

# HOULTON WINTER NEWS 2021



HOULTON  
SCHOOL



## Welcome from the Principal

Dear Houlton Family,

In some ways, I can't believe that our community has already completed its first term and yet, at times, it's difficult to remember a time when we weren't already achieving so much together!

Once again our family's passionate commitment to everything it does leaps off the pages of this newsletter – and the themes of kindness and compassion are what shine through confidently on this occasion. From exploring November's Remembrance celebrations from different cultural perspectives to raising more than £280 for Bone Cancer Research Trust in just a single day, I could not be more proud of every single pupil's contributions to our success story so far.

It has been another year of challenges and restrictions for most of us as we continue to navigate the international pandemic, so seeing the joy and happiness of our pupils as the holiday period approaches has been particularly joyous. For Christians, this time of year is a celebration of the wonderful gift of Jesus and the joy He brings to so many people's lives. For others of different faiths (or of none), this time of year is still special because for many it means time away from the busy bustle of school or work and gives time for reflection, thanks, family and friends.

I look forward to seeing members of my own family this Christmas and to sitting down to watch Her Majesty the Queen with them at 3.00pm on Christmas day, just as we have every year.

It will also be my puppy, Clementine's first Christmas so I can't wait to see what she makes of it all. And, of course, Hogmanay is in some ways an even more important celebration in my Caledonian family's festive calendar! But whatever your own family's customs and traditions, and however you will spend the festive period, may I wish you all a happy, restful and safe winter break. We look forward to welcoming pupils back to school on Wednesday 5 January 2022 as we embark on our second, historic term together.

**Merry Christmas and  
Happy Hogmanay**

**Michael McCulley**  
Principal



# Festive Extravaganza

We hosted our first ever Festive Extravaganza on Friday 10 December to mark the start of the festive season. Staff and pupils alike enjoyed a 'festive dress day' which gave a chance for everyone to celebrate the festive season in cultural or casual dress of their choice. We were delighted that we raised over £260 in support of Bone Cancer Research Trust, especially given our school has just 180 pupils and the suggested donation was just £1. Your additional generosity in support of

such an important charity is overwhelmingly humbling. Thank you.

Pupils enjoyed a carousel of activities on a collapsed timetable, meaning we could explore different ways of learning including discovering how the festive period looks in different parts of the world. We were also delighted to see some incredible Christmas decorations and 'fractal trees' being made as well as pupils enjoying creating festive stories, playing funfair games and working together to solve festive science challenges!

After lunch, our entire Houlton Family was joined by AIM Board Partners (governors) and our CEO, and we enjoyed a hugely impressive

Extravaganza Showcase! This included performances from our Choir, Dance, Acting, and Public Speaking co-curricular groups. The afternoon culminated in our pupils having a great time singing along to some well-known festive tunes together. As we were unable to invite our wider Houlton Family to see our Extravaganza Show this year due to COVID-19, we will be sending out an extra special highlights video of the day that all our Houlton School families can enjoy together at home. Committing this special day in Year 7's founding year to film means families and future generations of Houlton pupils will be able to enjoy it (and look back on it) for years to come.



hegarty**maths**

## Houlton Hegarty Heroes

Pupils in Year 7 were introduced to HegartyMaths at the start of this term to help support them with their maths work and to give them an opportunity to expand their mathematical knowledge independently.

Houlton pupils readily accepted the challenge and have (at the time of writing) answered 46,493 questions so far! This has equated to 862 hours of additional learning across the year, or almost 36 days!

It has been a tough competition between the colleges but after a strong battle, Obama has come out on top having answered 10,568 questions alone! Individually we have had some exceptional scores with the winners from each college as follows:

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**Shakespeare** - David

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**Armstrong** - Mya

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**Morse** - Luca

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**Obama** - Harry

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**Dorsey** - Jude

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**Winton** - Maja

59 pupils have joined the 100% club this term and have shown that they want to aim for green and go back to areas they have found challenging and repeat them in order to succeed. I have been blown away by their resilience and perseverance, demonstrating our key Houlton values.

Looking towards the next term I want to challenge our pupils to hit 100,000 questions as a year group. Some of our pupils are already expanding their knowledge by researching and looking at areas of maths we won't cover until much later such as Trigonometry, Pythagoras and even A-Level Integration; I can't wait to see how far they can go!

