



FIVE ACRES HIGH SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

24 December 2025

MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Welcome to the latest edition of our school newsletter. December has been full of the usual excellent school offer plus a host of additional celebrations, activities and events leading towards the Christmas period.

Over the past weeks we have been excited to see many of our students involved in performances including the GLT Winter Concert at Clifton College, a carol service held at Coleford Baptist Church and an open mic night held in the Music department. Each of the students participating have excelled and shown real determination to further develop their talents. We have also been pleased to offer students the opportunity to witness stage performance of *Woman in Black* and *A Christmas Carol*, opportunities that will support the set texts that we cover in Key Stage 4 English and Drama.

Another part of our rhythm leading up to Christmas has been fundraising including our Enterprise Society students holding stalls at the in-school Christmas markets and in particular support for the Forest Foodbank by collecting donations. We, and staff from the organisation, were absolutely delighted with the amount of food that was collected and know that many families in need will be supported.

Food has been very high on our agenda, especially during the last week of term. Huge thanks go to Mrs Tootell and the catering team for their imaginative approach to providing nutritious and healthy meals that have had a truly festive flavour.

During the last week of term I have given a Christmas reflection during assemblies centred around the idea of being proud of our individual stories. Story is an important part of the educational offer here at Five Acres High School evidenced through our Reading programme and the stories that we weave into areas of our curriculum. We continue to be thankful for all the support that you provide to your children to enable them to read well and thank you for the way in which you have encouraged a brilliant take up of the new Sparx reading platform over the past term.

In my reflection for Christmas I talked about the need for students to be confident in themselves and avoid the temptation to imitate others. I also challenged them to reflect on what they could do to provide hope and forgiveness to others at this time of year, in keeping with two of the central themes of the Christian Christmas message.



At Five Acres High School we believe that every child deserves to be given hope for a brighter future and that where situations have not always been positive in the past there can be a way through. As we head into the new year we have so much to look forward to including the school giving support to many other schools in the region around behaviour and attendance. Forest of Dean schools have much to celebrate collectively in this area and we are proud that our school, and fellow schools within the district, continue to be held in high regard by the Department for Education and other organisations across the region.

Celebration forms a large part of our end of term programme. We were delighted to announce Peregrine house as our champions this term. Golden Ticket winners were also celebrated with afternoon tea and a number of Year 10 students were rewarded with an evening of bowling. We have been able to celebrate mock exam results with our Year 11 students and continue to wish them well as they enter the final stages of their education with us, and we also look forward to celebrating in the coming weeks with our Year 7-10 students as they complete the first of their two sets of assessments for this year.

Schools are often a hive of activity and we know that this takes a lot out of staff, students and families, so I wish you a very restful and peaceful Christmas and look forward to welcoming students back on Tuesday 6 January.

YEAR 10 WOMAN IN BLACK THEATRE TRIP

On Friday 5 December 25 Year 10 students travelled to the Theatre Royal Bath to experience the Woman in Black play, based on the gothic novel by Susan Hill. Students were amazing and really enjoyed the chilling ghost story and the fantastic performances from the actors!



GREENSHAW LEARNING TRUST WINTER CONCERT

Monday 15 December saw a choir of Key Stage 3 students travel to Clifton College, Bristol to perform in the Greenshaw Learning Trust Winter Concert. Our students joined choirs from seven other South West-based GLT schools for an evening of individual school songs and readings, culminating in all of the schools performing A Little Love by Celeste to close the performance. Well done to Mr Williamson and Mr Clement for helping the students to showcase their talents. You can watch their performance of Somewhere Only We Know on the school's social media platforms.



FISH IN SCHOOL HERO PROGRAMME

Thank you to the Fish In Schools Hero programme for providing 10kg of live mussels for our Hospitality & Catering students to cook with. Many of the students were preparing, cooking and tasting mussels for the first time! Pictured are Year 10 students Amelie, Harvey and Freddie.



FIVE ACRES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL

We are delighted to announce that every tutor group across all year groups has now elected or selected their Student Council representative. These young leaders will begin their training programme, where they will be developing the skills needed to lead meaningful discussions, gather viewpoints from their peers, and represent their tutor group with confidence and integrity.

