

Coombeshead Academy

Newsletter - April 2025



Dear families,

The academic year is rushing by and we are already nearly at Easter. Our Year 7 cohort are well and truly settled in and we are now making plans and holding transition activities for our new Year 7 groups starting in September 2025. We are pleased that our new Year 7 cohort is full and we hope that is a reflection of our ongoing improvements in GCSE and A level outcomes, our high-quality teaching, supportive pastoral staff and our ever-developing inclusive approach to our students and their families.

For Year 11 and Year 13 this is a very important and busy time. Students PPE (mock exam) outcomes are the highest we have ever had and we are expecting our best results ever! I am very aware as a Year 11 Biology teacher, Headteacher and a mum of two teenagers who have just been through GCSEs and one about to sit A levels, the worry, stress and anxiety exams can cause for students and their families. My advice for parents in supporting revision is – ensure they have a plan, make revision sessions little and often and do your best to encourage them to stick to it. They need down time, lots of sleep and some small rewards/nice activities to look forward to, to break it up. The Easter holidays is a key time to get a substantial amount of revision in. Please contact your child's teacher, Mr Stevenson or Mr Balsdon if you have any key questions about revision or exams in the coming weeks.

It's incredibly important that students, families and staff feel a sense of belonging at Coombeshead and we are always working on developing the "Be nice" section of The Coombeshead Way. This term we ran a project with a small group of Year 8 boys who had been struggling with behaviour and attitude towards school and learning. We started with a core group of five students who were identified as most in need of additional support. Rather than simply imposing consequences, we invested time in truly listening to their concerns, offering consistent positive reinforcement, and emphasising how much they mattered at Coombeshead Academy. To help them grow, we introduced a weekly social skills programme and targeted literacy sessions, all guided by our talented learning coaches. This holistic approach led to significant improvements in behaviour, increased engagement in lessons, and enhanced attendance. The success of the programme sparked interest from other students, prompting the expansion of the initiative. Inspired by its success, we are planning to launch similar interventions for Year 7 students.

As ever we have had a jam-packed term with exciting enrichment and extracurricular events some of which have been highlighted in this newsletter. As I am writing this, I have just been emailed to say we have, again, won awards in the national "Show racism the red card" initiative. Izzy S and Holly J have won an award in the "All Ages Kickers Music" Category and Eloise T has won an award in the "Year 7-9 Artwork" Category. Well done to all who entered, but especially our prize-winners!

Other highlights include our student's appearance on "Spotlight" to talk about their involvement in the new tree mural on display in Newton Abbot. Our student leaders did an amazing job representing Coombeshead at a recent student South West Leadership Conference. There have been some fantastic sporting events and fixtures and our Duke of Edinburgh groups have been completing expeditions on the moors. The ski trip to Austria had a fantastic time and Year 8s had a great day at Coombeshead's own "Meet the employer" event.

Many thanks for your ongoing support. I hope you all have a lovely Easter break.
Helen Coulson

EASTER HOLIDAY SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

If you have any safeguarding concerns during the school holiday, please be aware of the following avenues of support:

- 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.

EMOJI LANGUAGE

In light of Netflix's recent tv show, 'Adolescence' a serious safeguarding topic has been re-highlighted that every parent, educator, and mentor needs to know about, the hidden language of emojis.


Online, young people are communicating in ways that most adults completely miss. What looks innocent could have a much darker meaning.


Listed on the page opposite are some of the codes being used as well as some guidance for parents on how to engage young people in conversations around online safety.


So what should parents do?


- Get Curious, Not Combative – Ask open-ended questions: "I saw something about emojis meaning different things. Have you heard of this?" Keep the conversation light.
- Create a Judgment-Free Zone – If your child feels like they'll be punished for opening up, they won't. Make it clear you're there to listen, not just lecture.
- Decode Together – Ask them to explain their digital world. What do different symbols mean? Who are the influencers they follow? Don't assume, ask.
- Teach Critical Thinking – Help them question online content. "Why do you think some groups push this idea? Who benefits?" Arm them with questions, not just rules.
- Monitor Without Spying – Open conversations work better than secret surveillance. Make checking in on their online spaces a normal part of parenting, not a crisis move.
- Be Real About Manipulation – Explain how toxic online groups groom young people by making them feel special, included, or like they have 'insider knowledge.'
- Build Their Offline Confidence – The more they feel valued and confident in the real world, the less they'll seek validation in dangerous online spaces.


