



THINKING
SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST

Plymouth High School for Girls

"For life, not school, we learn"

2nd May 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this finds you well.

IET Faraday Challenge

On Monday, 28th April, a team of six Year 8 students were invited to compete against teams from other local secondary schools in the IET Faraday Challenge held at DHSG. The challenge involved solving a real-world STEM problem, with this year's theme focusing on using batteries in an innovative and sustainable manner. Teams had to work together to design and build a functioning prototype to solve a problem within strict time constraints. Our team decided to create a basketball hoop that lit up every time a point was scored and presented their working prototype to the audience and judges from the IET, then answered questions on their design.

Congratulations to our amazing year 8 team; Orraith, Jess, Molly, Olivia, Sohana and Martha for their innovative design, teamwork under pressure, and presentation skills.

Xantus electric racing car outing

Last weekend Mr Thackray, Miss Cook and the sixth form team took the new race car, Xantus, to its very first race. Just the week before the car had been unfinished, missing vital safety parts and it also suffered a small electrical fire! However, the team arrived in West Sussex with high hopes for the car. Daisy made history as the first ever student to drive Xantus around a racetrack, successfully passing the MOT, whilst Tyler was the official driver for the race itself. We started the race last with our main hopes being just to finish. Luckily, during some last tense laps, other cars ran out of battery due to incorrect gear selection and Tyler overtook them landing us within the top twenty. Getting nineteenth place on our very first race was a huge success, and we are very proud to say that PHSG now has an official F24+ racing team. Thank you to all the parents and sponsors who have supported the team so enthusiastically.



Year 10 revision evening

We will be holding our year 10 revision evening on Thursday 8th May. For more details, please see [here](#) for the recent letter from Mr Law sent to parents and carers of year 10 outlining the plans for the evening.

Parent Pay and Buying Food

As part of our commitment to ensuring that all students have access to a nutritious lunch, we want to remind you to top up your Parent Pay accounts regularly. Our goal is to make sure every student has a sufficient meal at lunchtime, and we appreciate your cooperation in helping your child understand the importance of managing their meal allowance effectively at both breaktime and lunchtime.

We kindly remind parents whose child has overspent and now has a negative balance on Parent Pay for food purchases to clear the debt at their earliest convenience. This helps ensure that all students can purchase food and drink when needed and prevents debt accumulation. We especially ask Year 11 and 13 students and parents to clear any debts before the examination period starts.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and your continued support. If you have any questions or need assistance regarding the payment process, please feel free to contact the school.

The Benefits of Reading

Ancient philosophers and contemporary scientists agree reading makes people happier. Reading regularly boosts creativity, reduces stress, fosters empathy and understanding – and it's fun. It turns out there might be a simple habit that contributes to this mental agility: reading. Specifically, reading from a book every day. It sounds ambitious, maybe even a little daunting, but the benefits are worth the effort. Not only does this habit broaden your knowledge, but it can also significantly boost your IQ.

Here are the reading suggestions for this week:

Biology [XEC: A new Covid-19 variant - The Day](#)

PE [The man who never said never - The Day](#)

IT <https://theday.co.uk/first-ai-classroom-launches-in-london/>

Reading Academic Texts

This week, I would like to highlight a skill that lies at the heart of academic success across every subject: the ability to read complex academic texts and make sense of them. As students progress through school, the texts they encounter become more

demanding—not just longer or more densely written, but richer in ideas, structure, and subject-specific language. Whether deciphering a scientific article, analysing a historical account, comparing two poems, or grappling with an abstract religious concept, students are constantly invited to stretch their thinking.

Reading complex academic texts isn't just about understanding content; it enriches their vocabulary. It teaches students how to question ideas, evaluate evidence, notice patterns and contradictions, and connect knowledge across subjects. Reading these texts develops resilience, critical thinking, and a genuine appetite for challenge—all essential qualities for learning, life, and future study or employment.

We are working hard to support students in becoming confident and curious readers. Teachers model how to approach complex texts methodically, encourage annotation and discussion, and provide strategies for unpacking unfamiliar vocabulary and structure. One of the most powerful things we can all do is champion reading at home—not just fiction, but challenging, subject-rich material that broadens horizons.

Reading well is not a passive activity; it is an active, thinking process. Our aim is not just for students to do well in school, but to develop the habits and confidence that will help them thrive in life beyond school.

Surveys for School Improvement

In last week's letter, I informed you of our ongoing efforts to improve our school and provide the best possible educational environment for your child(ren). As a result, we are conducting a series of surveys over the coming weeks. Your thoughts and feedback are invaluable to us, and we would greatly appreciate your participation. Each survey will be brief and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Your responses will help us identify areas for improvement and celebrate our successes.

Week 1: School Life

[Please click here to take the survey](#)

Thank you in advance for your time and valuable feedback. Together, we can make our school an even better place for our young people.

Very best wishes,



Simon Underdown
Headteacher

Latest news

Please [click here for our latest news](#) and for details of a post that we are currently advertising.

Dates for your diary

All years

5th May – Bank holiday Monday – school shut

23rd May – Last day of half term

2nd June – First day back after the half term break

Year 13

9th May – Celebration Day

Year 12

6th May – return to lessons (other than those doing the Art mock) following the mock examinations

Year 11

7th May – Celebration Day

Year 10

8th May – Revision information evening for parents and students

Years 7 to 9

19th May - Beginning of written end of year papers