

HOULTON SUMMER NEWS 2025



HOULTON
SCHOOL

The Sir Harry and Lady Djanogly
Learning Resource Centre



Welcome from the Principal

Dear Houlton family,

As we approach the end of our fourth year of operation as an academy, I am delighted to share our final newsletter of the year with you all.

This edition is jam-packed full of exciting highlights of our work together this year, not least of which being the articles that have come out of our annual enrichment week - always a highlight, but this year has been our best ever!

In September our main school will be full for the first time with 900 pupils on campus - and I am thrilled that from September 2026 it is now confirmed that we'll be simultaneously opening our primary-phase provision to Reception and our Sixth Form to Year 12.

We will be welcoming lots of new faces to the teaching and support teams after the summer break, but there are also some sad farewells. We say goodbye to Mr Mistry, our Senior Site

Officer, to Mr Mahli and Mr Lowry in the Mathematics team, to Mr Hobrow and Mrs Malhi in Inclusion and to Mr Ellis who has secured promotion to Vice Principal in another Trust. We wish them all every success and happiness in their next chapters.

Take care and be safe over the holidays; I look forward to welcoming you all back in the autumn term.

Michael McCulley
Principal

Two Brilliant Graduations!

Earlier this academic year, Year 8 pupils who successfully completed The Brilliant Club Scholars' Programme attended their graduation ceremony at the University of Nottingham.

The Humanities group worked with their PhD tutor, Maged Zakher from the University of Northampton, on the topic "The Secret to Living a Long and Happy Life." Pupils researched and compared key factors affecting life expectancy in two different countries of their choice, before developing strategies to increase longevity. Meanwhile, the STEM group collaborated with their PhD tutor, Merissa Hickham from the University of Leicester, on an exciting project entitled "Biology: Disease Detectives."

Both tutors praised the pupils for their dedication and resilience throughout the challenging programme, and impressively, 12 pupils achieved a First in their final assignments.

More recently, in July, our Year 7 pupils celebrated their own graduation from the Scholars' Programme at the University of Sheffield.

Guided by their PhD tutor, Charlotte Parker from the University of Nottingham, the Year 7 STEM group also explored "Biology: Disease Detectives," focusing on how to develop and prioritise strategies to prevent the spread of malaria in an African village.

Meanwhile, the Humanities group investigated the topic "Economics: What is Money?" with tutor Precious Reuben from the University of Leicester. Their challenge: to create and manage a new currency for an imaginary desert island with limited resources.

Throughout the programme, all pupils demonstrated Houlton's core value of tenacity—attending every tutorial and meeting all deadlines. They should be incredibly proud of their achievements!

We look forward to sharing more success stories and fascinating project topics from our Key Stage 3 Brilliant Club Scholars in the next academic year...

Miss Angela Lancini
Assistant Principal



Houlton Presents... A Midsummer Night's Dream

We ended the term and academic year with an incredible show of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', at the Yelvertoft Theatre by the Pond, performed by our talented Year 9 and 10 pupils and Performing Arts Scholars.

The cast did a fantastic job of bringing Shakespeare's magical comedy to life with charming, unforgettable performances.

A huge well done to the entire cast and crew for their hard work and passion – what a wonderful way to end the year!

Miss Frankie Connolly
Head of Dance



Our show was brought to life by:

Elissa (Year 10) - Puck
Lewis (Year 10) - Demetrius
Mo (Year 8) - Starveling
Faith (Year 10) - Titania
Claudia (Year 10) - Hippolyta
Isabelle (Year 8) - Snug
Callum (Year 10) - Bottom
Charlotte (Year 10) - Helena
Imogen (Year 10) - Hermia
Danielle (Year 9) - Philostrate
Katherine (Year 10) - Egeus
Isabelle M (Year 10) - Lysander
Victoria (Year 8) - Flute
Jordan (Year 8) - Theseus
Eira (Year 10) - Oberon
Madeline (Year 9) - Snout
Erin (Year 9) - Quince

With an honourable mention to our fairies!

Isabella (Year 10)
Orlaith (Year 10)
Charlotte (Year 10)
Lauren (Year 10)
Daisy (Year 10)

Curriculum Enrichment Week

Our Curriculum Enrichment Week was a fantastic way to round off the academic year - packed full of adventure.

With plenty of residential and day trips, as well as activities back at base, it was a chance for pupils to try something new and broaden their horizons. The week was full of growth, fun, and unforgettable memories.

Here are just some of this year's highlights...

Year 7's Barton Hall Adventure

Over 100 excited Year 7 pupils headed to sunny Devon for an unforgettable week at Barton Hall. After a long journey, we arrived at stunning sea views and jumped straight into the action.

Pupils took on a brilliant mix of activities, including canoeing, abseiling, trapeze, problem solving and archery! Evenings were just as fun, with a silent disco and marshmallow-filled campfire.

Our pupils were brilliant throughout – supportive, enthusiastic and full of team spirit. Some even practised their French with a visiting group from France!

We returned tired but buzzing with memories we hope will last a lifetime. Huge thanks to the amazing staff team for making the trip possible and for their support every step of the way.



Year 8 Paris Tour 2025

75 Year 8 pupils spent a memorable week soaking up the culture, history and magic of Paris during enrichment week.

From the iconic Sacré-Cœur and the artists of Montmartre to a behind-the-scenes tour of the Stade de France, pupils experienced the city from every angle. They cruised along the Seine at sunset, taking in stunning views of the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame and the Grand Palais, and enjoyed panoramic cityscapes from the top of Montparnasse Tower.