Over the coming weeks, students will be learning how to:

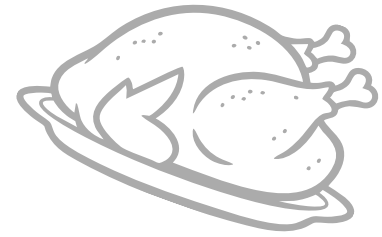
- Facilitate productive and inclusive tutor group discussions
- Listen actively and gather valuable feedback
- Present ideas clearly during Student Council meetings
- Work collaboratively to improve the school experience for all

It promises to be an exciting time as the newly formed council begins its work. We are incredibly proud of them and look forward to seeing the positive impact they will make this academic year.



FESTIVE FOOD

Thank you to Mrs Tootell and the catering team who provided staff and students with some fantastic festive treats during the last week of term. The traditional Christmas lunch on Wednesday 17 December was really appreciated by everyone and thank you to those who came along to help support and serve on the day.



KEY DATES

Monday 22 December - Friday 2 January 2026
Christmas Holiday
Monday 5 January
INSET Day
Tuesday 6 January - Friday 9 January
Year 7 - 10 Assessments
Tuesday 13 January
Hospitality & Catering NEA
Wednesday 14 January
Shakespeare performance
Monday 19 & Tuesday 20 January
Hospitality & Catering NEA
Thursday 22 January
Year 9 Options Evening
Tuesday 27 January
Governors Meeting
Friday 28 January
Year 7 - Author visit
Thursday 5 February
Year 9 Parents' Evening
Thursday 12 February
Celebrations Evening
Monday 16 February - Friday 20 February
Half Term &
Year 11 Revision Sessions
Week commencing 23 February
Year 11 PPEs
Friday 27 February - Sunday 1 March
TenTors
Sunday 28 February - Sunday 7 March
Ski Trip, Aprica Italy
Week commencing 2 March
Year 11 PPEs
Thursday 5 March
Year 8 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 11 March
Governors Meeting
Friday 20 March - Sunday 22 March
TenTors
Wednesday 25 March
Year 11 Parents' Information Evening - Subject Specific Workshops
Monday 30 March - Friday 10 April
Easter Holidays
Friday 24 April - Sunday 26 April
TenTors
Tuesday 5 May
Governors Meeting
Friday 22 May - Tuesday 26 May
Multisport trip,
Thursday 4 June
Year 10 Parents Information Evening
Tuesday 23 & Wednesday 24 June
Great Western Heartstarters

YEAR 10 BOWLING REWARDS TRIP

On Tuesday 16 December 14 students from Year 10 had a great evening bowling as a reward for their start to life in Key Stage 4.



GOLDEN TICKET AWARDS AFTERNOON TEA

Thursday 18 December saw students selected by members of the Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Year celebrate a great end to Term 1 with an afternoon tea with Mr Phelps. Students were nominated for things such as great attendance, completing extra homework, being mature in social situations, great in class, receiving top 10 positive points, consistently demonstrating ambition, fantastic behaviour and attendance and sharing big plans for the future, and for always doing the right thing.



UPDATES FROM HEADS OF YEAR

MRS PHELPS - HEAD OF YEAR 8

As we pause for the festive season, I want to recognise the efforts our Year 8 students have made this term, particularly regarding their attendance. This term has definitely felt like a long one with the dark and wet evenings and we are all deserving of a break. Attendance remains an ongoing focus and a key target for our entire year group next year. Being in school, on time, and prepared every single day is the most fundamental ingredient for learning and progress. While we have seen periods of great consistency - especially between Mr Maidment and Mrs Hayward's groups - we must collectively aim for even higher attendance rates across the board in the new year. I encourage you to use this break to allow your child to return energised and committed to being present for every valuable minute of their education, building on the foundation they have established this term.



Our work on developing strong character, particularly the trait of integrity, is also a continuous journey that we must prioritise. Integrity means always striving to make the honest choice, taking ownership of one's work, and acting responsibly even when it's challenging. This is not a lesson to be learned and forgotten; it is a lifelong skill that requires consistent practice both inside and outside of school. Moving into the next term, we will continue to set high expectations for truthfulness, respect, and personal responsibility in all actions.

To finish, I'd love to give a special mention to those making great choices inside and out of school. Ella C congratulations on your creative Dance exploits: achieving a distinction in your recent exams. As well as the confidence shown when you are singing beautifully at a number of local establishments. A huge congratulations to Lily G on the completion of your black belt in Karate also.

In school, Jayden H received a Golden Ticket to reward his 100% attendance and 0 negative points. Jayden was one student selected from a pool of 19 in Year 8 who are getting it right on a daily basis. Well done!