EMOJI LANGUAGE


 Red Pill – “I see the truth.” Used in toxic male spaces to mean waking up to supposed hidden ‘truths’ about women and society, often linked to misogynistic ideologies.


 Blue Pill – Represents those who are “blind to the truth” or still believe in mainstream views about relationships and gender dynamics.


 Dynamite Emoji – An “exploding red pill,” meaning someone is a radicalised incel.


 Kidney Bean – A symbol linked to incel culture, sometimes mocking women.


 100 Emoji – Tied to the “80/20 rule,” the belief that 80% of women are only attracted to 20% of men.


 Black Hole – Used to express depression, hopelessness, or being sucked into negative online spaces.


 Tornado – Represents chaos or feeling overwhelmed, sometimes used to indicate mental distress.


 Frog Emoji – Associated with alt-right and extremist meme culture, often linked to Pepe the Frog, which has been co-opted by some toxic online groups.


 Eagle – A symbol of extreme nationalism, sometimes used in far-right online spaces.


 Skull – While often just slang for “that’s funny” or “I’m dead (from laughing),” in certain groups, it can signal darker themes like nihilism or self-harm.


 Heart Colours – Not just about love!

 = Love

 = Lust

 = “Are you interested?”

 = Interested but not in sex

 = “You’ll be okay”

EDUCATION SOUTH WEST STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

On Thursday 27th February, a group of students from Coombeshead Academy attended the first ever ESW Student Leadership Conference held at KEVICC. Coombeshead students from a range of leadership roles including school council representatives, diversity ambassadors and mental health ambassadors attended the conference and were able to meet and share ideas with other student leaders from across our trust.

The Trust CEO Matthew Shanks talked to students about the importance of the role of student leaders and why it's important to celebrate what they do. Caroline Voaden (South Devon MP, Lib Dem) also addressed the conference and spoke to the students about her varied career/ leadership.

Students from all schools were required to speak for five minutes about their roles and specifically, what difference/ improvements have they been able to make in their school. Hannah, Jagoda, Freddie, Dom, Lucas and Angel all represented Coombeshead brilliantly.

All ideas and responses from the conference will be edited and shared across schools and also shared with primary pupils at a planned Primary Leadership conference in the summer term.



YEAR 8 'MEET THE EMPLOYER' EVENT

As part of National Careers Week, Year 8 students participated in an exciting speed networking event, where they had the chance to meet a diverse range of employers from various industries. Students were able to 'interview' representatives from the Devon Fire Service, Devon FA, Mare and Foal Sanctuary, as well as volunteers from local construction, law, and engineering sectors.

This event tied in with the current Life Skills Curriculum, where students have been exploring careers and future pathways. It gave them an opportunity to apply their learning, reflect on their goals, and consider new career possibilities.

