

DARTMOUTH ACADEMY

Secondary Newsletter

January 2026

Be your
Best Self

COURAGE · COMPASSION · AMBITION




Dartmouth
ACADEMY



As we move further into the new year, we are beginning to welcome the brighter days, even if the weather has not quite got the memo yet. Recent weeks have seen a huge amount of rain and some exceptionally high winds batter our local area, and I would like to thank everyone in our community for the patience, resilience and good humour shown during what has been a challenging start to the term. Despite the conditions, school life has continued with real purpose and positivity.

I am incredibly proud of how well our pupils have returned to school in January. Across all year groups, staff have commented on the strong focus, calm behaviour and positive attitudes to learning that have been evident from the very first week back. It has been a pleasure to see classrooms buzzing with engagement and pupils applying themselves so well after the Christmas break.

A particular well done must go to our Year 11 pupils, who have been fully immersed in their preparation exams this week. These exams are an important milestone in the journey towards GCSEs, and Year 11 have approached them with maturity, determination and a real commitment to doing their best. Their efforts have not gone unnoticed, and we are confident that this hard work will continue as we move towards the summer exam season.

We are also extremely proud of our public speaking teams, who represented the school so impressively at the Youth Speaks competition last week. They spoke with confidence, clarity and passion, and their performances were a real credit to themselves and to the school. Congratulations to all involved – we are immensely proud of you.

Finally, I would like to thank parents and carers for the excellent response to the mobile phone survey that was sent out before Christmas and again this week. Your feedback is invaluable, and we appreciate the time taken to share your views. Further information can be found elsewhere in this newsletter, and we will be sharing the findings and next steps with you in the coming weeks.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support as we move forward together into the term ahead.

Paul Girardot and
The Dartmouth team

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

Dates for the diary

February 2026

9th – Y6 Mock SATs

11th – Y8 Parents' Evening

13th – Y9 Sleepover

March 2026

2nd – Y9 Vaccinations

4th – Y11 Parents' Evening

9th – School support & snack

11th – Y9 Options Evening

14th – Silver DofE training weekend

16th – School closed, staff training day

21st – Bronze DofE training weekend

26th – Y8 History Trip

April 2026

3rd – Easter Holidays

20th – Return to school

21st – Y8 HPV vaccinations

24th – Silver DofE

27th – Y9 Prolific Sailing Trip

May 2026

1st – Silver DofE Expedition

4th – Bank Holiday

6th – Y7 Parents' Evening

9th – Bronze DofE Expedition

11th – GCSE Exams start

11th – Y6 SATs week

Attendance Matters

This year's attendance by Year Group:

Reception – 94.8%

Year 1 – 94.7%

Year 2 – 95.3%

Year 3 – 96%

Year 4 – 92.6%

Year 5 – 91.4%

Year 6 – 93.7%

Year 7 – 91.7%

Year 8 – 93%

Year 9 – 90.5%

Year 10 – 91.9%

Year 11 – 92.6%

School attendance for the year so far is currently

92.6 %

Thank you for supporting our target of 96%



Mobile Phones

The government has recently renewed its focus on reviewing pupils' access to smartphones in schools, highlighting the impact of phone use on wellbeing, behaviour and learning. As a school, this is something we have already been actively considering, and we have sought the views of parents and carers through a recent survey. We are now carefully reviewing these responses alongside national guidance and wider research into smartphone use in schools. Central to this work is our commitment to working in partnership with parents, ensuring that together we are able to support, safeguard and promote the best possible outcomes for all our pupils.