Some were brave enough to try snails, all explored the spectacular Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, and one lucky coach even spotted Kim Kardashian modelling for Balenciaga - cue screams from both pupils and staff!

The week ended on a high with a full day at Disneyland Paris - the perfect finale to a trip packed with new friendships, amazing memories and a real taste of Parisian charm.

Mr Mark Couch
Teacher of Modern Languages



Year 9 Explore the Best of Barcelona

Our recent Year 9 Spanish trip to Barcelona was a wonderful adventure filled with culture, sunshine, and lasting memories. Over the course of five packed days, our pupils had the chance to experience the very best that this vibrant city has to offer.

We began our journey with a visit to the iconic Sagrada Família, where pupils were wowed by Gaudí's breathtaking architecture and the sheer scale of the basilica. This was followed by a stroll through the colourful and imaginative Parc Güell, another of Gaudí's masterpieces, offering stunning views over the city.

We then stepped back in time at Poble Espanyol, a charming open-air museum showcasing replicas of buildings from all over Spain, giving pupils a real flavour of the country's regional diversity.

Wandering down Las Ramblas, the city's most famous street, gave everyone a chance to soak up the lively atmosphere and try out their Spanish in local shops and cafés. While in the area, we also visited the fascinating Mercat del Born, a beautifully restored market space that reveals an archaeological site beneath - offering pupils a glimpse into Barcelona's rich past.

One of the highlights was a relaxing boat trip along the coast, giving us a unique view of Barcelona from the water. The pupils also enjoyed a traditional tapas meal, where they had the chance to sample a variety of Spanish dishes and immerse themselves in local culinary culture.

A visit to Montjuïc Castle and a ride on the cable car offered both history and adventure, as well as some incredible panoramic views of the city and coastline.

We ended the trip on a high with a full day at PortAventura, one of Europe's top theme parks. The pupils had an amazing time enjoying the rides.

Miss Carola Roca Cassanovas
Head of Spanish



Houlton School's exciting new primary provision

We are delighted that proposals have been approved to enable Houlton School to become an all-through provision – meaning that children will have the option to learn there from their first day of primary school until the moment that they head off to university or employment.

A purpose-built primary building will be developed next to the existing secondary school by the site's Master Developers, Urban&Civic. Planning permission has also just been granted, meaning that building works can proceed – with the opening of the primary provision planned for September 2026.

The prospect of an all-through school at Houlton is an exciting one. The children and young people will still have their own distinct areas to play, learn and socialise – but they

will also be able to benefit from shared resources, facilities and opportunities.

Primary aged children, for example, will be able to experience science labs and have access to specialist teachers for subjects like languages, and older children will have some amazing leadership and mentoring experiences. It is a win-win situation for everyone.

We are working with Urban&Civic to ensure that the building work will be done

with consideration for the learning of the pupils. In addition, we are looking at the leadership structure that will sit under Principal McCulley to ensure that there is the appropriate experience, capacity and expertise so that all elements of Houlton School can thrive.

We will be communicating with parents and carers regularly about this to make sure you're up to date with our progress.



Celebrating Mathematical Excellence – A Year of Dedication and Progress

As we draw to the end of another busy and successful year in the Maths Department, we'd like to take a moment to celebrate the hard work, determination, and progress shown by our pupils across all year groups.

A particular highlight this year has been the fantastic effort pupils have put into their Sparx Maths homework. Pupils have collaboratively answered over 875,000 questions correctly and have spent over 10,000 hours working on additional maths content on the platform. This is something they should be commended for. Sparx not only supports learning outside the classroom, but also rewards consistency, effort, and resilience — all qualities we value highly in our pupils. We are incredibly proud to announce the top five highest XP earners across the whole school this academic year:

- Kieran (Year 9)
- Oliver (Year 9)
- Samina (Year 7)
- Goutham (Year 7)
- Divij (Year 7)

These pupils have demonstrated incredible commitment and are fantastic role models for others.

We would also like to recognise the top 3 XP earners in each year group from Year 7 to Year 10, who have consistently gone above and beyond in completing their work:

Year 7:	Year 8:	Year 9:	Year 10:
1. Goutham	1. Ethan	1. Kieran	1. Archie
2. Divij Sai	2. David	2. Oliver	2. Caydan
3. Samina	3. Blake	3. Daisy	3. Gracelyn

Well done to every pupil who has engaged with Sparx this year — your efforts do not go unnoticed.

Looking ahead, we are especially excited as next year marks a significant milestone: our first ever GCSE Maths cohort will sit their exams. This is a huge step, and one we are preparing for with enthusiasm and care. All of Year 10 have now received their most recent assessment papers, and we encourage parents and carers to talk with their children over the summer about these results. These conversations are a key part of helping pupils identify their strengths and focus areas ahead of the final year of study.

Year 9 pupils have also taken an important first step by tackling their first look at a foundation-level GCSE paper this term. It has been brilliant to see so many pupils engaging positively with the challenge and showing genuine interest in what lies ahead. While these assessments provide us with useful insight, they are just an early indicator to help guide and support pupils as they begin their final two-year GCSE journey in Maths.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to all our pupils, parents, and carers for your continued support and commitment this year. We wish you all a restful summer break and look forward to welcoming everyone back in September, ready to build on this year's success.