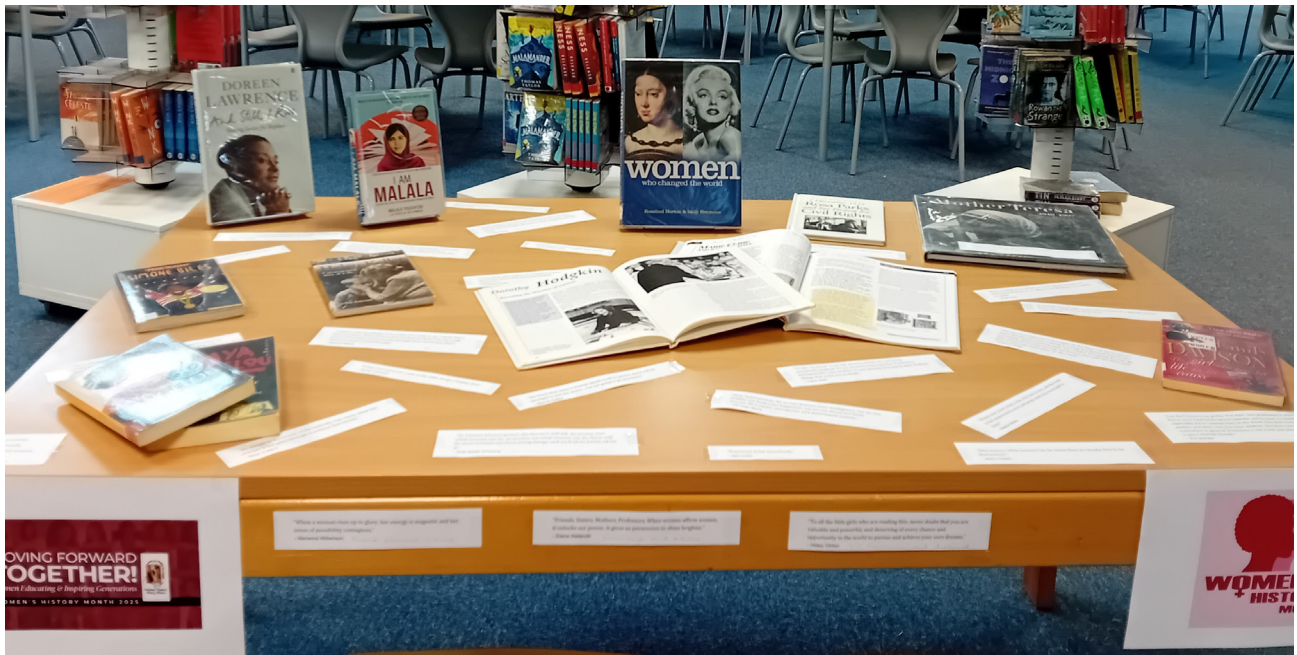
Employers were impressed by the politeness and professionalism of our students. Well done Year 8, for making such a positive impression!



DIVERSITY CALENDAR

The book displays are continually updated in the library to support our diversity calendar in school. For example in March you can find out more about Women's History Month, which highlights the contributions of women to events in history and contemporary society.

It is also a time to reflect on the work that still needs to be done to achieve gender parity.



SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD

Thank you to all the students who chose to take part in the 'Show racism the red card School competition'. And a special "Well done" to Eloise T. (Artwork), Sophia W. (T-shirt design) and Izzy S. & Holly J. (Music) whose entries have been selected to represent Coombeshead in this national competition. Good luck!

Linked to this initiative and our diversity work in school, all KS3 students have had a specific Life Skills lesson this term to engage them with the anti-racism message and promote the key values of respect and acceptance.



SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD COMPETITION AND OUR STUDENTS HAVE WON AGAIN THIS YEAR!

We are delighted to announce that the judging session of the Show Racism the Red Card School Competition 2025 has taken place, and the panel of independent judges have selected:

Izzy S & Holly J

from Coombeshead Academy to receive an award in the All Ages Kickers Music Category

AND

Eloise T

from Coombeshead Academy to receive an award in the Year 7-9 Artwork Category

HUGE CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS!



YEAR 10 STUDENTS WORKING WITH YOUNG DEVON

Some Year 10 students have been involved in a police training video that was filmed in school with the help of a professional videographer. The final version of the video was proudly shared with their peers in a special assembly, and it will soon be used with the local police to improve relationships with young people in our community.

This collaboration, facilitated by the charity Young Devon, started last year with the initial research project 'Safer spaces, safer places' that was about making Teignbridge safer and more inclusive for young people.

This group of students have worked very well together - their insightful contributions have been valued and listened to, which is empowering for everyone involved in this exciting partnership.



YEAR 9 ASSEMBLY ON HATE CRIME AND HATE SPEECH

PC Ruth Lee (Diverse Communities Team, Devon & Cornwall Police) was invited to deliver a presentation on hate crime and hate speech (through a policing lens) in Year 9 assembly. The students found the content very informative and engaging as it helped them understand some key concepts/ terms more clearly - e.g. prejudice, discrimination, hate crime. They also commented that they now feel more confident to be active bystanders and challenge unacceptable behaviours.



