keep things fair and affordable for everyone.

3. Plan Food Carefully

Christmas dinner doesn't need to be over the top. Planning meals in advance helps avoid waste, and sharing the cooking with friends or relatives can save both time and money.

4. Make the Most of What's Local

There are plenty of free or low-cost events in Teignbridge over the festive period — from school fairs to community activities. These can be a great way to get into the Christmas spirit without spending much.

5. Don't Feel Pressured

It's fine to say no to things that stretch your budget. A walk to see the lights, a film night at home, or a board game with family can make just as good memories as anything that costs money.

Need a Bit of Advice?

If you're worried about money or would like some support with budgeting, benefits, or local services, the Citizens Advice Schools Project can help. You can speak to your school for a direct referral.

Do you have cost of living worries?

Would you like to know what help is available to you?

Get free, confidential and impartial advice on Benefits & Universal Credit; Debt & Money worries; Housing & Rent issues; Utility bills, Work & Employment rights; Family matters; Immigration & more.

Contact the school office or ask any member of school staff to refer you to the service. You don't need to explain why – just let them know you're interested.

Let us help you find a way forward.



Teignbridge

EDUCATION
SOUTH WEST

HITS FOODBANK COLLECTION

Mrs Goldsworthy and Mrs Farleigh coordinated a whole-school Christmas hamper collection. Each tutor group, from year 7 through to the Sixth Form, was provided with a cardboard crate to decorate and fill with food items for donation to the local food-bank, HITS. This valued charity supports individuals and families in need across Teign-bridge, including some of our own students.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to the appeal. Your generous donations have been warmly received by HITS. Well done, Coombeshead, for demonstrating such kindness, generosity, and community spirit—it is truly appreciated.

Ther hampers, gathered with the assistance of several of our Year 9 diversity ambassadors, reflect the values of inclusivity and community cohesion that we proudly promote within our school.

A big thank you to everyone who contributed to the Christmas hampers appeal in school. Your kind donations have been gratefully received by HITS foodbank - this valued charity supports people in need across Teignbridge, including some of our students and their families.

Well done Coombeshead for demonstrating such generosity and community spirit, it is truly appreciated. Congratulations to the winning tutor groups for the competition:

7 CKI
8 BOU
9 AST

10 BPA
11 LRI-TWI



SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD

On Friday 24 October, students and staff showed their support for the charity 'Show Racism the Red Card' by wearing something red.

Some Diversity ambassadors also organised a fundraising cake sale and volleyball game (staff vs students) at break times, which proved very popular and helped raise over £100.

The day was filled with the powerful message that our school community stands together against racism and all forms of discrimination. It is about raising awareness, showing solidarity and educating ourselves. In Life skills lessons earlier this term, students took part in thoughtful discussions to deepen their understanding of what racism is, how it can affect others, and why it is everyone's responsibility to challenge it. Being anti-racist means more than simply not being racist. It means speaking up, showing empathy and taking action to ensure that everyone feels valued and included.

* Show Racism the Red Card is the UK's leading anti-racism education charity. Founded in 1996, the organisation uses the high-profile status of footballers and other athletes to help tackle racism through education.

WEAR RED DAY

**FRIDAY 24 OCTOBER
COOMBESHEAD ACADEMY**

**STAND TOGETHER
AGAINST RACISM**



**DONATIONS WELCOME FOR THE CHARITY
SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD**

www.theredcard.org

SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD



REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

On Tuesday 11 November, all Coombeshead Academy staff and students gathered for our annual service of remembrance. The service was led by Mrs Coulson who spoke of the sacrifice made by others during times of military conflict. Our guests were Petty Officer and Mrs Brian Williamson. Brian is a former Coombeshead student who is coming up to having served 24 years in the Royal Navy. He spoke about the opportunities and experiences he has enjoyed during his service as well the significance and importance of Remembrance Day for serving personnel and veterans. The whole school fell silent for 2 minutes. We were accompanied on the trumpet by Curriculum Team Leader for Performing Arts, Andy Tyner. The students were an absolute credit throughout. A big thank you to all of you who bought and wore poppies and another thank you to our cadets who came in uniform today.