To end on a quote from Ruby in Armstrong College, whose attitude has been amazing so far this year and summarises the message we try to promote in maths:

"I did try my best and I know that's all that matters :)"

**By Miss Jasmine Etheridge Head of Faculty:  
Mathematics & Numeracy**

## Observing the night sky

As the nights draw darker and the stars appear brighter, winter is an excellent time of year for astronomy.

Pupils at Houlton started their Astronomy Club journey at lunch times but quickly realised that after school is going to be the best time to observe the night sky.

Over the past few weeks, we have gathered as late as possible to observe what we can.

Using a very impressive telescope (kindly brought in by a member of Armstrong college) we have managed to capture some fantastic images of the Moon and hope to observe Venus, Jupiter and Saturn if the British weather allows!

**By Mr Aaron Griffin, Head of Faculty for Science and Computer Science**





# STEM club inspires

The past term has seen students attempt the very first STEM Club challenge - Egg Parachutes!

Houlton pupils have had to look at variables and design techniques to plan an investigation looking at the best type of parachute to protect an egg from an 8m high drop. After careful planning and extensive research, they then created five parachutes, each with all bar one variables controlled. Pupils then took their creations to the historic stairs in Transmission Hall to test their creations.

Although there were a few egg fatalities, many of the parachutes worked beautifully and we certainly have some future engineers in the making!

**By Mr Aaron Griffin, Head of Faculty for Science and Computer Science**

# English and Literacy News

Houlton pupils have been working hard this term on their analysis and creative writing skills. We have seen some lovely pieces of work created from every College. Have a look at some samples of student work inspired by the image below from *The Arrival*:

“The engine growls obnoxiously as we trudge into the storm” – by Alice (Winton).

“The mirror that covered his eyes had broken long ago; writhing agony leaked through the shards” – by Isobel (Obama).

“Furious waves bellowed like an angry mob.” – by Maisie (Morse).

“It felt like the world had no colour or joy left in it.” – by Isabella (Dorsey).

“Her lips were sore and cracked, just like her grief-stricken heart.” – by Gabi (Armstrong).

“I can feel the misery in the air. Night is falling.” – by Estelle (Shakespeare).

In addition, pupils have begun a new programme for their homework called, ‘Bedrock Vocabulary’, which uses an algorithm to help pupils to learn personalised tier 2 vocabulary. After an initial vocabulary test, pupils were assigned a block of vocabulary to learn, which includes fiction and non-fiction reading around a variety of interesting topics.

Each week, they will complete a minimum of 2 Bedrock lessons or 30 minutes of time on Bedrock, in which they play a series of games to learn new vocabulary. Each lesson gains them points and each half term a competition is held where pupils have a target number of points to achieve. If they succeed in accruing the required amount of points by the deadline, they will be automatically entered into a prize draw and could end up winning a £10 voucher or Chromebook laptop for their efforts! Pupils were very excited to get started on this programme and really seem to understand that ‘the limits of our vocabulary are the limits of our world’; we cannot wait to see them using this vocabulary to broaden and deepen their thinking about the world that we live in.

Pupils have also really been enjoying the

Centre for Communications, where they can explore the wonderful variety of literature that we have available to them. They have been conducting treasure hunts in their library sessions to try and find different kinds of fiction and non-fiction books that might interest them; they have been reading everything, from the action-packed Alex Rider series to historical fiction like, *Things a Bright Girl Can Do*. Pupils love the resource and their time to read for pleasure and staff have been enjoying displaying their reading recommendations for pupils to see.

Research shows that 20 minutes or more a day of reading (or listening to an audio book) will improve academic achievement across all subject areas, not to mention the wonderful benefits of reading on mental health. This is why we are so excited that Houlton pupils have such a well-resourced space, with a variety of dynamic and engaging texts to choose from. We hope to be able to continue this love of literature throughout their education and make life-long readers out of all members of the Houlton family.

Ask your child about their book to encourage their engagement and help us establish a school community that loves to read!

**By Ms Sian Warde, Head of Faculty for English, Literacy and Acting**



# Acting update

In recent weeks, Houlton pupils have been building tension with their Acting pieces and polishing them for performance to their classmates.

We have seen some beautiful work, with techniques such as thought-tracking, tableaux and cross-cutting embedded throughout. In addition, pupils have been working really hard at creating and maintaining characters throughout their

pieces (and revealing the relationships and power dynamics between these characters through the use of levels and proxemics).

We are exceptionally proud of the way in which Houlton pupils have explored the topic of the refugee crisis with such maturity and care. They have been incredibly respectful and mindful around the realities of life for many asylum seekers and have tried to convey this through their devised work.