YEAR 9 STUDENT AISHA - TALK ON RAMADAN

Aisha (Year 9 student) gave a talk in school about the holy month of Ramadan. Her presentation was very informative and also helped to address some misconceptions.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar which is lunar-based so Ramadan falls on a different date every year, due to the cycles of the moon. It is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting (dawn to sunset), prayers, reflection and community. It is considered the most sacred month in Islam. Aisha explained about the daily routine of Ramadan and how Eid al-Fitr is celebrated to mark the end of Ramadan.



Ramadan Mubarak



"Ramadan is more than just fasting—it is a time of self-reflection, kindness, and spiritual growth."



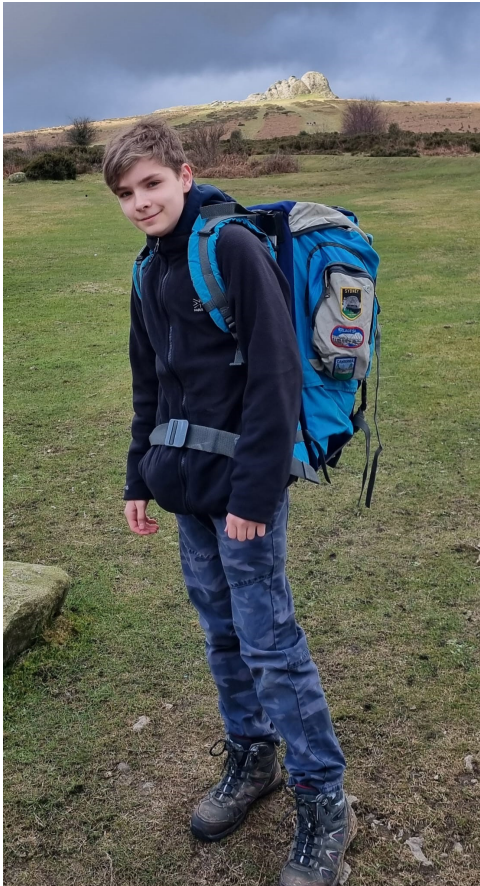
"It teaches patience, gratitude, and the importance of helping others."



"Whether you are Muslim or not, Ramadan's values—discipline, empathy, and generosity—are lessons for everyone."

SILVER DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Over the weekend our four Silver Duke of Edinburgh boys were out in force on the moors. The weather was kind to them albeit a little on the chilly side. Armed with their cake the boys set off. They walked from 10am-4.30pm on both days and did really the well. The leader from Reach Outdoors said they were a pleasure to have on the walk and worked so well together to overcome obstacles and keep each other's spirits high. They are now ready for their qualifying walk in a couple of weeks to be followed shortly after by their actual expedition. Well done boys.



The boys spent time on Friday route planning their weekend expedition due to take place 4 - 6 April. The boys were so focused during their training session which was led by Reach Outdoors. Well done!



AUSTRIA SKI TRIP 2025

35 Coombeshead students took to the Austria slopes during the half term. It was an action-packed week full of skiing which the students enjoyed immensely. The team spent 5 days learning how to ski as well as immersing themselves in the Austrian culture. The students behaved impeccably and were a credit to the school. Thank you to Mr. Thomas, Mr. Gore, Mrs Williams and Miss Clifford for giving up their half term to make the trip possible. The leader of the trip, Mr. Stevenson said 'It was an absolute pleasure to take the students on their skiing adventure. They were fantastic and I hope they had just as much fun as I did! We took some students who had never had any ski lessons before and by the end of the trip, they were able to expertly ski down the mountain. Thank you to all students once again and I hope you had a brilliant trip!'



AUSTRIA SKI TRIP 2025



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AUSTRIA SKI TRIP 2025



LYRA - SOUTH WEST CHAMPIONSHIPS

Lyra recently attended the South West Championships dance competition. Lyra came 1st out of 18 in her slow routine. She came second in her team dances and 5th out of 18 for the fast dance. What an achievement! Huge congratulations to Lyra.