Special mention to 8AFS for the most hours of reading completed on Sparx Reader. As a year group, we have read over 1220 hours of quality fiction and non-fiction since September. Huge congratulations to our top 5 performers: Aalish T, Leila M, Lily H, Oliver S and Albert B!

Wishing you all a wonderful break and I look forward to hearing of more wonderful events, inside of school and out, in the New Year.

MR ROBBINS - HEAD OF YEAR 9

As we look ahead to the assessments after Christmas, I am really pleased with the hard work and focus many of our students have already shown; they are rising to the challenge and should be proud of the progress they are making. To give them the very best chance of success, we do need to see attendance improve from "okay" to consistently strong, as every missed lesson is a missed opportunity to learn and grow. Next term is packed with exciting opportunities, including new clubs and societies, a range of trips and visits, and fresh curriculum topics in lessons that will stretch and inspire them. With parents and school working together on attendance, effort, and engagement, I am confident our students can make the most of everything on offer and take a real step forward in their learning and personal development.



MR BURKE - HEAD OF YEAR 10

As we approach the end of a busy and productive autumn term, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible progress our Year 10 students have made. This term represents a significant transition as the cohort truly begins their GCSE journeys. I have been immensely impressed by the resilience and focus shown in classrooms across the school.

It has been an incredibly busy and pivotal term for our Year 10 students. Transitioning from Key Stage 3 into full GCSE courses is one of the most significant steps in a student's educational journey. I have been delighted to see how the majority of the year group has risen to the challenge. Walking through the corridors, I see a renewed sense of purpose. This term was about building foundations, and I am proud of the grit our students have shown.

I would like to thank all parents and carers for your continued support. It is a privilege to lead this year group, and I look forward to seeing everyone refreshed and ready for the challenges of the new term. Wishing you all a peaceful and happy festive break.



UPDATES FROM HEADS OF YEAR

MR HAYWARD - HEAD OF YEAR 11

We've made it to the end of a long autumn term. Between coursework deadlines, new content, and the winter chill, you've put in a tremendous amount of work and now the festive break is finally here. While this is a time for celebration, we all know what's waiting on the other side: PPE exams. This break is about finding the "sweet spot" — resting enough to recharge your batteries, but staying sharp enough to walk into those exam halls with confidence.



As we enter the final stretch of your secondary education, attendance is our number one priority. Missing just a few days of school can lead to "gaps" in your knowledge that are very difficult to fill. Research consistently shows a direct link between high attendance and higher GCSE grades. Let's aim for 100% attendance in the new term to give you the best possible chance of success in the summer.

If you haven't already, now is the perfect time to finalise your post-16 options. Whether you are looking at sixth form, college, or an apprenticeship, the deadlines are approaching fast. Some have already passed. Have a wonderful, restful, and safe Christmas break. We are incredibly proud of the progress you've made so far, and we can't wait to see you hit the ground running in January.

ENTERPRISE SOCIETY CHRISTMAS MARKETS

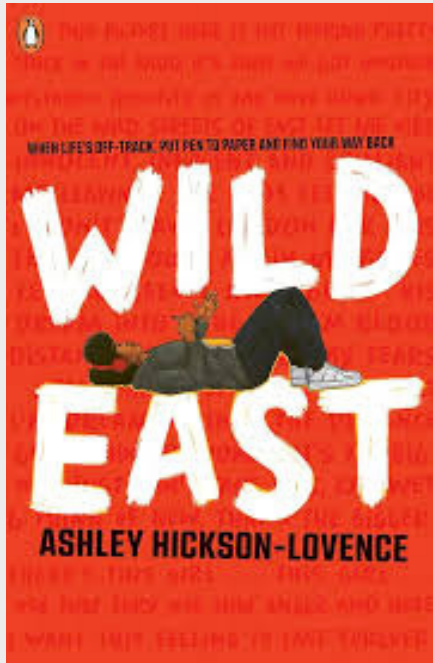
A huge well done to all of the students who successfully created their businesses and are raising money for charities of their choice. During lunchtimes on Monday 8 and Tuesday 9 December, we held our Christmas Markets allowing them to sell their creations to staff and students. We look forward to sharing with you their grand totals in the new year and inviting representatives in to school from the charities to receive their donations.



