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Plymouth High School for Girls

"For life, not school, we learn"

27th February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you are well. This week we have been remembering our much-loved colleague, Miss Luscombe.

Remembering Miss Luscombe – One year on

Yesterday and today, our school community came together to mark one year since we lost our much-loved colleague and friend, Miss Luscombe. It is difficult to believe how quickly the year has passed. For many of us, it still feels as though she was with us only yesterday, working alongside staff and supporting pupils with her characteristic warmth and dedication. At the same time, her absence has been deeply felt throughout the school, a reminder of how significant a role she played in daily life at PHSG.

The two events, one on Thursday for staff and one today for students, were not only a moment to recognise the sadness of losing Miss Luscombe, but also an opportunity to reflect on everything she brought to our school. Miss Luscombe shaped our community in countless ways. Staff and students continue to speak of her kindness, her humour, her unwavering support for pupils, her enthusiasm for sport, and the calm reassurance she brought even on the busiest days. These qualities remain part of the school's culture because she helped embed them here.

Over the past year, her influence has continued to guide us. Teachers still draw on the lessons she planned, her conversations and ideas still shape our thinking, and the values she modelled remain a standard to which we all aspire. Many staff mentioned



that they still occasionally expect to see her walk into a room or hear her voice in the corridor, a reminder that grief moves at its own pace, and that moments of remembrance like today play an important role in healing.

As we gathered, we also took time to acknowledge the strength of our school community. The way staff and students have supported one another over the past year reflects the teamwork, compassion, and care that were so important to Miss Luscombe herself.

We also share a photograph of the new memorial bench, painted in Miss Luscombe's favourite colours and stripes. It now sits as a thoughtful and meaningful space for quiet reflection, a place where students and staff can pause, remember, and celebrate the joy she brought to our school.



Spotlight on student excellence

Congratulations to the following students who were celebrated before half-term for demonstrating commitment to our school values and ethos:

- ◇ Student of the week: **Sarah K, Year 12** who scored 98% in her core mathematics midterm – dropping just one mark overall. Nominated by Miss Roughton.

- ◇ Group of the week: **U14 Hockey Players** who were amazing in the U14 Devon Schools tournament before half-term. We had an U12 team and U14 team. The U12 team did so well and ended up coming joint 3rd after a very tense shuffle! And our amazing U14 team went on to win the tournament meaning they are through to the regional tournament later in the year. Special thanks to our two Sixth Form helpers Clara R and Emily E. Nominated by Miss Clews.

Silver Artsmark award

We are delighted to share the exciting news that our school has been awarded the Silver Artsmark Award, a national recognition of our dedication to providing a rich and inspiring arts curriculum. The award is valid for two years, and reflects the hard work, creativity, and ambition of our whole school community.

Over the past two years, we set ourselves the goal of broadening and strengthening our arts provision, ensuring every pupil has access to meaningful, high-quality creative experiences. We are pleased to say that this ambition has been met with great success.

Through a strategic approach to developing the arts, we have raised the profile of students' achievements across a wide range of creative disciplines. We have deepened our connections with cultural venues, arts organisations, and creative industry professionals. These partnerships have enriched the quality and scope of the experiences available to our pupils, helping to build their confidence, aspiration, and

cultural capital. A major aspect of this is working with the Barbican Theatre for our upcoming production of Legally Blonde Jnr.

Greater cross-curricular teaching has enabled the arts to positively impact other subjects, particularly Design Technology. Many projects have taken on a more arts-focused approach, leading to increased engagement and enjoyment among students.

By developing our creative pedagogy and embedding more metacognitive approaches, we have helped pupils build greater self-awareness as learners. They are now better able to understand how creativity supports their learning across all subjects. Teachers across the curriculum have embraced the use of visual interpretations, performance, and creative responses to deepen understanding.

Achieving the Silver Artsmark Award is a significant milestone. It reflects the dedication of our staff, the enthusiasm of our pupils, and the invaluable support of our families. We would also like to extend a special thank you to our Artsmark Lead, Miss Roughton, our Deputy Headteacher, for guiding the school through this journey.

We are incredibly proud of this accomplishment and excited to continue developing vibrant, creative opportunities for all our children. Thank you for celebrating this success with us, and congratulations to our whole school community

Mathematics performance

As part of our strategy to further develop aspirations for high performance in mathematics assessments (70%+ is a high score), the mathematics department are piloting a trial using the Arbor behaviour points system. It is hoped that this will help us to raise the profile of and celebrate student attainment as well as effort.