FOOTBALL YEAR 7

Coombeshead win 5-1 against Stover School to earn their place in the next round of the Devon cup. Well done to all involved.



The Year 7 football team played their South Devon football cup game Against Dawlish on Monday. Well done to all involved.



**Great teamwork.
Well done!**

NEW COMMUNITY TREE MURAL UNVEILED

Students from Coombeshead Academy have proudly helped complete a stunning new mural in Newton Abbot town centre that celebrates the local community's connection to nature.

'The Community Tree' has been brought to life by renowned local artist Joe Webster and is a powerful representation of the bond between the people of Newton Abbot and the natural world. Joe, known for his 'landscape-graffiti' style, explores the impact of human activity on nature, and his work has been displayed across the UK and internationally.

The mural, which stands at an impressive 16 metres high, is located in Golden Lion Square. It draws inspiration from a giant oak tree that was felled in 1922 to make way for the war memorial at the end of Queen Street. The loss of this iconic tree caused public outcry at the time, underlining the deep connection communities have with natural landmarks.

The mural project invited contributions from the local community, with residents offering stories, photos, and memories of their favourite trees. Coombeshead students were also invited to submit nature-inspired words that were incorporated into the design. A group of talented graphics students from Coombeshead Academy played a key role in the creation of the mural by designing and preparing typography work, which was used in the final artwork.

The Community Tree was part-funded by a Levelling Up Grant via Teignbridge council and many other sources. It was made possible almost entirely by 5 months of voluntary work by the artists and Rotary Newton Abbot. 'If you're enjoying the new mural and would like to see more around town please consider giving a donation via this website. All funds received will go to completing this project and creating more beautiful artwork around the town.

Local businesses are also being invited to sponsor the mural in exchange for inclusion on its plaque and if you would like to know more about this please contact the artist Joe Webster at the following email address: joe@joewebsterart.com

Helen Coulson, Headteacher at Coombeshead Academy, said:

"We are incredibly proud of our students for contributing to such a meaningful project. The 'Community Tree' mural is not only a beautiful symbol of the bond between nature and the people of Newton Abbot, but it also represents the creativity and hard work of our students.