Mr Ollie Jenkins
Second in Charge: Mathematics



Sparx Maths

Science in the Sun: From Superheroes to Solara

With the summer sun finally putting in a solid shift, our labs and classrooms have been buzzing with curiosity and discovery. From intrepid ecological fieldwork to super-powered thought experiments, here's a whistle-stop tour of what each year group has been up to—and where they're heading next.

Science Club | Into the Wild

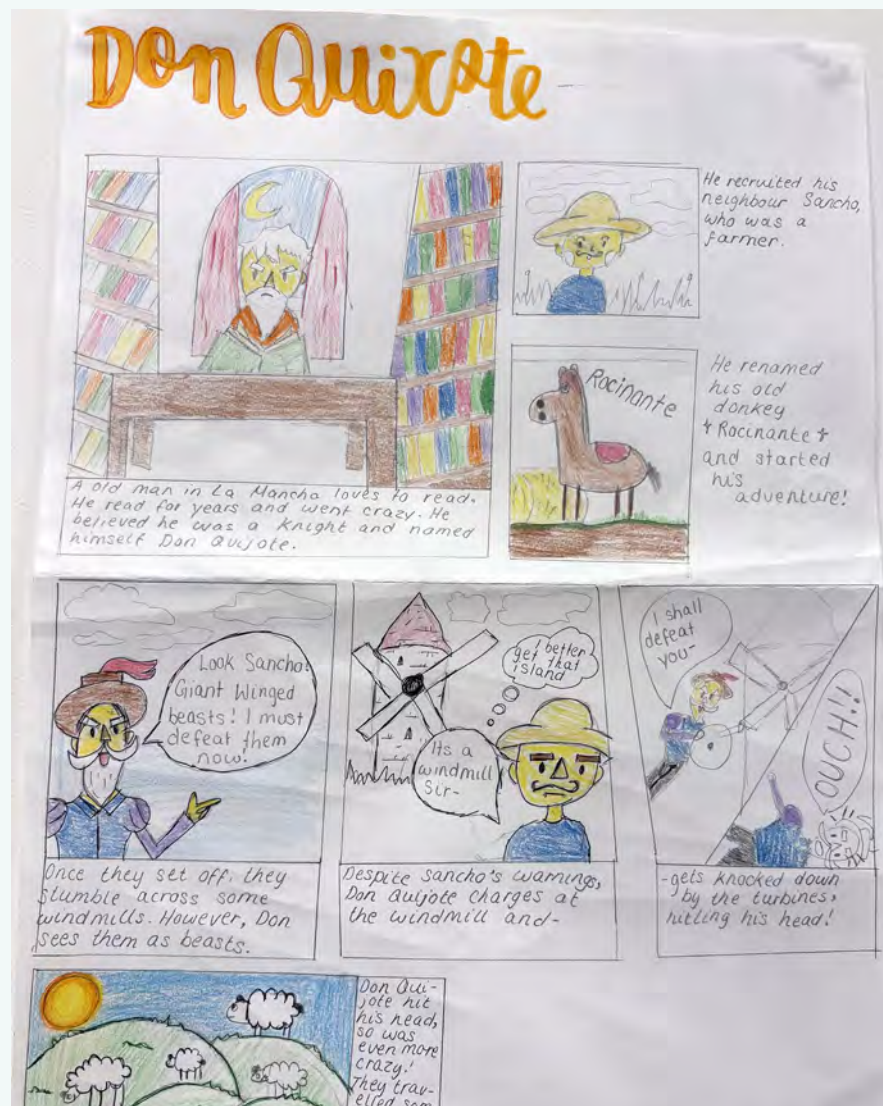
Taking full advantage of the glorious weather, Science Club headed outdoors to conduct real-world ecology studies. Pupils used quadrats to analyse plant diversity and looked at minibeasts down the microscope.

Year 7 | The Science of Superheroes

Can gamma radiation really bulk you up like the Hulk? Could Storm's lightning tricks ever work in real life? Year 7 have been putting comic-book feats under the scientific microscope, unpacking the physics of strength, and the electric fields of electricity. It turns out Bruce Banner would need bone density like reinforced concrete to avoid shattering every time he jumps, and Storm would require mastery over static charge separation on a planetary scale—no small ask!

Year 8 | Mysteries of Solara Island

West of Ireland is the fictional island of Solara, home to moss-dwelling micro-beasts and inexplicable magnetic anomalies. Year 8 have treated the island as a living case study: investigating ecology and the minibeasts underneath our feet, then mapping magnetic field lines with iron filings and sensors. Their mission statement? Use real-world physics and biology to demystify Solara's oddities—proving that even the strangest phenomena bow to the laws of science.



Year 9 | GCSE Launch Pad – The Periodic Table

It's lift-off for the GCSE journey! Year 9 dove straight into the heart of chemistry by exploring periodic trends, electron configurations, and the historical detective work of Mendeleev.

Year 10 | End-of-Year Exams—Mission Accomplished

Congratulations to Year 10 for completing their end-of-year exams with resilience and flair. The papers offered a tantalising glimpse of the breadth and depth awaiting them in Year 11. Over the coming weeks, we'll analyse question trends and fine-tune revision strategies, while setting the groundwork for Paper 2 in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. September may feel far away, but a little targeted preparation now will pay huge dividends when the real countdown begins.

Year 7 London Science Museum Trip—A Capital Adventure

Last but by no means least, our newest scientists took the capital by storm with a hands-on tour of the London Science Museum. From piloting lunar landers in the "Exploring Space" gallery to marvelling at Faraday's original apparatus, the day blended history, innovation, and wide-eyed wonder.

