

DARTMOUTH ACADEMY

Secondary Newsletter

September 2025

Be your Best Self

COURAGE · COMPASSION · AMBITION




Dartmouth
ACADEMY



As we reach the end of September, we want to take a moment to thank all pupils, parents, and staff for helping us begin this academic year with such energy, commitment, and positivity. It has been wonderful to see our school community working together, each of you embodying our shared values of courage, compassion, and ambition in striving to “be your best selves.” The tone for the year has been set, and it is an inspiring one.

Our new Year 7 and Year 8 pupils have wasted no time in making the most of the opportunities available. With the guidance of **Sea Kayak Devon**, they have been exploring the River Dart, developing confidence on the water and forming strong friendships along the way. These experiences remind us how fortunate we are to be surrounded by such a rich natural environment, and how learning outside the classroom complements the work we do inside it.

Meanwhile, we have been delighted to welcome back pupils from their unforgettable summer **adventures in Borneo**. Their stories of resilience, teamwork, and cultural exchange highlight the importance of courage and curiosity, and we are already seeing how these experiences are shaping their outlook and contributions to school life. Back in the classroom, it has been equally impressive to see how smoothly everyone has settled into routines, focused on learning, and supported one another.

This week has also provided a special opportunity for international collaboration. Through the **British Council**, Mrs McKay took part in the **UK-Ukraine School Partnerships Project**, representing our school in building meaningful connections with colleagues abroad. Such partnerships broaden horizons for both staff and pupils, offering insights into global education and fostering understanding between cultures.

Closer to home, we are immensely proud to share that **Dartmouth has been shortlisted by the Department for Education to interview for the Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence Programme**. This recognition is a direct result of our exceptional approach to behaviour and attendance. To be considered as a lead school in this national initiative reflects the dedication of our entire community—pupils, parents, and staff alike—in creating an environment where all can thrive.

As we look ahead to the rest of the term, we are excited about the opportunities to come. With the foundation we have built together this September, we know that our pupils will continue to show courage in facing challenges, compassion in supporting one another, and ambition in striving to achieve their very best.

Wishing you a wonderful weekend
Paul Girardot and
The Dartmouth team

Our future successes are built on the work we do today,

Dates for the diary

October 2025

1st – Secondary Open Morning @ 9.30am

6th to 14th – Y11 PPEs

10th – Flu Vaccinations

27th – Half Term

November

12th – Primary Open Morning @ 9.30am

12th – Y11 Parents' Evening

19th – Celebration Evening

December

1st – Non-pupil day

4th – Primary Open Morning @ 9.30am

10th – Y10 Parents' Evening

12th – Xmas Fayre

17th – Xmas Dinner

20th – Xmas Holidays

January 2026

5th – Back to school

Attendance Matters

This year's attendance by Year Group:

Reception – 93.3%

Year 1 – 93.3%

Year 2 – 95.3%

Year 3 – 98.7%

Year 4 – 96.7%

Year 5 – 98.8%

Year 6 – 96%

Year 7 – 96.8%

Year 8 – 94.2%

Year 9 – 93.7%

Year 10 – 94.9%

Year 11 – 94.1%

School attendance for the year so far is currently

95.1 %

Thank you for supporting our target of 96%



What have we been up to:

Dartmouth Academy Marks Youth Mental Health Day

Pupils and staff at Dartmouth Academy have marked Youth Mental Health Day (19th September) this month.

Mental health concerns for young people have multiplied in recent times. Today, a fifth of 8 to 25-year-olds have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Youth Mental Health Day aims to provide hope and positivity by getting young people engaged in discussions and activities about how to improve their mental health. Stem4, the UK's leading digital mental health charity for young people, is the founder of Youth Mental Health Day, which started in 2020.

Dartmouth Academy know that without good mental health children aren't able to thrive in education. The school is pleased to have a team of mental health professionals on hand who regularly visit and speak with the entire school community. They also hold assemblies on how to achieve good mental health and provide a comprehensive programme of support to aid staff wellbeing.