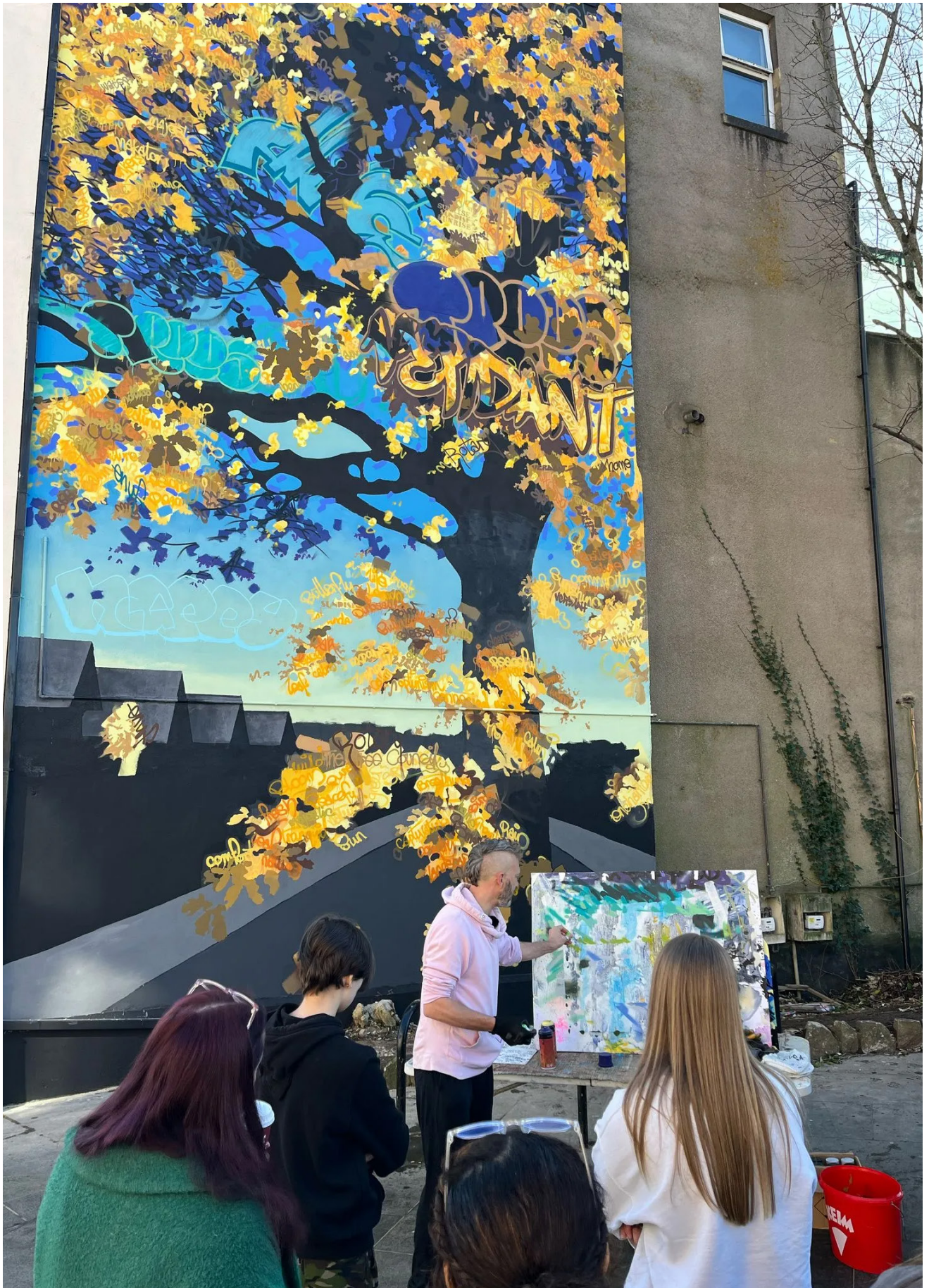
"It has been a privilege to see them actively involved in this initiative, collaborating with the community to bring this artwork to life. This mural will be a lasting legacy for the town, and we are thrilled to have played a part in its creation."

Joe Webster said:

"The 'Community Tree' mural is a celebration of both nature and the strong sense of community that defines Newton Abbot. It has been a true honour to work with local residents and students to bring this vision to life.

"The contributions from Coombeshead Academy, particularly the graphics students, have been invaluable in shaping the final piece. The mural stands as a tribute to the history of the town and its deep connection with the natural world, and I hope it inspires future generations to continue to cherish and protect our environment."

NEW COMMUNITY TREE MURAL UNVEILED



CODEX PROJECT

Coombeshead Creative Arts Lead Shares Insights on CODEX Project in New Blog
Published by NSEAD

Sam Eyre, Curriculum and Team Area Lead for the Creative Arts at Coombeshead Academy, has had a blog post featured by the National Society for Education in Art & Design (NSEAD), where he discusses the innovative CODEX project.

This project, a collaboration between Sidmouth College and Sidmouth School of Art, bridges the gap between digital media and traditional printmaking. Led by Sam Eyre and printmaker Emma Molony, CODEX provides students the opportunity to explore themes of identity, personal storytelling, and emotional wellbeing through techniques like typography, photography, gel plate printing, and digital composition.

Mr Eyre explains: "CODEX allows students to push creative boundaries, explore their emotions, and express their personal narratives through art. says Sam.

"By blending traditional and digital techniques, we empower young artists to use art not only as a form of expression but as a tool for processing their emotions and connecting with their community."

The project serves as a therapeutic outlet, offering students the space to process their emotions while building technical skills and confidence.

CODEX has culminated in public exhibitions such as those at Sidmouth Wallspace and the Telephone Box Micro Museums, amplifying the voices of young people. With plans to expand across Devon, the project continues to inspire and build a sense of belonging within the local community, while reinforcing art as a powerful means of self-expression and connection.