Please do take a few minutes to have a look at the information around phone use and its effects on young people:

Research & Evidence on Smartphone Impact

Government guidance and evidence reviews

UK Government: Understand the impact of smartphones and social media on children and young people – official synthesis of evidence about digital use and wellbeing (UK gov.uk). [UK government evidence on smartphone & social media impact](#)

Academic and research summaries

Impact of mobile phones and wireless device use on children's mental health and wellbeing – systematic review on associations between device use and mental health outcomes. [PMC research on device use and children's wellbeing](#)

Should children have mobile phones? – The Children's Society overview of risks and benefits, including mental health and online exploitation. [Children's Society: Should children have phones?](#)

Risks & Concerns (Mental Health, Behaviour, Safety)

Ofcom: A window into young children's online worlds – UK regulator's insights into early digital independence and online activity trends. [Ofcom report on young children online](#)

Safer Internet Centre: Phones guidance for parents & carers – outlines key concerns like cyberbullying and unwanted contact. [Safer Internet Centre phone safety guide](#)

Barnardo's: Keeping your child safe on their smartphone – practical tips on parental controls and limits. [Barnardo's smartphone safety tips](#)

Internet Matters: Mobile phone safety checklist for parents – step-by-step safety checklist & age-appropriate advice. [Internet Matters phone safety checklist](#)

Practical Support & Parent-Focused Advice

 **Raising Children Network: Responsible mobile phone use** – tips on healthy phone habits and setting family rules. [Raising Children Network responsible use advice](#)

USwitch: How to keep your child safe on their smartphone – advice on parental controls, plans and safety features. USwitch child smartphone safety guide

Family Action: Pros & cons of giving a child a phone – guidance on setting rules, parental controls and digital agreements. [Family Action mobile phone guidance for parents](#)

Smartphone Free Childhood – A UK-based grassroots movement encouraging families to delay giving children smartphones and social media access, offering resources and support for parents and schools. Official website: <https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/>

What have we been up to:

Dartmouth Academy Primary Phase Success at Rotary Youth Speaks Competition

Last night's Rotary Youth Speaks competition, held at Stoke Fleming Village Hall, showcased impressive talent, confidence and commitment of pupils from local schools, as teams took to the stage to deliver researched and thought-provoking speeches on a range of topical issues. Pupils from Stoke Fleming Primary School and Blackawton Primary School also competed in the event.

We are delighted to share that our school enjoyed outstanding success on the evening. Our Junior 1 team, made up of Year 6 pupils: Mia-Rose M, Thea C and William H, were crowned winners with their compelling and well-argued speech on "A Social Media Ban for Children Under 16". The team demonstrated excellent research, clear structure and confident delivery, impressing both judges and audience alike.

The success didn't stop there. Members of our Junior 2 team were also recognised individually, with Oakley F awarded **Best Overall Chairperson** and Sienna S awarded **Best Overall Speaker** for their exceptional performances. We were thoroughly impressed with the whole Junior 2 team whose speech was titled, "How useful is AI?" and would like to mention Evan C who delivered an excellent **Vote of Thanks**.

The Rotary Youth Speaks competition is designed to develop public speaking, teamwork and critical thinking skills and all pupils involved represented the school with maturity, enthusiasm and professionalism. We are incredibly proud of everyone who took part and congratulate them on their fantastic achievements.

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to **Dartmouth Rotary Club Chairperson Robert Benns** for organising and hosting this **annual event**, which continues to provide such a valuable opportunity for young people to develop their public speaking skills. We were honoured to have **Dartmouth's Mayor, Cllr Andrea Cates**, on the judging panel and we are very grateful to the Rotary Club for their continued support and for generously donating **book token prizes** to all the winners.



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

Exeter Mathematics school Physics challenge

On Wednesday the 28th of January 8 nervous pupils left the academy headed for the Exeter Mathematics school Physics challenge. There were 2 teams consisting of 2 year 10 and 2 year 11 in each. The room was filled with approximately 20 different schools some having travelled from Somerset to take part in the challenge. The challenge began promptly at 12.30 with the estimation round. This included questions like if you had a swimming pool filled with Mayo how long the Mayo would last. Undaunted they worked together to submit answers; this was followed by a practical round and then the really hard question round to which pupils commented "these are really hard". It was great to see how well the 2-year groups were able to work together and support one another as well as showing independence and resilience. I have even had some tentative suggestion that some of the year 10 pupils would be prepared to have another go next year.