Paul Girardot, Principal, at Dartmouth Academy, said:

"Good mental health is the foundation on which learning and personal growth are built. At Dartmouth Academy, we are committed to creating an environment where every young person feels supported, listened to, and able to flourish. Youth Mental Health Day is an important reminder that taking care of our wellbeing is just as vital as academic achievement."

Matthew Shanks, CEO, at Education South West said:

"Across Education South West, we recognise that schools play a crucial role in promoting positive mental health. Dartmouth Academy's approach demonstrates the importance of providing early support, reducing stigma, and giving both pupils and staff the tools they need to thrive. We are proud to stand alongside them in supporting Youth Mental Health Day."



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Dartmouth Academy pupils' life-changing Borneo adventure

Pupils from [Dartmouth Academy](#) experienced the trip of a lifetime during a four week summer excursion to Borneo.

Over four extraordinary weeks, 22 pupils swapped the classroom for the lush landscapes of Borneo - an experience that tested their independence, built friendships and transformed the way they see the world.

As well as throwing themselves into demanding community and conservation projects, pupils trekked into jungle camps and even dived with turtles off Mamutik Island. "We saw four of the Borneo Big Five," one pupil, Millie, recalled. "The only one we missed was the pygmy elephant, but we saw everything else; crocodiles, monkeys, hornbills and orangutans - it was incredible."

But this was no sightseeing holiday. The journey was built on two years of hard work, as every pupil was challenged to raise the £5,000 needed for the expedition themselves. The school organised raffles, bingos and sponsored walks, but it was the pupils' own initiative that made the difference. Millie baked cakes to sell in her mum's salon. Another pupil, Alec, sold jewellery and delivered logs during winter, while others took on part-time jobs, saving up to reach their goal.

"It took about two years to raise the money," explained Year 11 pupil, Seren. "But that's what made it so rewarding. We weren't just handed this opportunity - we built it ourselves."

Once in Borneo, the pupils turned their energy to helping rural communities. They played football with local children, taught English and worked alongside villagers on projects to support everyday life. "Everyone was so welcoming," says Kayden. "They were grateful for what we were doing, but we also learned so much from them - about kindness, generosity and how to think about others before ourselves."

"When you go on holiday, you don't see the local side of it, you're in the fancy rich area with the massive hotels. But we weren't, we were in the camps with the real community people."

Science teacher, Emma Richardson, who led the expedition, described the transformation she witnessed: "These young people stepped up to and above all expectations, showing what wonderful adults they are becoming - a side I'd never have had the chance to see in the classroom. My only regret is that it had to end."



Sixth Form Open Events:

- South Devon College-Tuesday, October 7, 2025 from 4:00 PM to 6:30 PM at the Vantage Point campus, as well as another one on Wednesday, November 26, 2025
- South Devon UTC , Newton Abbott – Thursday 16th October 5:00pm to 7:00pm, Wednesday 22nd October 2:15pm to 3:00pm
- Kingsbridge Community College-9th October 4-7pm
- KEVICC Sixth Form (Totnes) – Kennicott Sixth Form (part of KEVICC) — *Open Evening* on Thursday 16th October 2025, 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm
- Churston Ferrers Grammar School Sixth Form – Sixth Form Open Evening: Wednesday 12 November 2025, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
- Exeter College – 7.10.25 and 20.11.25, both 4-8pm.
- Plymouth City College – 8th October, 10–1pm

(Please check provider websites for full details and to register attendance, as booking may be required.)

If you have any questions about the post-16 process, or if you would like support in helping your child decide on their next steps, please do not hesitate to contact Nicola Perrott, nic.perrott@dartmouthacademy.org.uk



Secondary Parent Scripts & Supportive Phrases for School Attendance

Going to school every day is important for **children's learning, confidence and future success**. Parents play a key role in setting the expectation that school attendance is vital, while also listening and supporting their child if things feel difficult.