Mr Kris Docherty
Second in Charge: Science

Coding Creativity and Progress in Computer Science

As another year comes to an end in Computer Science, I often take a moment to look back at all we've achieved together.

Our new cohort of Year 7 are on the verge of Year 8 and have done fantastically well in Computing this year, learning how to use computers, understanding the key components and how programmers need to adapt to have the computer carry out what is needed.

This term, they have worked fantastically on MakeCode coding and got hands-on with our micro:bits. Not only have they created some fantastic code they have also worked on solving real-world problems and learning how to evaluate their work.

The colleges have particularly enjoyed creating code to solve cheating in Rock, Paper, Scissors as well as nightlights, emotion buttons and even an anti-poaching collar.

Year 8 have also acquitted themselves well this year, with a large long-term project designing a choose-your-own-adventure game, grappling with Python along the way.

This term, they have finished by looking at how information can be presented, designing some fantastic online safety posters and presentations. I have seen some fantastic work across this year and look forward to them further developing their skills in year 9.

It is strange to think that Year 9 and I began our journey at Houlton together when they first entered Year 7, and the past few years have gone by very fast. This year, they have understood networks and more Python coding. Followed by post options choices of impacts, and this term's topic of advanced IT skills, making them ready for GCSE and the real world, regardless of their subject.

Computers and their software can be an amazing support tool during pupils' studies. Our key areas of focus have been referencing and how using Microsoft Word can be used to make this process much easier and time efficient, and budgeting using Microsoft Excel, with pupils creating spreadsheets to work out budgets for various aspects of life. I am excited to see those Year 9s who have selected computer science next year to develop their understanding of the subject further and in greater depth.

Which brings me to our current Year 10s, our first GCSE cohort. This group has done fantastically in gelling together as a group, pushing each other's knowledge further and putting up with my "dad jokes".

We have covered multiple topics, including networks, computers, data representation and impacts of computers, which we continue to revise. We have also started on and continue to work on our Python units, ready for Year 11 and the GCSE papers that term 3 2026, contains.

Next year promises to include some brilliant lessons, topics and opportunities for learning that we will continue together.

Mr Matt Cresswell-Peters
Head of Computer Science

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Social Science Reflections and Summer Inspiration

This half term has been another busy one for Social Science pupils. As well as starting new topics all pupils have received feedback from their mocks.

Pupils have spent time identifying their strengths and areas for development and have created a personalised action plan. It would be great if you could chat to your child about their plan and encourage its completion over the summer holidays.

We also welcomed some of the residents from a local care home for afternoon tea. It was lovely to chat and swap more stories as well as share the history of our school. We enjoyed a couple of games of Uno and then a wander around Houlton Fest – it was a great way to end the year.

The summer holidays can provide an excellent opportunity to read around the subject. I have listed some interesting books, documentaries and podcasts which may pique interest from pupils and parents/carers alike!

Books

- Gang Leader for a Day – Sudhir Venkatesh - Real-life sociological research on gangs, deviance, and urban poverty.
- The Spirit Level – Richard Wilkinson & Kate Pickett - Inequality and its social consequences.

- The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat – Oliver Sacks - Case studies in neuropsychology – memory, perception, brain function.
- The Lucifer Effect – Philip Zimbardo - Obedience, conformity, ethics – covers his prison experiment in detail.
- Bounce – Matthew Syed - Talent vs practice – psychology of learning and development.
- 1984 – George Orwell - Power, surveillance, social control – relevant for both psychology and sociology.
- Lord of the Flies – William Golding - Socialisation, group behaviour, conformity.
- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time – Mark Haddon - Neurodiversity, perception, family relationships.

Documentaries

- Educating Essex/Educating Yorkshire (Channel 4) - Education system, teacher/pupil interaction, inequality
- Panorama: Britain's Hidden Homeless - Social issues, poverty, inequality.
- The Secret Life of 4 and 5 Year Olds (C4) - Socialisation, gender roles, peer groups.
- The Mind, Explained (Netflix) - Covers memory, anxiety, dreams – clear and engaging.

- Three Identical Strangers (Netflix) - Twins separated at birth – nature vs nurture debate.
- The Stanford Prison Experiment (2015 dramatization or docu-clips) - Conformity, obedience, ethics in research.
- Brain Games (National Geographic) - Fun and interactive exploration of memory, perception, attention.

Podcasts

- BBC Radio 4 – Thinking Allowed (Laurie Taylor) - Discusses contemporary sociological research in an accessible way.
- The Sociology Show (Dan Hewitt) - Interviews with sociologists, pupil-friendly topics.
- Social Science Bites - Short interviews with leading social scientists.
- PsychCrunch (from the British Psychological Society) - Bitesize episodes with academic insight – well aligned to GCSE topics.
- All in the Mind (BBC Radio 4) - Explores mental health, behaviour, neuroscience
- Speaking of Psychology (APA) - Psychological insights on real-world issues