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

Introducing our new recruit in training:

Following the departure of Snoopy and Uno, many pupils have been keen to welcome another school dog into our community. Over the past week or so, Indie has been visiting school to get used to the environment and learn what life in school is all about.

Indie is an 8-year-old Labrador with a wonderfully calm and gentle nature. He is very well behaved and enjoys nothing more than snoozing in his bed and taking walks along the beach.

Indie will be in school most days in his role as our therapy dog, working alongside a staff member and may be available to pupils during specific times and activities, such as counselling sessions, stress-reduction opportunities, or small group support. Therapy dogs have been shown to help pupils feel calmer, more focused, and emotionally supported in the school environment.

- The dog is not a service animal assigned to a specific pupil.
- The dog will always be under the direct supervision of an adult handler and will not roam freely around the school.
- The therapy dog is up to date on all vaccinations and receives regular veterinary care.
- The dog is groomed regularly and follows flea and tick prevention protocols.
- Pupils will be encouraged to wash or sanitize their hands before and after interacting with the dog.
- Clear expectations are in place for appropriate pupil interactions.

Allergies, Fears, and Accommodations

Pupil participation is voluntary. No pupil will be required to interact with the therapy dog. Families are encouraged to inform the school reception if their child has allergies, asthma, a fear of dogs, or other medical concerns so that appropriate accommodations can be made.



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

We have an exciting opportunity for Year 10 & 11 pupils coming up in February at Access Creative College, Plymouth.

On Wednesday 4th February from 5-7pm, we're opening the doors at Access Creative College for Year 10 and 11 students to take part in an exclusive Music or Games bootcamp!

Games: Blender- Create a Monster

Using Blender, an industry-standard Games Development software, you will dive into the world of 3D modelling, bringing a creature of your own imagination to life! You'll create moodboards to generate ideas, and then with the expert guidance of our Games tutors, you'll use the Blender to master the tools needed to shape, twist, and transform primitive forms into a one-of-a-kind monster!

You'll develop skills in 3D modelling, as well as getting to showcase your creativity!

Music Camp: Songwriter & Music Producer Camp - Write, record and produce a demo track

Using Logic Pro, you'll collaborate with professional producers, songwriters, and session musicians to write, record, and produce your own demo track from start to finish - experience what it's like to be a songwriter, musician and producer all in the space of one evening! You'll get real studio time, access to professional recording and production equipment, and expert guidance every step of the way. You will leave the session with a copy of the demo track that you've recorded and produced!

No experience needed !

Note this session is for young people, parents/guardians need not attend.