MOCK INTERVIEWS - YEAR 11

"Every student brought something unique to the table and offered thoughtful, varied answers that genuinely gave me hope for the next generation. Their confidence, insight, and individuality shone through in every interview. It was inspiring to see such maturity and potential in them all. With young people like this coming through, the future is definitely in safe hands." Holly Meacock, Centek Group

Year 11 students took an important step toward their future this week as they took part in a Mock Interview Event designed to help them develop essential life and career skills. The event brought together a diverse group of employers and professionals who volunteered their time to support the students.

Representatives from a wide range of industries, including law, HR, IT, mining, education, and planning consultancy conducted one-to-one interviews with students, offering them a realistic interview experience and personalised feedback. The aim of the event was to give students the chance to practise key communication and presentation skills in a supportive, real-world environment. For many, it was their first experience of a formal interview.

Students spoke positively about the opportunity, with many reporting increased confidence and a better understanding of how to present themselves professionally. Employers praised the students' enthusiasm and highlighted how valuable experiences like this can be in preparing young people for life beyond school.

The school extends its sincere thanks to all the volunteers who contributed their expertise and time to make the event a success. Their support plays a vital role in helping students broaden their horizons and prepare for their next steps.



CAREERS FAIR AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Students were given the opportunity to broaden their horizons as they attended a vibrant Career & Higher Education Fair, designed to introduce them to the wide range of options available beyond school.

The fair brought together a diverse mix of employers, universities, training providers and industry professionals, all offering students the chance to ask questions, gather information, and explore different pathways. These meaningful encounters are a vital part of preparing young people for life after school, helping them develop confidence, ambition, and a clearer sense of direction.

The event was widely regarded as a success, offering students a valuable chance to connect with experts, discover new interests, and begin planning their next steps. It forms a key part of the school's commitment to personal development and its ongoing work to empower students to make informed, confident choices about their futures.



CAREERS FAIR AND HIGHER EDUCATION



YEAR 11 GCSE HISTORY TRIP TO BUCKLAND ABBEY

Year 11 GCSE History students recently enjoyed a highly successful educational visit to Buckland Abbey. The trip provided an excellent opportunity to revise core GCSE content in a real historical setting, supporting classroom learning while also offering valuable cultural enrichment. Students explored the Abbey's monastic origins, its Tudor transformation, and its links to Sir Francis Drake, bringing key topics to life. They also took part in an engaging talk led by Buckland Abbey staff. Students were a credit to the school, demonstrating excellent behaviour throughout the day. We are very grateful to the Buckland Abbey team, especially Jon, and students particularly enjoyed the beautiful Christmas decorations in the Great Barn.



YEAR 11 GCSE HISTORY TRIP TO BUCKLAND ABBEY



HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION'S GREATE DEBATE

Two of our talented historians, Cora and Bea, represented Coombeshead Academy at the regional heats of the Historical Association's Great Debate – and delivered outstanding speeches. Competing against older Sixth Form students from local grammar schools, both impressed the judges with their confidence, clarity and thoughtful historical analysis. They spoke with real maturity and held their own in a very high-level field. Cora and Bea thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and the event provided an excellent reconnaissance opportunity as we prepare to launch our own Trust-wide Great Debate heats next year. We are incredibly proud of them both.