Ms Emma Clark
Head of Social Sciences

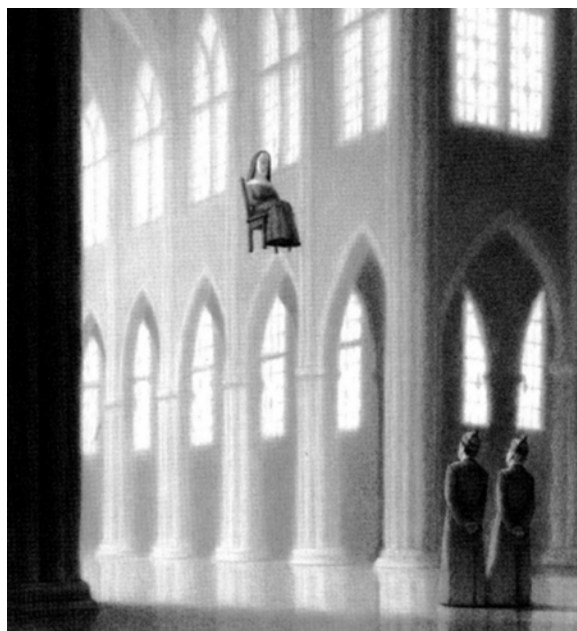


Mystery Writing and Powerful Voices in English

KEY STAGE 3

We had a fantastic Transition Day with our new Year 6 pupils this term. Mr.Coleman and Mrs.Straw introduced them to the mystery of Harris Burdick, an illustrator who disappeared in the 1950s leaving behind nothing but a series of pictures. Young people have used these images as inspiration for writing short stories over the last few decades and in our lesson, the Year 6s were asked to write a mysterious opening paragraph to one of them.

One year 6 pupil, Edward, wrote: "Two weeks passed and it happened again. He just started crying. The man was sitting on his very clean sofa, staring at his very clean rug and the tears just came. Right out of nowhere, the tears started to flow and they wouldn't stop. A river as long as a giraffe's neck began to wind it's way onto the carpet. The man went to fetch a mop to wipe away the flood but when he returned the wet patch had gone and in its place there rose a lump. A strange lump under the carpet. He grabbed a chair and tried to whack it but it wouldn't stay still..."



Year 7 have been engaging with our Voices for Change unit and have been writing speeches focused on equality. Inspired by Emma Watson's HeforShe speech at the United Nations, our pupils are looking to persuade an audience to stamp out racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism and anti-semitism to name but a few. We are hoping to have an enlightened generation of rhetoricians spring up around us.

Please support your child with reading over the summer holiday by following this link to School Reading List www.schoolreadinglist.co.uk. The site is packed with ideas and guidance for selecting books to interest every young person. There are recommendations for books for young adults and teens aged 11-18 with reading lists for years 7-9 and years 10-11 in secondary school. Titles are selected by experienced teachers.

During our Houlton Enrichment Week, pupils have had the chance to take their first steps into the world of palaeography (the study of historical handwriting, focusing on deciphering, dating, and understanding the context of old manuscripts and documents). This included the chance to decipher and write their own Elizabethan style texts.



GCSE

Y10 pupils have started their study of the GCSE Poetry Anthology this term and have become immersed in stanzas, sibilance and rhyming couplets. One of my favourites is Exposure by Wilfred Owen who describes the burying of his fellow WWI soldiers thus:

*To-night, His frost will fasten on this mud
and us,
Shrivelling many hands, puckering
foreheads crisp.
The burying-party, picks and shovels in
shaking grasp,
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes
are ice.*

Context is so key to success in the GCSE Literature exam and so Year 10 have been played excerpts from Voices of WWI, a series of interviews conducted by the Imperial War Museum (link below). There are some incredible tales of bravery, sacrifice and trench life to be found here.



www.iwm.org.uk/VoicesOfTheFirstWorldWar

My class were played an excerpt from British artillery officer Murray Rymer-Jones who found an unusual way to cope with the freezing trench conditions in the winter of 1916.

Now, for our own comfort, to be in a tent with snow on the ground and the appalling cold was nobody's business. You couldn't have heating in the tents, you see. So the only thing I could do then was, we had a double loo heavily sandbagged all round in the entrance, you see, it was like little rooms. And although there was no connection between the two, you could talk to the chap next door! So Hammond, from another battery who came and joined us for a bit then, he and I used to sit in the loo most of the night – because it was so heavily sandbagged it kept it reasonably warm – and talked!

Keep on reading (and listening)!

Mr Ben Coleman
Head of English and Literacy



A Living Lesson on History: Naseby Battle Project Visits Year 7

Year 7 pupils were transported back in time thanks to an exciting and educational visit from the Naseby Battle Project. Even more special, the session was led in part by a familiar face — our former teaching assistant Mrs Ball, who now works with the project to bring history to life across schools in the region.

The team gave an engaging talk all about the English Civil War, with a particular focus on the Battle of Naseby, one of the most significant clashes of the conflict. Pupils learned about the key figures from both sides of the war, including King Charles I and Oliver Cromwell, and how their decisions shaped the future of Britain.

As well as a fascinating presentation, pupils were treated to a hands-on experience with authentic replica weapons. Under close supervision, they learned how muskets and pikes were used in battle. The highlight of the visit was a lively re-enactment of how soldiers would have fought using 17th-century techniques.

Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to step into the shoes of a Civil War soldier and experience history in such an immersive way. It was not only educational but sparked lots of curiosity and questions, bringing classroom lessons to life in a memorable and exciting way.

A huge thank you to the Naseby Battle Project — and Mrs Ball — for a fantastic visit. We hope to welcome them back again in the future!

Mrs Becky Cooper
Head of PHRSE



Year 7 Ask: Is Rugby an Appealing Place to Live?

This term, our Year 7 pupils have been using Ordnance Survey (OS) maps to explore the big question: Is Rugby an appealing place to live?