Their team-work and evaluation skills have also developed immeasurably since the beginning of term; we cannot wait to mix up the pupil groupings following the winter break to allow them to develop their ability to work with an even wider range of people. Well done Year 7!

**By Ms Sian Warde, Head of Faculty for English, Literacy and Acting**

# Exploring the local environment

Year 7 pupils have had the chance to complete Geographical Fieldwork skills this half term.

They have undertaken traffic surveys, completed field sketches as well as partaking in bi-polar environmental surveys. Pupils have presented this data in a variety of different formats, allowing them

to reach conclusions about the local environment of the town as well as helping them answer this half term's big question: Is Rugby an appealing place to live?

**By Mr Jamie Abbott, Subject Team Leader: Humanities**





# Modern Languages

## ¡Pintamos como Picasso!

In Spanish this term, to explore the Big Question: Quién está en mi burbuja - Who is in my 'bubble', we had a look at Spanish painter Picasso's art.

We looked at ways in which Picasso's paintings were influenced by his own environment; and we drew our own, Picasso-style self-portraits!

## Jour de Souvenir

In French this term, to commemorate Remembrance Day, we looked at the way France remembers those who have fallen, and as a school, created an acrostic poem, using French keywords chosen by each college.

Not only did the pupils show respect and interest in the differences between the French and the British commemorations, they also made me feel at home, as we were all able to take a moment on 11th November to remember those who have fallen for their countries, abroad or at home. #HoultonFamily

**By Mr Matthieu Raffy, Subject Team Leader: Modern Languages**

# Award winning design

We are delighted to announce that our Creative Technician, Miss Darcy Hill has received a prestigious design award at the Global Design Graduate Show 2021, the biggest ever online showcase of graduating creatives worldwide.

Miss Hill has received the Furniture Design Award for her stunning piece 'The Potter's Chair'.

In a description of the piece, Miss Hill said: "The Potter's Chair is a chair for makers designed by a maker.

"The principal purpose of this chair is to work alongside a potter's wheel; the seat and frame are not connected which enables the seat to be positioned on different tilts. This allows the potter to sit in a better position when throwing. Designed for utilitarian use, every element is considered and serves the motive.

"The entire seat is handcrafted from Oak. Each strut of the frame is turned, the back rest is laminated, with small brass features and a ceramic coin which allows the potter

to stamp their own makers mark on the chair. The organic-shaped seat has been carefully moulded and cut on the CNC. It is all finished with white oil which brings out the grain in a beautifully subtle way.

"If you are creating a piece of art, you shouldn't be sat on a chair that belongs in an office" was a quote that followed the project from the start. As many potters told me during the research phase, they sit on whatever they can find - from old dining chairs to upside down buckets. This is a chair tailored for them.

"The design was to be simple yet beautifully crafted and for each element, not to overpower but to work harmoniously together to create a functional, yet elegant item of furniture which fits within a potter's creative studio. The design was influenced by Japanese craftsmanship, allowing the humble elements to speak for themselves."

Many congratulations Miss Hill, from everyone across our Houlton Family!



## STEM Challenge: THINK, DRAW, EXPLAIN

### HOW DO TOUCH SCREENS WORK?



## Yes Chef!

*Mise en place* refers to the chef's ability to put everything in place and the set up required prior to cooking. All pupils mastered the skills it takes to prepare themselves ready for service. Upon completion, the chefs produced their first dish.

Strong organisational skills, accurate knife skills and safe hygiene practices resulted in some incredible dishes. Each pupil will continue to work towards achieving commis chef status.

By Mr Russell Hill, Subject Team Leader: Creative



# What Do Artists Do All Day?

Andy Warhol once said, 'An artist is somebody who produces things that people don't need to have'.

I would tend to agree with Warhol, but for one exception. Art is created from ideas, and ideas are created from open minds, and all pupils need the capacity to think openly. Each young artist at Houlton School has produced something wonderful during the last term.