General Principles

- **Assume attendance:** Talk as if going to school is the normal, expected thing.
- **Show empathy:** Acknowledge feelings without reinforcing avoidance.
- **Offer problem-solving:** Ask gentle questions to understand barriers.
- **Reinforce positives:** Remind them of friends, activities, and progress.

For Secondary-Age Children

Supportive Phrases:

- "School is important for your future—I know it's not always easy, but I believe you can do it."
- "Everyone has days they'd rather stay home, but going in is always better than missing out."
- "You'll feel more confident once you're there and see your friends/teachers."
- "What's making today feel tough? Is it lessons, friends, or something else?"
- "You don't have to get everything perfect—just showing up matters."
- "If there's a problem at school, let's talk about it together so we can find a way forward."

If they resist going:

- "I get that you'd rather not go, but staying home will make it harder tomorrow. Let's take it one step at a time—get dressed, have breakfast, and we'll go from there."
- "I'm here to listen if something is worrying you, but school is not optional."
- "What would make today at school a little easier for you?"

Closing Daily Encouragements

- "I'm proud of you for going in today"
- "Look at what you managed, even when it felt tough"
- "Every day at school is a step forward"
- "I can see your effort, and that matters"

Our future successes are built on the work we do today.



Mobile Phone reminder

Our expectation is that pupils do not bring mobile phones into school, and we do not expect, or encourage, parents to buy smartphones for their children. This is a family decision, not a school requirement. Pupils will never be asked to use a mobile phone in lessons.

Where **parents feel it is absolutely necessary** for their child to have a mobile phone, the following rules apply:

- **Primary pupils** must **hand their phone to their class teacher** at the start of the day.
- **Secondary pupils** must **keep their phone switched off and out of sight** upon entry to the school grounds until leaving site at the end of the day.
- Secondary pupils choosing to bring a phone to school must **hand it in for PE lessons**.
- **Any phone seen during the day outside of these arrangements will be confiscated** and returned to the pupil at the end of the school day.

If a pupil needs to contact home, this should be done through the school office. Likewise, if parents need to reach their child during the school day, we ask that this is arranged via the school office on 01803 839700.

Thank you for your continued support in helping us keep school a calm and purposeful place for learning without additional disruption. If you would like any additional help and support with managing screen time at home please contact the school on: admin@dartmouthacademy.org.uk or see the links below:

[Keeping children safe online - Parent's questions answered | Barnardo's](#)

[Children and technology: Age-appropriate usage advice | NSPCC](#)

[5 tips for talking to your teen about reducing their smartphone screen time - BBC Bitesize](#)

[Phones - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

How can our
community
help you and
your child
thrive?

Pop into our Support &
Snacks drop-in sessions
where you can:

- Chat with other parents and carers.
- Meet professionals and staff who can signpost support.
- Enjoy a cuppa and a croissant.



Our next drop in is
Monday 24th Nov
9am - 10.30am in
The Cube at
Dartmouth Academy

Input from Beth
Gorton & The
Neurodiversity
Navigators

There's no need to book –
just pop in, grab a snack,
and join the conversation.



School
Support
& Snacks

Supporting your child to thrive in our community








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HISTORY, AND ENJOY A COMMUNITY
CELEBRATION OF STEAM, STORIES,
AND ENGINEERING.**

SCAN TO FIND OUT MORE

**27TH SEPTEMBER | 10AM-4PM
FREE ENTRY**

**PARTNERS MAY CHARGE FOR ATTRACTIONS. DONATIONS WELCOME

THE GUILDHALL, DARTMOUTH, TQ6 9RY

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HALF TERM FUN FOOTBALL DAY



FRIDAY 31st OCTOBER

VENUE: KEVICC, TOTNES TQ9 5JX

£20 | Age 5-14 Years | 10am-3pm



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