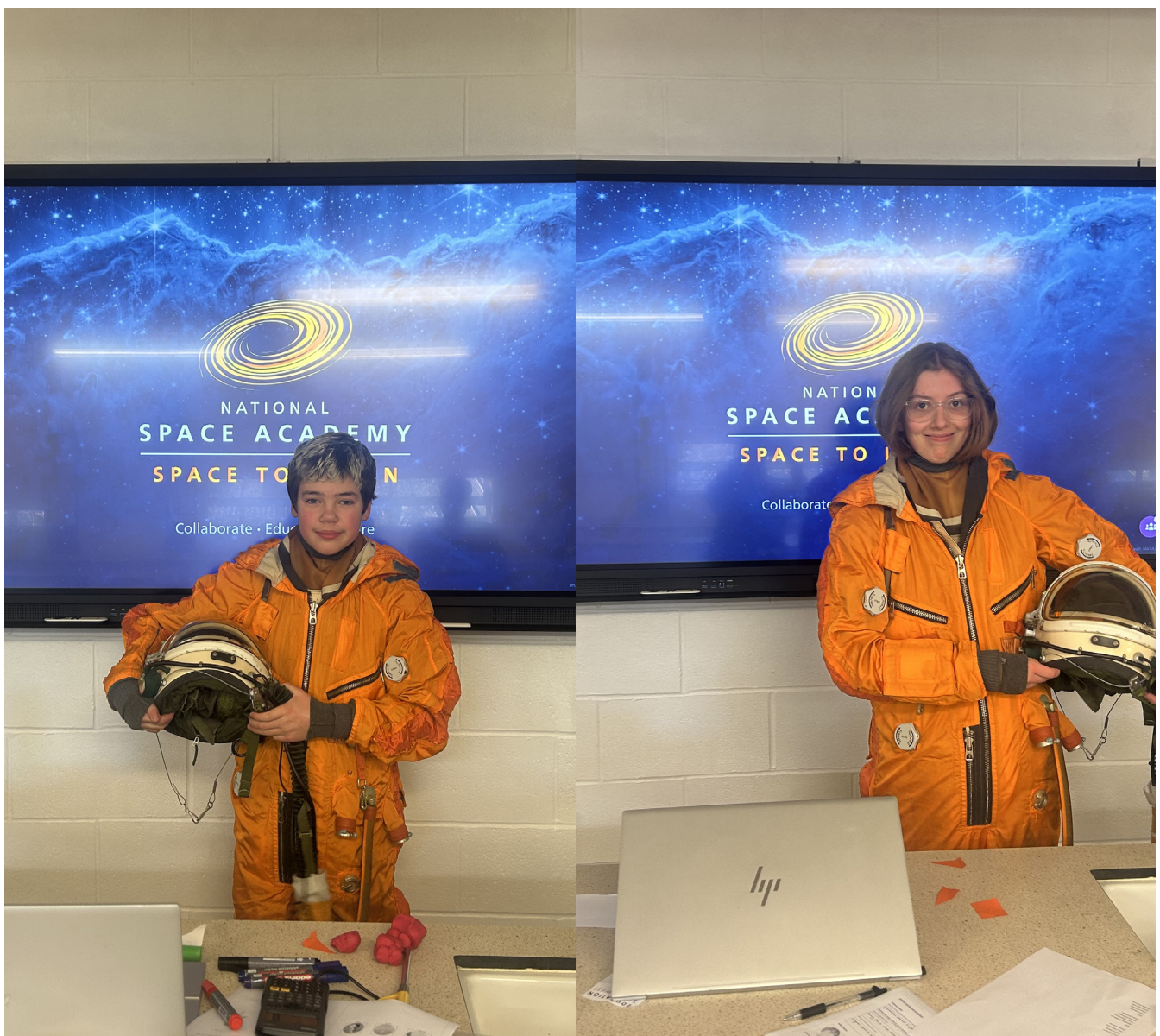
ARTEMIS AND BEYOND: A SPACE SCIENCE MASTERCLASS

On Thursday, 20th November, selected Year 8 and Year 9 students had the exciting opportunity to take part in a Science Space Masterclass delivered by an expert from the National Space Agency.

The session, titled Artemis and Beyond, was packed with hands-on practical experiments and interactive models exploring space science and the incredible possibilities within the UK space industry.

Closely linked to the curriculum, this enriching experience allowed students to deepen their understanding of space technology and its real-world applications. A standout moment was the chance to try on a genuine space suit and learn how it protects astronauts in the harsh environment of space.

The sessions were inspiring and left students with a greater appreciation of the science and innovation shaping our future in space exploration.



WELCOME TO OUR STUDENT LIBRARIAN VOLUNTEERS

Over 25 students, from all year groups, have volunteered as Student Librarians this term. They have attended weekly training sessions and given up their breaktimes to assist our new Librarian, Mrs Crawford in the library. As well as shelving books and keeping the library tidy, they have been recommending books to fellow students, helping to create displays and learning about the Dewey Decimal system. This week they have been making the library sparkle for Christmas.