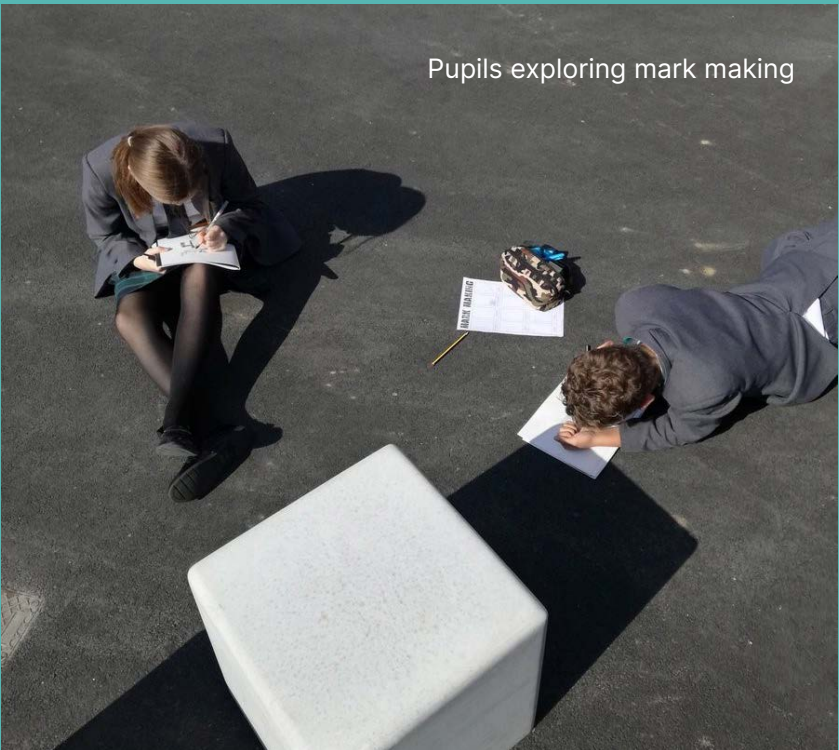
Pupils have been exposed to the reflective nature of art making by negotiating fundamental art making skills, such as mark making, perspective and observational drawing. We are currently investigating the relationship between art and nature, which will result in ambitious outcomes over the next term.

View a fascinating video:

[Cornelia Parker - 'What do artists do all day'](#)



Alice C, finger prints on glass.  
Inspired by the work of Richard Long.



Pupils exploring mark making



## 180 Keyrings

Avocados, Rugby Balls, Egg Timers and Watermelons were just some of the shapes our young designers created when casting pewter during the manufacture of their keyrings, inspired by the visitors to Rugby Art Gallery & Museum. Vigorous filing, sanding, polishing and buffing, along with some great enamelling resulted in some professional outcomes from Luca and Andras.



By Mr Russell Hill, Subject  
Team Leader: Creative

# PE at Houlton

We have had another busy term in the PE Department, competing in various sports against local schools across the district.

We have been participating in both Badminton and Basketball fixtures this term with many of our pupils taking part. They have been a credit when representing our school.

We also have our indoor athletics competition coming up in the remaining few weeks. Next term we look forward to our Netball and Handball fixtures.

## Afterschool clubs

Our Netball and Football clubs have been running since September with excellent attendance for both. We are looking forward to some Netball fixtures in the new year for our pupils to test their skills in a competitive situation. Please look out for new sports clubs which will be starting when we return after Christmas.

## Lunchtime clubs

Our co-curricular lunchtime clubs have been well attended also this term with a variety of sports on offer. Our Basketball, Badminton and Volleyball clubs offer opportunities for our pupils to can develop their skills as an alternative to our curriculum lessons.

Please follow our new twitter page with all news regarding fixtures, results and PE department news.

@HoultonPEdept

**By Miss Abbie Hartfied, Teacher of Physical Education**



## Badminton tournament

Our pupils played in a tournament hosted at Houlton with Ashlawn and Rugby Free School attending on Tuesday 30 November. It was great to see the pupils applying the skills which they have developed in both PE lessons and co-curricular clubs to compete against individuals from different schools. The results were as follows:

**ASHLAWN 24 – 22 HOULTON**

**RFSS 17 – 25 HOULTON**

Well done to Alice, Maja, Elissa, Tillie, Callum, Hugo, Joel and Luke for their enthusiasm and efforts.



## Basketball pool games

During this half term, our girls and boys have been competing in their respective leagues to win games for Team Houlton. We have had a great turn out for both the girls' and boys' teams with over 15 players for each. Results are below:

**HOULTON VS LSS (BOYS): 6 – 12**

**HOULTON VS RFSS (GIRLS): 12 – 4**

**HOULTON VS RFSS (BOYS): 6 – 8**

**HOULTON VS AVON VALLEY (GIRLS): 4 – 8**

Well done to all the pupils who were involved in the above fixtures. R2s are awarded for sporting representation, which goes towards their Houlton excellence award.



HOULTON  
SCHOOL

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