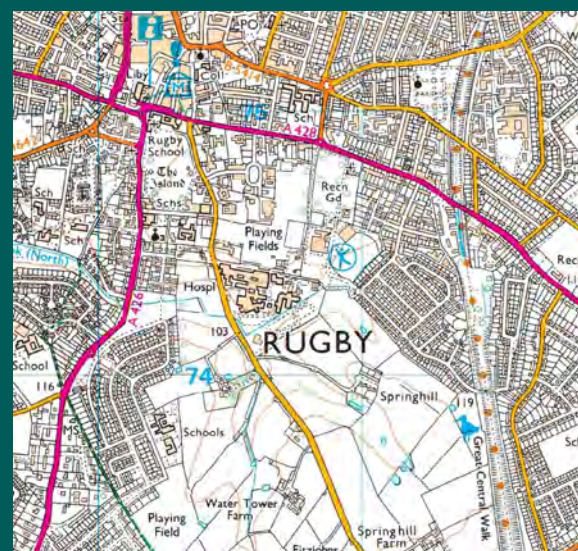
Through hands-on map work and local fieldwork enquiry, pupils have developed key geographical skills including interpreting symbols, using grid references, and understanding land use patterns.

Using Rugby — our own town — as a living case study, pupils examined local features such as transport links, housing developments, green spaces, and access to services. Particular attention was given to areas around Houlton, enabling pupils to connect their classroom learning directly to their own experiences and surroundings.

Pupils produced thoughtful and well-supported conclusions, showcasing a strong understanding of how geography impacts everyday life. They particularly enjoyed using OS maps alongside their own knowledge of Rugby, which helped bring the learning to life.

It's been a brilliant opportunity for Year 7 to deepen their understanding of their local area while strengthening the core geographical skills they'll continue to develop throughout their time at Houlton School.

Mr Charlie McDermott
Head of Geography



Big Questions and Thinking in Religious Studies

It has been an exciting and reflective term for our pupils in Religious Studies across the school. With each year group delving into new and thought-provoking topics, classrooms have been buzzing with curiosity, meaningful discussions, and deep engagement.

In Year 7, pupils have moved on to learning about Sikhi, asking the key question: "Who are the Sikhs, and what do they stand for?" Pupils have been particularly intrigued by the story of the Khalsa and how it was formed during the festival of Vaisakhi. Learning about the Ten Gurus and their teachings has helped pupils to understand the values at the heart of Sikhism, such as equality, service, and courage. Many have said it's been eye-opening to explore a faith that promotes standing up for justice and helping others.

Meanwhile, Year 8 pupils have been grappling with even bigger questions in their unit: "How do different religions shape our understanding of life?" This has led to some powerful class debates and discussions around complex issues like euthanasia, abortion, and the use and abuse of the planet. Pupils have shown maturity and respect when engaging with different viewpoints and have been encouraged to think critically about how religious and ethical beliefs influence people's decisions and values.

Year 9 have also spent time exploring the ultimate question: "What's the purpose behind our existence?" Through this,

they have reflected on the sanctity of life and what gives life meaning. Pupils have shown genuine interest in discussing what matters most in life, and how beliefs about our purpose can shape the way we live.

In Year 10, pupils have started their new topic on Islam, laying a strong foundation as they prepare for their GCSEs. They are learning about the core beliefs, practices, and values of Islam, with a focus on understanding the Five Pillars and how Muslims live out their faith. The pupils are showing great focus and are already making thoughtful links between what they've learned in earlier years and the new material.

Overall, it has been a term full of deep thinking, respectful discussion, and valuable learning. It's clear that our pupils are not just learning about religions — they are learning from them, asking big questions about life, meaning, and morality. We are proud of how thoughtfully and maturely they are engaging with these topics, and we look forward to seeing where their learning will take them next.

Mrs Dupinder Ghatora
Head of Religious Studies



Year 10 Shine in CV Workshop

Year 10 recently took part in a CV Skills Writing Workshop during their PHRSE Careers Day session. The workshop was designed to support pupils in exploring their future ambitions and making informed choices about their post-16 pathways.

Using the Unifrog platform, pupils were guided through a step-by-step process to build their own tailored CVs. Unifrog's intuitive tools allowed them to record their skills, experiences, and achievements in a professional format. Whether pupils were considering sixth form, college, apprenticeships or employment, the session gave them the chance to think carefully about how to present themselves effectively to future employers or education providers.

The workshop encouraged pupils to reflect on their individual journeys, strengths,

and goals. They explored what makes a great CV and how to match their content to the opportunities they might apply for in the future. Many pupils included achievements from work experience, extra-curricular activities, school leadership roles, and volunteering.

The quality of the CVs produced was outstanding. Pupils demonstrated real maturity and ambition, and it was clear that many left the workshop feeling more confident about their choices for next year. Many pupils were already able to tailor their

CV to the post-16 provider they will be applying to early next year.

Unifrog continues to be a powerful platform for career development, and we're excited to see how pupils use it to support their next steps. Every pupil in the school now has a Unifrog login which can be used at home and school to compare university courses, apprenticeships, and Further Education options.

Mrs Becky Cooper
Head of PHRSE

Year 10s Lead the Way as Art Ambassadors

This term, a group of Year 10 Fine Art pupils took part in a workshop led by Rugby Art Gallery and Museum's Education Team on becoming Art Ambassadors.