The idea is that teaching staff can quickly and efficiently use Arbor to reward a student for 'high performance' in an assessment, as well as having the option to add narrative

to the achievement point. This awards the student a **positive point** and notification is sent out to parents.

At the other end of the scale, we can also now efficiently report on underperformance (under 40%) in a similar way; this does not assign negative points to a student but does serve as a notification of a lower score.

We will be offering parents the chance to provide us with feedback on this system once it has been up and running for a while.

My Bookshelf – Spotlight on Mrs Brown, Teacher of Food & Textiles and Head of Anthony House

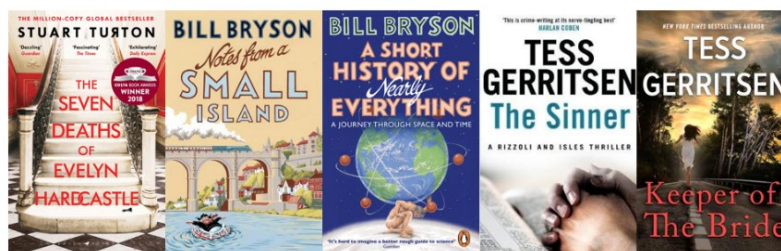
“I am always drawn to books that challenge the way I think and keep me guessing right to the end. This is why I enjoy the work of Stuart Turton so much. *‘The Seven Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle’* is my favourite of his novels. I loved the intricacy of the plot and the feeling of uncovering a mystery one layer at a time. There is something incredibly satisfying about following clues and patterns until everything finally makes sense.

I also have a real soft spot for Bill Bryson. His writing is full of warmth, humour and curiosity, and I often find myself laughing one moment and learning something fascinating the next. Whether he is travelling across countries or exploring science and history, his books feel like conversations with a very observant and very witty friend.

When I want something gripping and full of tension, I turn to Tess Gerritsen. Her stories move quickly and her characters stay with me long after I have finished reading. I often find that I intend to read just one chapter, and suddenly I am halfway through the book.

Once I connect with an author, I like to read widely across their work. There is something reassuring about returning to a familiar writing style while still discovering new stories and ideas.

If I were to make a recommendation, I would encourage anyone to read Bill Bryson's 'A Short History of Nearly Everything'. It does exactly what it says on the tin, but in a really interesting way for curious learners."



Safeguarding updates

Lemon8 is an app which seems to be growing in popularity. Calling itself a 'lifestyle community' app, the terms and conditions, as per most social media, is 13+. The company which owns Lemon8 is ByteDance, who also own TikTok and it's essentially a mix between Instagram and TikTok. Reviews generally seem to be quite positive but one of the big downfalls is that parental features are a little lacking. It's worth checking if your child is using Lemon8.

Internet Matters has uploaded 3 short videos onto YouTube, each focusing on parental controls for YouTube, Roblox and TikTok:

- [Top features parental controls You Tube](#)
- [The top 3 parental controls to use on Roblox](#)
- [The top 3 parental controls to use on TikTok](#)

[Kids Online Safety](#) is a new government website launched on 16th February 2026 to support families and encourage regular conversations about what they're seeing online, asking simple questions, like "who shared this?" and "why?". Based on parents' main concerns and needs, it provides: Tips for parents' conversations with their children, actions to support each stage of their child's life and parental controls information. The website also signposts to trusted resources from charities and third parties, where parents can access other forms of support.

Using AI effectively for learning

As many parents will be aware, AI tools such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini and Snapchat's 'My AI' are now widely available to young people. Used well, they can support learning; used poorly, they can undermine it.

A growing area of research refers to something known as '**cognitive debt**'. This is the long-term cost that develops when thinking is repeatedly outsourced to technology. When pupils use AI to generate answers or complete work for them, they may gain short-term efficiency but miss the opportunity to practise essential skills such as reasoning, memory and independent writing.

Guided by our school motto, '*For life not school we learn*', we believe that education is about developing habits of thinking that last beyond the classroom. If AI does the thinking, those habits never form.

AI has a place when it *supports* learning rather than replaces it, for example asking it to **explain** ideas differently, providing **feedback** on work, or helping pupils **reflect** on how to improve their work. Our message to students is clear: AI should be a thinking partner, not a thinking replacement.

Your support at home with this message would be greatly appreciated.

Earth Alliance activity in school

As part of the 2025 Trust-wide aims for Earth Alliance groups, last year's members took part in a House competition to build Bug Boxes which included designing, planning, testing materials, and then actually building them. The project aimed to promote biodiversity in school. Students who participated really enjoyed it and the finished boxes look amazing – you can see photographs in our Latest News [here](#).