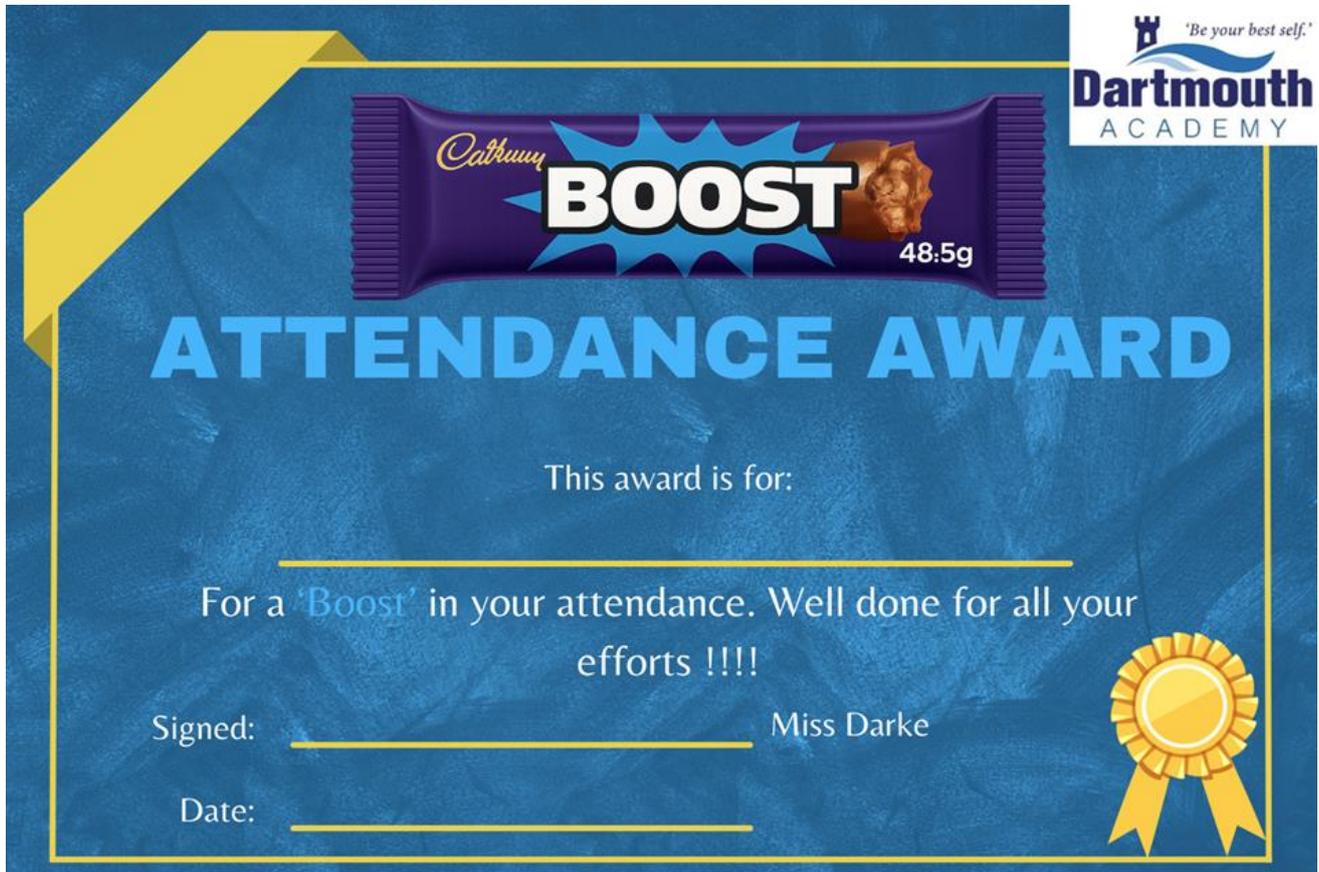
To get involved, book via our form here:

https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2ffe8gc.share-eu1.hsforms.com%2f2UoXdAL7rTdO9HeuaBKnyMA&c=E,1,ehBbgTOtnUsEqp9965QVNSpfrdd9pAe9IXBL3g2SZblruRb8hq8K5HkkJopwhNhCGANODZSSLgIbnx_wJQC-I5d9LedrxGQ2YfEVv-6hqOW-HoEUFGgdBGqs6Vw,&typo=1

Be quick to book - spaces are limited!

If you have any questions, contact us at studentsupportplymouth@accesscreative.ac.uk or 01752 210801

This week we had the delight of handing out this new award that we will be giving out every Tuesday to acknowledge a pupil in each year group whose attendance has 'booooooosted'.



We are running to raise vital funds for MACS, the UK's national charity supporting children and adults born without eyes or with underdeveloped eyes. This cause means the world to us. Rich's daughter, Remi, was born with Microphthalmia and Coloboma in her left eye. While the diagnosis was overwhelming at first, especially as it was during the Coronavirus lockdown period, MACS was there to provide support, connection, and priceless information 📌

Remi now? She's 5 going on 15 and she's absolutely smashing life so far — a bright, happy bundle of joy who inspires us every single day 💜

Every year in the UK, around 114 babies are born with conditions like Anophthalmia (no eyes), Microphthalmia (small eyes), or Coloboma (a cleft in the eye). Many of these children also face other health challenges, and for parents, it can be an isolating experience. MACS now helps over 3,000 people from 1,000 families across the UK, offering peer support, practical advice, and life-changing opportunities such as family weekends and adventurous activity trips that build confidence and independence.