Pupils had the opportunity to share their experiences of Arts and Culture within Rugby and the surrounding communities and express their views on how provision could be improved.

They mapped out where there would be potential in enhancing experiences and exposure to different forms of Art, from Sculpture to poetry, from music festivals to painting workshops! It was exciting to see the next generation so invested in creativity for the future.

Dr Ruth Woodcraft
Head of Creative



Food Preparation and Nutrition

Year 7-10 Explore Protein and Food Culture

Year 7 have been looking into the benefits of protein in the diet and understanding what are high and low examples of these foods. They have made protein bites with packaging to accompany the products.

Year 8 have also been researching protein, further developing their understanding of HBV protein foods and LBV protein foods. They have identified foods that fit into the two categories and made meatballs and Quorn balls.

Year 9 pupils have been continuing to develop their afternoon tea skills by creating a twist on the traditional scone, with ham, cheese, and chive scones as a share and tear.

While our Year 10 pupils travelled to East London to conduct the Walk, Eat Tour. During the visit, pupils tasted six different types of food and drink, including a salted beef bagel from one of London's oldest - still family-run bagel bakeries; chocolate truffles from a lady called Nyanga who is from Ghana; as well as handmade samosa, pakora, bhaji or paneer rolls made by one of the oldest Bangladeshi sweet and snack delis in the area, to name a few.

Mrs Baldeep Devgun
Head of Food Preparation and Nutrition



Spanish

¡Hola from the Spanish Department!

As we wrap up a fantastic term, we wanted to share some of the highlights from Spanish lessons across Key Stage 3 and Year 10. Each year group has been diving into exciting topics, developing their language skills while learning more about Spanish-speaking cultures.

Year 7 – ¿Adónde voy?

This term, Year 7 pupils have explored the big question “¿Adónde voy?” (“Where am I going?”) as they’ve taken their first steps into the future tense in Spanish. Pupils have been learning how to talk about future plans, from weekend activities to dream holidays. They’ve worked hard to form sentences using “ir + a + infinitive”, building confidence in speaking and writing about what they are going to do. It’s been fantastic to see their creativity shine through when describing their ideal trips!

Year 8 – Don Quijote de la Mancha

Year 8 has taken a cultural journey into Spanish literature, learning about Don Quijote de la Mancha, the most famous novel ever written in Spain and one of the most translated books in the world. Written by Miguel de Cervantes, this classic story of a nobleman turned knight has sparked great discussions and imaginative activities in class. Pupils explored the characters, the storyline, and the historical context, gaining a deeper appreciation for Spanish literary heritage.

Year 9 – Celebrating Spanish Festivals

This term, Year 9 delved deeper into the rich world of Spanish festivals. From La Tomatina to Las Fallas and Semana Santa, pupils learned about the origins, traditions, and significance of these cultural events. They developed their reading and listening skills while expanding their cultural awareness. Many pupils enjoyed

comparing Spanish celebrations with festivals in the UK, and the vibrant videos and group discussions brought the topics to life.

Year 10 – Talking About the Future and Preparing for GCSE

Year 10 have been working hard this term, continuing with the school topic while also sharpening their exam skills. They’ve practised reading, writing, listening, and speaking tasks in the style of GCSE assessments, gaining confidence in both content and exam technique.

They’ve also been building on their understanding of the future tense, using it to talk about future ambitions, career plans, and upcoming holidays. Pupils are learning to use a range of tenses and express their opinions more fluently – fantastic preparation for Year 11!

Miss Carola Roca Casanovas
Head of Spanish

French

We’ve had a wonderful year of language learning here at Houlton, always guided by our Big Questions that help us explore how language connects to the wider world. Our pupils have gone above and beyond expectations, showing real curiosity and commitment in every lesson.

In Year 7, we spent time diving into the magical world of Le Petit Prince. Pupils looked at the story through the lens of animals and colours, exploring why the author chose them and how they help us understand the characters’ feelings and ideas. It sparked some thoughtful conversations about symbolism, imagination and the ways stories can be shared across cultures. Pupils also produced creative work inspired by the book, including colourful posters, short role-plays and descriptive writing.

Year 8 has been all about film and pop culture. We looked at different film genres, from comedy and adventure to science fiction, and discussed what makes each one unique. Pupils compared French and British films, picked out themes and even designed their own movie posters.

Alongside this, we explored popular music and trends, thinking about how language helps shape culture and identity. It was fantastic to see so many pupils confidently expressing opinions and making connections between what they watch and listen to at home and what we studied in class.

Year 9 pupils worked hard on cultural projects while also preparing for their GCSE studies. Together, we examined the French Revolution, discussing how it changed society and why it still matters today. Our classes also followed the excitement of Le Tour de France, learning about famous cyclists, the different stages of the race and the regions it passes through. To bring a bit of French leisure to Houlton, we learned about the origins of pétanque and how it became such

a popular pastime. Everyone had the chance to play, and there were plenty of competitive games (and a lot of joie de vivre) as pupils practised their skills.

Year 10 was very much GCSE time. Pupils have worked incredibly hard revising for their end of year assessments, focusing on key topics such as family and relationships, holidays, education, and the world of work. We’ve spent time practising speaking and listening tasks, building up vocabulary and working on strategies to tackle longer reading and writing questions with confidence. It has been brilliant to see pupils supporting each other, sharing ideas, and showing real determination to do their best.

Throughout the year, it’s been inspiring to see pupils growing not only in their language skills but also in their understanding of different cultures and perspectives. They’ve brought energy, curiosity and creativity to every topic, and it’s made for a fantastic year of learning.