You can read Mr Eyre's full blog post on the CODEX project on the NSEAD website here. <https://www.nsead.org/.../codex-sam-eyre-and-emma-molony/>



CREATE
CREATIVE ARTS
ACADEMY

SIXTH FORM VISIT TO THE UCAS DISCOVERY EXHIBITION SOUTH WEST

On 12th March we took all of year 12 along to the UCAS Discovery Exhibition South West at Westpoint, Exeter. Our students had the opportunity to talk with representatives of 100+ Universities and Higher Education institutions, and find out more to help them with their future plans. They had prepared questions in advance in tutor time in the week leading up to the event to make the most of the opportunity. The buzz around applying to university next year has really begun now for them!



UCAS

STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

On Thursday 27th February a delegation of Coombeshead Academy students from years 9, 10 and 12 took part in the first Education South West Leadership Conference hosted at King Edward VI Community College (KEVICC) in Totnes. Students with a range of leadership roles at Coombeshead from sports leaders to student council representatives, mental health first aiders and anti-bullying ambassadors took part in the afternoon designed to spotlight their leadership and allow them to share their experiences with student leaders from other schools in the South West. The event included key note speeches from Rob Coles, Deputy Chief Executive of ESW as well as Caroline Voaden, MP for South Devon about the importance of leadership in their respective journeys. Our student leaders declared the event a positive experience and welcomed the opportunity to reflect on the impact they have on shaping the future of education.



EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

Ten of our year 13s completed their EPQ presentations on Thursday 17th March, presenting the findings of their months long Extended Project to an audience of staff and their peers. Topics covered included "The Progression and Regression of Speech throughout the Life Stages", "How Crime is Represented in the Media", "Does Cold Water Immersion Improve Muscle Recovery?" and "How the Declining Attention Span of the Younger Generation is Affecting their Education". The presentations represented the culmination of projects that began before last summer, included hours and hours of independent research and a 5000 word report on their chosen topic. The EPQs count as half an A level and have helped develop the time management, critical thinking and independent research skills of all who have completed their projects. Well done to all involved!



SPRING CONCERT - 1 APRIL 2025

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

On Tuesday 1st April, we held our Spring 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.

We also heard a number from the cast and band of this year's summer production of Little Shop of Horrors.

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."



NEWTON ABBOT PRIMARY MUSIC FESTIVAL

On Tuesday 25th March at our very own Bushell Theatre, we were honoured to host the Newton Abbot Primary School Music Festival

This was an all day event where 8 local primary schools came to Coombeshead Academy to showcase their own musical skills and perform. This gave the young people involved an opportunity to perform to each other and show all of the hard work they had put into the event.

We would like to say a huge thanks to all the schools who took part and to also a huge thank you to Tom Deam, the Music Development Lead for Newton Abbot and Teignbridge and the Devon Music Education Hub, for supporting this new initiative.



MUSIC FOR YOUTH

On Sunday 30th March, we hosted a Music for Youth regional event. We are one of only 35 centres to be asked to host one of these events, from across the whole of the UK.

The day itself saw performances from a variety of ensembles from across Devon, some of which included Devon Youth Chamber Brass Ensemble, Devon Youth Jazz Orchestra and various bands from schools and music centres across Devon.

The event was organised by the Devon Music Education Hub and we were asked if our own Folk Group and Soul Band would perform. Each performance was listened to and appraised by two Music for Youth mentors, who are both professional working musicians. The feedback we received for our two ensembles was very encouraging and could possibly open the door to an invite to perform at the national event in Birmingham, later on this year.

The whole day presented a real opportunity for enrichment for local young musicians, with over 100 people performing throughout the day.



MUSIC FOR YOUTH



YEAR 7 REWARDS EVENT

Here are just some of our students who were invited to our end of term rewards event on Tuesday. The top positive percentage praise point earners in year 7 and 8 were invited to attend the event with bouncy castle, inflatable football shoot out and other games activities.

Well done to all involved!



HAVE A WONDERFUL EASTER BREAK!