All 4 boxes are now placed on and around the courts; students will be able to spot them as they make their way around site. The boxes will be remaining a focus for Earth Alliance this year as the team will be monitoring them to work towards the Woodland Trust Green Tree Schools Award – their chosen aim for 2026. Students are welcome to join Earth Alliance – the group meets on Wednesday lunchtimes in Room 1, and they would be delighted to accept new members.

Parental/carers support for autism

You Are Not Alone is a free online support opportunity for parents and carers from the Autism Family Support Service. They offer a monthly online drop-in for parents and carers who have a child diagnosed with (or suspected) autism; the next session is taking place on Tuesday 3rd March. You can find more details [here](#).

Free GCSE learning and revision support

If you have a child in Years 9 – 11 and they are eligible for Pupil Premium, they can now get **free access to [Atom GCSE: Atom Learning](#)**'s new platform built to give you clear, structured guidance for your GCSE preparation. Atom GCSE gives students access to:

- Exam-board-specific practice: GCSE practice questions, past papers and predicted papers tailored to your exam boards.
- Instant feedback: AI marking based on real GCSE mark schemes.
- Clear explanations: Step-by-step guidance for every question.
- Progress tracking: Predicted grades and topic-by-topic insights showing what's going well and what to revise next.
- Structured revision: Courses broken into simple steps to make studying more manageable.

You can request your free account here: [Access free GCSE learning](#)

If your child is not eligible for Pupil Premium, they can still use the [free version](#) with limited daily access.

World Book Day

The library will be hosting a whole week of fun activities to mark World Book Day! More information about what we have planned can be found [here](#). House points for participation are up for grabs.

Pre-loved uniform shop

The pre-loved uniform shop will be open again on **Friday 6th March** between 1.30pm – 2:30pm in the new examination room (along the corridor from the Main Hall or up the stairs from room 5.

- £5 for uniform (blazers, trousers and jumpers)
- £3 for any PE uniform
- 3 for the price of 2

Items are free from the shop if swapped with an existing item. Uniform shop items are free for Pupil Premium students.

School trips

We are very grateful to our parents and carers for understanding that school trips often come with a financial cost. When we plan for trips, we look at the total cost and ask that parents and carers pay for their child to attend. Often the costs come from things like transport, providing cover for staff out on the trip and entry fees to events or competitions.

We use the Arbor app for all parent payments including trips. If any parent/carer is having trouble using the app, please contact the school office team who are very happy to help.

Thank you for your ongoing support; it has enabled us to run 31 trips since the start of term, with 28 further trips already planned for this year.

Girl Guides sleepover at school

We were delighted to welcome Plymouth East Division Girl Guiding to Plymouth High School for Girls last weekend to enjoy a sleepover to mark their centenary celebration. Some of the girls sleeping over were PHSG girls, and they did a super job of showing the others around our school. Our very own Miss Noble (office manager and Girlguiding leader) was awarded her long service award (30 years) at the sleepover. Please do click on the following link to find out more: [Plymouth High School for Girls - Plymouth Girl Guides mark centenary with sleepover at PHSG](#)

Legally Blonde Jnr.

A reminder that the performance of Legally Blonde Jnr. is next week! Tickets have now sold out for the Thursday and Friday; a small number are still available for Tuesday and Wednesday. Details and booking link [available on our website](#).

Mobile phone rules

Many thanks indeed to our parents and carers for supporting our mobile phone rules. As a reminder, phones must be kept off and away in bags whilst students are on the school site during the school day; Year 7 students hand their phones in at the start of the day. On the very rare occasions when a student does not follow these rules, an after-school detention will be set, as per the behaviour policy. Sixth form students are permitted to use their phones in the study centre only.

HPV vaccinations

Vaccinations will take place in school on 27th April 2026 for students in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11. Parents and carers can find more information about this for Year 8 [here](#), and information for Years 9, 10 and 11 [here](#). Parents and carers should complete the consent form linked in the letter relevant to their child's Year group **no later than 9:00am on 23rd April 2026** if they would like their child to have the vaccinations.

Very best wishes,



Simon Underdown
Headteacher

Keep up to date with our latest news by clicking [here](#)

Dates for your diary:

All Years

- 3rd – 6th March** School production
- 5th March** World Book Day
- 6th March** International Women's Day celebrations (Sunday 8th March)