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

By sponsoring us, you'll be helping MACS continue their incredible work and making a real difference. Every mile we run will be fuelled by your generosity and by the thought of amazing kids like Remi, who show that challenges don't define you.

Thank you so much for your support!

Rich & James | Yeoy & Locko 🤝 👤

The raffle is open until 5.30pm on the 5th February followed by the draw which will be live from the Market House and on our Instagram page at 9.30pm. We will also be having some fun before hand, so please look out for this.

@runningthemarathon2026 - Instagram page

[To Buy Raffle Tickets](#)

[Link to Sponsorship Page](#)



MACs Mega Raffle

We are running the 2026 London Marathon to raise vital funds for MACS, supporting children born without or with underdeveloped eyes.

Rich's daughter Remi inspires every step – and MACS has supported their family from day one.

By entering the raffle and help MACS support over 1,000 families across the UK.

♥ Thank you for your support

£5 a ticket

You could win...

- B&B package for 2 – St Austell Brewery ●
- Cream tea for 6 – The Banquet Boat ●
- Dartmouth Steam Train trip – 2 adults & 3 children ●
- 20 Lower Ferry tickets ●
- Tour & wine tasting for 2 – Sandridge Barton ●
- ½ day paddleboarding or kayaking ●
- 4 Ball Golf ● 2 x 1-hour private tennis lessons ●
- Sunday roast for 2 – The Dartmouth Arms ●
- Meals for 2 – Twenty Seven – The Embankment– George & Dragon ●
- Pizza for two – The Crabshell ●
- £250 Lloyd Attree Jewellery voucher ●
- £30 M&S voucher ● Swan Airfryer ●
- Jo Downs handmade glass bowl ●
- Paul Barclay prints ●
- Bert & Buoy print ●
- Maxine Adams framed art ●
- His & Hers designer sunglasses ●
- NASH & DUFF bespoke bag ●
- Jam Industries shirt ●
- Bayliss & Harding robe & bath gift set ●

SCAN ME!

Raffle closes on 5th February 2026 at 5.30pm - Live draw at 9.30pm

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

EXPLORE A LIFE AT SEA. Discover your future in the fishing industry.

Join us for a **Deckhand Discovery Day** —
a hands-on introduction to careers at sea and onshore.

- Market & working vessel tour
- Meet skippers & crew
- Fishing gear demos
- Learn about training & career pathways
- Explore roles across the marine & seafood sector

18
FEBRUARY
2026

0900 - 1200
Brixham Fish
Quay

For: Students aged 14yrs+, school leavers, career changers, or anyone curious about a marine career.

No experience needed — just suitable sturdy footwear and enthusiasm!

For more information & to book a FREE place, email office@swfpo.org.uk (www.swfpo.org.uk)



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

 SportyStars

HOLIDAY CAMP

TOTNES FUSION

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Glow Sports
- Arts & Crafts
- Bubble Football
- Inflatable Games
- Bouncy Castles
- Swimming
- Sports & Team Games

GOOD TO KNOW

 Monday 16th - Friday 20th February

 Ages 5 - 12

 £35 Day / £157.50 Week

 8:15am - 5:15pm - Standard Day Ticket

Join us this February Half Term
for an exciting programme with
at least 6 activities each day.

Accept tax free / childcare vouchers

More information
07721638935

Visit our website
sportystars.co.uk

Here is the correct booking link for the Totnes holiday camp this Feb. Thank you!

<https://activities.bookpebble.co.uk/activity/sportystars-torbay-and-south-hams-totnes-multi-activity-camp-totnes-4847109f-4f36-435c-a622-0bf76fdb22d3>



Free tree giveaway!

Slapton Village Hall - Open to all parishes

Saturday 31st January 2026 10am-2pm

Come and collect between 1-5 trees to plant in your garden and help enhance Devon's treescapes. All trees will be UK broadleaf species and will be 20-40cm in height. All trees will come with tree protection and a planting and aftercare guide.