ALADDIN - BTEC PERFORMING ARTS PANTO

On Tuesday 2nd December, our BTEC Performing Arts group performed their production on the Pantomime, Aladdin. Throughout the whole day, the group performed the Pantomime three times. These included a morning and afternoon performance to a theatre full of local primary school pupils, with over 350 primary school pupils enjoying the production.

The pupils finished the day with an evening performance to a packed out Bushell Theatre, with friends and family coming along to support all of their hard work. The performances were all very well received and for the 3rd year running, we involved our Year 10 Drama group to help support with the production.



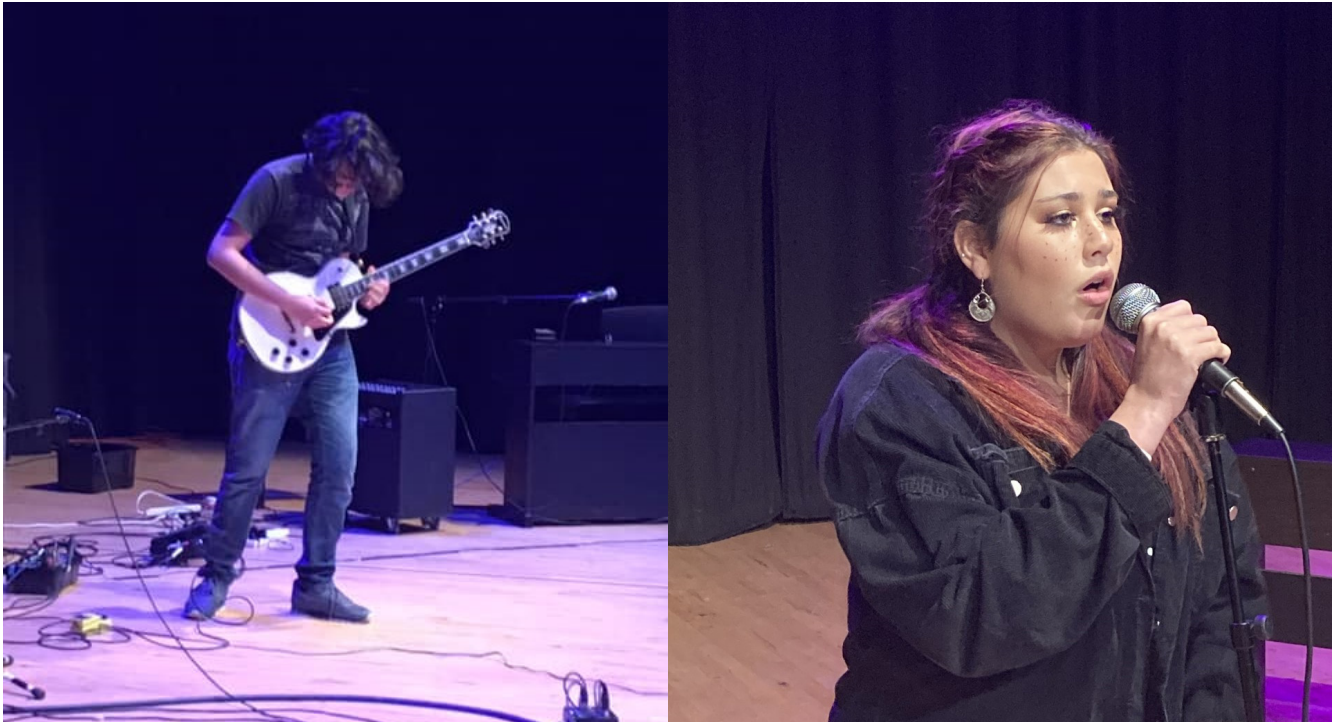
CHRISTMAS CONCERT

A wonderful evening of performances and students to be very proud of!

On Wednesday 10th December, we held our Christmas Concert in the Bushell Theatre. We listened to performances from the Bushell Youth Community Orchestra, Folk Group, Soul Band, Music Theatre Group and various student led groups and solos. The students were very well received and the feedback we received from members of the audience was excellent.