Mr Matthieu Raffy
Head of Faculty: Modern Languages

A Super-Curricular Day at the University of Oxford – Keble College Visit

We were once again delighted to take a group of our pupils on a visit to the University of Oxford, where they enjoyed a fantastic opportunity at Keble College.

The day began with an inspiring Aspiring Futures introductory talk, followed by an engaging Q&A session and a tour of the college with current pupil ambassadors. Our pupils particularly enjoyed the chance to ask questions and gain a real insight into life at Oxford.

Lunch in the impressive Keble College dining hall was a real highlight, giving pupils a taste of university life. The afternoon continued with an academic taster session in French, which sparked curiosity and enthusiasm among our linguists. We rounded off the day with a visit to the fascinating Pitt Rivers Museum, which never fails to impress with its unique and varied collections.

We were incredibly proud of how our pupils represented Houlton – they showed great interest, asked thoughtful questions, and engaged fully throughout the day.

Mr Matthieu Raffy
Head of Faculty: Modern Languages



Performing Arts Scholars Shine at Rugby School Workshops

Forty-two of our talented Performing Arts Scholars - representing dance, music, and acting - enjoyed an inspiring day of creativity and collaboration at Rugby School recently.

Selected for their dedication and talent, the pupils took part in a variety of high-energy workshops designed to broaden their artistic horizons.



From hands-on music production with Amber Music Group - where pupils experimented with drum machines, samples and recording vocals - to immersive sessions in Chinese arts featuring dragon dancing and traditional movement, the day was packed with new experiences.

Performers stepped outside their comfort zones in a laughter-filled clowning workshop, embracing improvisation, playfulness, and performance bravery. Dancers explored global rhythms, with workshops in both vibrant Latin styles like Salsa and Merengue, and powerful African drumming and movement rooted in cultural tradition.

In addition to the workshops, pupils were treated to a live classical music concert, giving them the opportunity to experience a professional performance in an awe-inspiring setting. This was not only a moment of inspiration but also a chance to deepen their appreciation for the world of music.

Throughout the day, the staff at Rugby School were incredibly impressed with the enthusiasm, creativity, and impeccable conduct of our pupils. They commented on how exceptionally well the group represented Houlton School - something we are incredibly proud of.

It was a day of fun, challenge, and artistic growth - one that left every scholar inspired and energised.

Miss Frankie Connolly
Head of Dance

Dance

Houlton Dance Department Steps into the Spotlight

It's been an exciting and inspiring term for the Houlton School Dance Department, with pupils across all year groups demonstrating creativity, commitment, and a true passion for performance.

Our Year 9 and 10 Dance Club proudly represented the school at a prestigious dance festival, performing alongside primary, secondary, and college pupils from across the West Midlands. Their powerful contemporary piece, 'Voices of Power', paid tribute to influential women throughout history. The performance was both moving and impactful, earning praise for its strength and emotional depth.

Meanwhile, our Year 10 BTEC dancers have been hard at work rehearsing for their upcoming production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. As part of the project, pupils had the incredible opportunity to

spend two full days working with professional choreographer Junior Cunningham. Together, they created an original piece that will open the show. Junior was full of praise for our dancers, commenting on their professionalism, enthusiasm, and the absolute joy it was to work with them.

Not to be outdone, our Year 7 and 8 Dance Club have been enthusiastically preparing for their performance at this year's Houlton Fest. Their piece combines high-energy street dance with expressive contemporary elements, promising an exciting and dynamic performance for the school community to enjoy.

Across all year groups, our dancers have shown dedication, creativity, and a real love for their craft. We can't wait to see what they achieve next!

Miss Frankie Connolly
Head of Dance

Sports Day Glory and Athletics Success

What a fantastic year it's been for PE at Houlton School! From outstanding performances in athletics to an unforgettable Sports Day, we're incredibly proud of everything our pupils have achieved this term.

Sports Day Success

This year's Sports Day was bigger and better than ever, with amazing effort, enthusiasm, and sportsmanship from every college. After a day of tough competition, Armstrong College claimed victory,



beating Dorsey by just 8 points in a nail-biting finish! A huge well done to Armstrong, and a massive thank you to everyone who took part, supported and made the day such a brilliant success.

Town Athletics Championships

Our Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 athletes did us proud at the Town Championships, showcasing brilliant determination, teamwork and talent. With excellent results across all year groups, Houlton made a big impact on the track and in the field. Whether it was sprinting, jumping, or throwing, every pupil represented the school with pride — well done to all who took part! Some special mentions go to Joe W (Year 8) for coming first in the 100m sprint and 75m hurdles, Isaac BY (Year 8) winning the 1500m, Florence O (Year 7) 1st in 200m, Isabelle H (Year 7) 1st in Javelin throw and our Year 10 girls coming 3rd overall.



Looking Ahead

As we wrap up this academic year, we're already looking forward to next year's PE curriculum. We're excited to be teaching across the full Key Stage 3 and 4 for the first time, which means even more opportunities to develop skills, confidence and passion in sport. You'll see some familiar sports return — but also a few exciting new additions to keep things fresh and challenging!

Thank you to all pupils for their hard work and positive attitude this year. Have a fantastic summer break — and we can't wait to see you back in action in September!

Please follow our X page with all news regarding fixtures, results and PE department news. @HoultonPEdept

Miss Abbie Hartfield
Head of PE

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