READING RECOMMENDATIONS

English Teacher, Mrs Langton shares her picks for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

KEY STAGE 3



Wild East by Ashley Hickson Lovence

Pen in one hand, on my wrist, a ticking clock I've got to make this work, just need a little luck...

When 14-year-old Ronny's life is struck by tragedy, his mum decides it's finally time they move out of East London.

In his new city, as a black teenager in a mostly white school, Ronny feels like a complete outsider and struggles to balance keeping his head down with his ambition of becoming a rapper.

But when a local poet comes into class, Ronny discovers a world he's never considered before. Rap is like spoken word, bars equal poetry – and maybe the combination of both could be the key to achieving his dreams?

Winner of the YA Diverse Book Award 2025, the Two Cities Book Award 2024, the Mal Peet Children's Award 2024 and the East Anglian Book of the Year 2024, and nominated for the 2025 Carnegie Medal for Writing.

KEY STAGE 4



Glasgow Boys by Margaret McDonald

Two boys can't remember the last time they had a hug.

Meet Finlay. He's studying for his nursing degree at Glasgow University, against all the odds. But coming straight from care means he has no support network.

How can he write essays, find paid work and not fall for the beautiful boy at uni, when he's struggling to even feed himself?

Meet Banjo. He's trying to settle in with his new foster family and finish high school. But he can't forget all that has happened, and his anger and fear keep boiling over.

How can he hold on to the one good person in his life, when his outbursts keep threatening his already uncertain future?

Can Finlay and Banjo let go of the past before it drags them under?

Carnegie Medal Winner 2025, YA Book Prize Shortlist 2025, Waterstones Children's Book Prize Shortlist 2025

**BOTH AVAILABLE IN THE
SCHOOL LIBRARY**

CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

On Thursday 18 December, students and staff were joined by families and members of the community including Matt Bishop MP and Mayor Nick Penny for an evening of festive celebrations at Coleford Baptist Church. Our Year 7 and 8 choir were represented and performed a selection of carols and our Student Leadership Team, including Character Education leads and deputies, shared readings.



AMBITION - CONFIDENCE - CREATIVITY - DETERMINATION - RESPECT

FUTURES FOR ALL YOUTH COUNCIL

Following an application and interview process, congratulations to Year 10 student Phoebe who has been selected to join the Futures for All Youth Council. Members act as an advisory board for the charity's teams, improve and co-create its programmes, provide feedback on student resources, write letters to Ministers on youth initiatives and blog articles about their experiences, record short videos to inform and inspire young people, attend or speak at educational events and round table meetings with policy makers, MPs or employers, get training and chances to grow skills and confidence. Phoebe has also earned her Platinum Character Education badge for working on a project to enhance opportunities for students at a national level.

Phoebe says: "Having been accepted into the Futures For All Youth Council I am proud to represent young people and help support and offer others opportunities and skills to achieve. I hope to create a change for young people and ensure that they have every chance to be successful."



FOREST FOODBANK REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR APPEAL

Our Reverse Advent calendar appeal was a huge success and thank you to everyone who donated in the build up to our Christmas Jumper Day on Wednesday 17 December. Pictured are our Student Leadership Team Ben, Tio, Freya, Lillie and Ellie alongside volunteers from the Forest Foodbank. Your amazing generosity will support so many families in our community at this time of year.

Lydney distribution centre at the River Family and Children's centre, Naas Lane Lydney GL15 5AU opens after Christmas on 6 January 2026, Coleford opens on 7 January 2026 and Cinderford at The Forest Community church will be open on 8 January 2026.

To get help look on our website <https://theforest.foodbank.org.uk/get-help/>

The Forest Foodbank would like to wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and thank you all for the tremendous support that all schools in the area give to them.



FUNDRAISING FOR MOROCCO EXPEDITION

December has been a busy month for students and staff raising funds for the Morocco expedition. Wednesday 3 December saw students, staff and families join other GLT schools at Gloucester Academy for a Christmas Quiz. Students also hosted the Year 7 Disco, sold raffle tickets and provided refreshments at our Open Mic night on Wednesday 17 December.



YEAR 11 & 10 A CHRISTMAS CAROL TRIP

On Friday 19 December, 48 Key Stage 4 students travelled to The Theatre Royal in Bath to experience the one-man A Christmas Carol performance by Olivier Award winner Guy Masterson. Students really enjoyed the experience as they study the Charles Dickens novel in their English lessons.



AMBITION - CONFIDENCE - CREATIVITY - DETERMINATION - RESPECT