A big thank you to all of the incredibly talented students involved.

Curriculum Team Leader of Performing Arts Andy Tyner said, "It's amazing to see the wealth and depth of musical talent at Coombeshead Academy. The students are full of confidence and have a great enthusiasm to display their musical abilities at school events. The support we receive from the pupils and parents is great and this helps us to give them as many opportunities as we can to perform."



THE WOMAN IN BLACK AT THE THEATRE ROYAL, PLYMOUTH

On Thursday 6th November, we took our Year 11 Drama pupils to an evening performance of The Woman in Black. This is part of the pupil's GCSE Drama course.

The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the eerie experience of the production and the show itself didn't disappoint, with some excellent acting and genuinely scary moments throughout.

GCSE MUSIC SET WORKS CONCERT WITH THE BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Through Devon Music Education Hub, we were invited to attend a GCSE Music Set Works concert at Plympton Academy and we took our Year 10 cohort of GCSE Musicians.

The event was presented by leading conductor and music educator, Patrick Bailey. We listened to performances of GCSE Music set works and Patrick gave an insightful and important discussion on each piece of music.

The aim of the concert was for our pupils to experience an in-depth discussion over the pieces of music they have to analyse and understand for their GCSE Music course. They thoroughly enjoyed the experience and were taken aback by the style and technique shown from the performers and the informative and laidback approach from Patrick Bailey.

Some of the comments made by our pupils included:
Learning the historical context as well as listening to the music helped to develop my musical knowledge – Harrison S

Really interesting to hear different styles of music that I am not that familiar with – Molly N



CREATE WINTER SHOW

What an amazing Create Winter Show! The level of talent, determination and sheer hard work and dedication from our students is inspirational!

Well done to all and a huge thank you to the Create team for supporting and developing our students.

Thank you to everyone who visited the show.



KS3 TEXTILES CLUB - A BOBBIN OF ROBINS

Our KS3 Textiles Club has been buzzing with creativity as students stitched their way to something truly special—a Bobbin of Robins! For many, this was their very first time using a sewing machine, but thanks to our dedicated Textiles room, they've mastered skills from threading and setting up machines to experimenting with decorative stitches.

The journey didn't stop there—students explored machine embroidery to add unique flair to their creations and even picked up the art of crochet as an extra bonus! Each robin is a one-of-a-kind masterpiece, bursting with personality and creativity. We're sure you'll agree, they've done a fantastic job bringing these festive friends to life!



KS3 CHRISTMAS FAYRE - RAISED £ £792.67!

With 2025 almost wrapped up it was time for the Coombeshead Christmas Fayre! Students of Year 7 and Year 8 have spent many months planning, organising, crafting and decorating a host of different gifts, sweet treats and games that students can participate in during the event. As always the students were an absolute credit and went above and beyond with the creation of their stalls. To name a few we had food and drink stalls such as cakes, cookies, biscuits treats and even a sandwich bar! We had fizzy drinks that were rather popular!

We had games aplenty such as sprout or chocolates, guess the name of the reindeer and whack a Santa!

And we also had a used book stall which sold books for as little as 10p. Again instilling the love of reading at Coombeshead.

It was an absolute pleasure to see the students come together and work in collaboration to pull off an amazing event. And to make it even better the grand total was a new record for the Christmas Fayre! A total of £792.67 was raised!!

Thank you for all the stall makers for all your hard work. Thank you to the students who bought so generously.



YEAR 8 FOOTBALL TEAM

The Coombeshead Year 8 team played Paignton in the second round of the National cup and managed to win 3-2 sending themselves into the next round. It was a cracking win. Well done to all involved!



The Coombeshead Year 8 team before their National cup football game against Torquay Academy on Friday. Well done to all involved.



WHY WE USE SLANT TO HELP SECURE ATTENTION

At Coombeshead Academy, we want every minute in the classroom to count. A calm, attentive start means students hear instructions the first time, understand what's expected, and can focus on learning without distractions. To make that happen consistently across subjects and rooms, we teach a simple routine called SLANT. It's part of our 'Big 5' teaching priorities for creating positive, purposeful classrooms.