- * **TREE HUB CUPPA & CAKE**
- * **KIDS CORNER & COMPETITION**
- * **DEVON WILDLIFE TRUST INFO STALL**
- * **WOODCRAFT STALLS & WILLOW WEAVING!**
- * **TALKS FOR LANDOWNERS ON HEDGES/TREES - PREBOOK**

**CONTACT: treewarden.slapton@icloud.com
JAMES 07769 883997**

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

DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT



THE FLAVEL
DARTMOUTH

YOUTH THEATRE



Wednesdays 4pm & 5.15pm at The Flavel
Free Trial Session

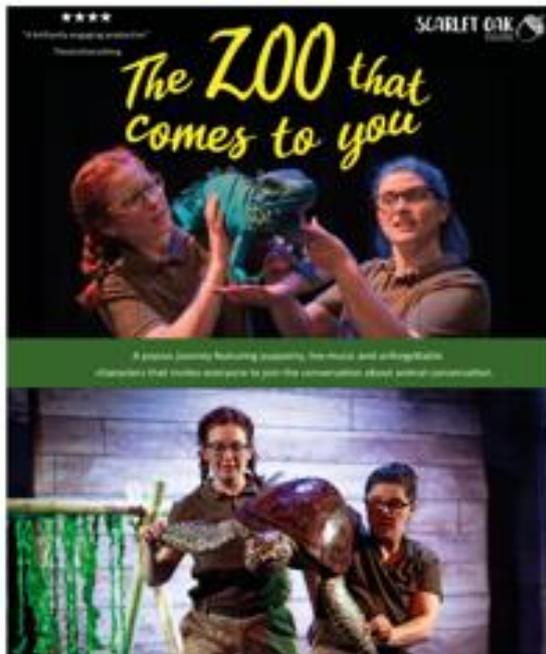
*Bursaries are available to subsidise the
cost for eligible Dartmouth residents*

For more information, contact Rachel on 07970 557508

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

FEBRUARY HALF-TERM

FUN at THE FLAVEL, Dartmouth 01803 839530



The ZOO that comes to you

Treat the family to a joyous journey featuring puppetry, live music and unforgettable animal characters, that invites everyone to join in the conversation about animal conservation.

The Zoo That Comes To You follows the efforts of two wildlife enthusiasts who provide respite, care and a temporary home to those in need and now have a sanctuary full of animals, however, no-one has come to visit their zoo. So everybody - animals and humans alike - have decided it is time to get out, see the world, and bring the zoo, to you!

These chatty creatures have a lot of stories to tell and want to inspire people of all ages to take action, because they know small actions can make a big difference in the world.

LIVE on stage with Scarlet Oak Theatre.

Thu 19 Feb, 11am and 2pm

Adults £12, Under 16s £8
 Family ticket £35 (family of 4)



The SpongeBob Movie:
 Search for SquarePants (PG)

Mon 16 Feb 2pm
 Wed 18 Feb 2pm
 Fri 20 Feb 11am



Drumming Workshop with Drum Devon

Come and learn to play a traditional West African Djembe rhythm - No experience necessary! Starting from scratch, through games and activities, you will learn fundamental techniques to create uplifting, authentic rhythms.

£15 Adults per session
 Family sessions are £15 per person including one child and £5 per extra child.
 Sat 14 Feb 10am



Hamnet (12A)

The powerful story of love and loss that inspired the creation of Shakespeare's timeless masterpiece, Hamlet.

Tue 17 Feb 2pm
 Wed 18 Feb 7pm
 Thu 19 Feb 7pm

the flavel
 www.theflavel.org.uk

The Flavel Centre Trust, Flavel Place, Dartmouth, TQ6 9ND; Registered Charity Number 1082208

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

LOOKING FOR A DOG?



ADOPT A RESCUE DOG
ON CHANNEL 4'S
the Dog House



APPLY HERE



 **C4THEDOGHOUSE TAKEPART.CO.UK**

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