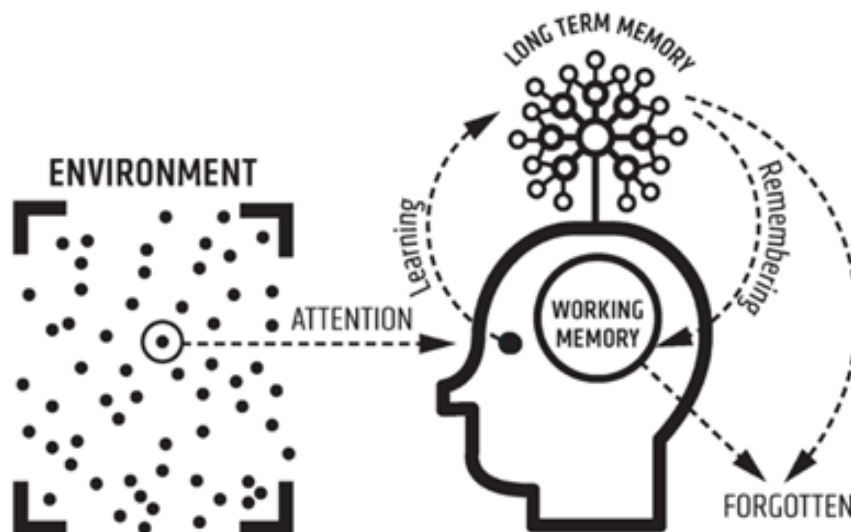
What is SLANT?

SLANT is a short, memorable routine students adopt whenever the teacher needs the whole class's attention:

- S – Sit up straight
- L – Listen
- A – Arms folded
- N – Nothing in hands
- T – Track the teacher (eyes on the person speaking)

You'll often hear the teacher use our silent signal and countdown: "3... 2... 1... SLANT." In that moment, all students move into the SLANT position and the room becomes quiet so instructions can be given clearly and efficiently.

Why it matters



- Research on how the brain works (see image above) shows that we learn what we pay attention to. When the whole class is attentive, explanations are clearer and directions are understood, which reduces repetition and wasted time.
- Visible, shared expectations. SLANT gives students a concrete, age-appropriate way to show "I am ready to learn," and it helps teachers check—at a glance—that everyone is with them before moving on.
- Consistency across lessons. Because all staff use the same signal and routine, students experience the same calm start and attention cue in every classroom.

WHY WE USE SLANT TO HELP SECURE ATTENTION

A successful trial with Year 7

Across the Autumn term, Year 7 classes have been introduced to “3–2–1, SLANT” as their standard attention routine. Staff have reported smoother transitions, quicker settling at the start of explanations, and more confident whole-class listening—especially during instructions, reading aloud, and checking understanding.

Rolling out to Years 8–10 from January 2026

Building on Year 7’s positive start, we will extend SLANT to Years 8–10 from January 2026. Teachers will use the same silent signal and countdown, and students will practise the routine so it becomes second nature. This keeps the experience consistent for every class and ensures attention is secured quickly before instructions, explanations, or reading. We will be training all students in this routine in the New Year.

How parents and carers can help

- Ask your child to explain SLANT and why we use it. If they can teach it back, they’re more likely to remember it in the moment.
- Reinforce the idea of “attention first.” Encourage pausing, listening, and eye contact at home when you give important information—mirroring the purpose of SLANT in a family context.
- Praise the habit. A quick “I’m impressed by how you listened the first time” builds the same positive norms we promote in school.

FAQs

Is SLANT only about behaviour?

It’s primarily about learning: securing whole-class attention allows teachers to give clear, concise explanations and check understanding without interruptions. The routine is short, respectful, and designed to support positive classroom climates.

Will students sit in SLANT for long periods?

No. SLANT is used briefly to gain attention before an instruction or explanation. Teachers are mindful of lesson flow and only use SLANT for as long as it takes to ensure everyone is ready.

What if a student forgets?

We reteach and practise the routine—just like any other learning habit—so it becomes automatic and fair for everyone.

Thank you for your continued support. Together we’re helping every student learn in calm, focused classrooms.