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Plymouth High School for Girls

"For life, not school, we learn"

1st May 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you are well.

There was an incident on the road outside school in the early hours today and the police were managing traffic and pedestrians. Our students were sensible and wonderfully behaved as they made their way into school and this was commented upon by the police. School staff were out and about in the streets surrounding the school this morning to guide and reassure our students. School was able to begin as normal with minimal disruption thanks to our fabulous staff and super young people. Another example of what makes our school so special.

Senior female leadership in the Southwest

On Monday, we welcomed Assistant Chief Constable Nikki Leaper into school to meet with and talk to our students about modern policing. ACC Leaper is the most senior female police officer in Devon and Cornwall, and we were delighted that she had the time to visit and share her experiences with KS4 and 5 students who had expressed an interest in policing. You can read more about her visit and how much the students got out of it [by clicking here](#). ACC Leaper's visit was the first in what we hope will be a series of visits from senior female leaders to the school to share their experiences with our students.



The Gym and Dance Festival

What a treat we had just before the Easter break with the Gym and Dance Festival! The students performed magnificently and everyone had a great time. You can read more about the festival on our website [here](#).

Spotlight on student excellence

Congratulations to the following students who have recently been celebrated for demonstrating commitment to our school values and ethos:

- Student of the week: **Tabitha W, Year 13** "Tabitha has been producing her practical work over the past few months. She has worked tirelessly to produce a high-level prototype product with minimal assistance. She is well motivated and has overcome some technical issues without assistance. I feel she exemplifies a level of confidence and sheer determination to produce an excellent piece of practical work." Nominated by Mr Keating.
- Class of the week: **10H2 Biology, Year10** "I cannot remember a time when I had such a uniformly positive parents evening. This class has worked hard for the whole academic year and has made good improvement from test to test." Nominated by Mrs Lewin.
- Group of the week: **Lilly-Mae H and Livia B, Year 11** "for acting as school photographers during the Gym and Dance Festival. This last-minute - and no doubt daunting - request saw them rise to the challenge with enthusiasm and maturity, and they did an outstanding job!" Nominated by Miss Redmond.

Examination season breakfast club

Our super catering team will be running a breakfast club over the examination period. Everyone is welcome to use the service, but those taking examinations might find it particularly beneficial. The breakfast club starts next week (5th May) and runs until 29th June; items are priced from £1.55. Please do share the details with your child(ren).



Newman Hall
5th May - 29th June



Breakfast Club

Choice of:

Cereals with milk, bacon or sausage baps,
vegan sausage baps, egg muffin,
toast & jam, or a free porridge



Served daily
08:00 until 08:30



Welcome to our monthly literacy spotlight!

Here we celebrate the birthdays of beloved authors and share their most famous works to inspire a love of reading at home:

“May is for imagination!”

This month, we dive into epic stories and timeless tales.

Author	Birthdate	Year	Birthplace	Famous Works
Peter Benchley	8 th May	1940	New York, USA	Jaws
Dante Alighieri	21 st May	1265	Italy	The Divine Comedy: Inferno, Purgatorio, and Parasdiso

My Bookshelf – Spotlight on Ms Akeroyd, Catering Manager

“These are some of the books that I have enjoyed recently, an eclectic mix. But what is life without variation? I love a good historical novel, a mixture of facts and fiction. Kate Mosse is an excellent example of this genre and would highly recommend any of her books”.



UK Youth Parliament (Plymouth) Homework Report

Why the report matters

The report was written by a member of the Youth Parliament for Plymouth following a city-wide survey of nearly 400 secondary students aged 11–18. Homework was one of the top issues raised by young people in local youth elections. The report explores how homework affects learning, wellbeing, and family life, and what schools might do differently.

Key findings from Plymouth students:

Attitudes to homework

- 72% of students believe schools place high importance on homework, while only 30% of students feel it is highly important to them.
- 66% of students feel their school's homework approach is unfair, often citing volume, difficulty, or tight deadlines.
- When homework is late, 67% receive a punishment, while only 8% receive additional support.

Impact on wellbeing and family life

- 84% of students say homework has affected their emotional wellbeing at some point, commonly reporting stress and anxiety.
- Only 6% say homework never affects their home or social life.
- Students report missing family time, clubs, social activities, and "time to relax".

Time spent on homework

- Some students report spending up to 4 hours per subject, per week on homework.
- Even at the lowest levels, many students spend around 1.5 hours per day.
- Difficulties with time management and overlapping deadlines were common concerns.

Support and consistency

- Only 30% of students felt well-supported by teachers when they struggled.
- 12% said they received no support at all.

- Students highlighted inconsistency between teachers and schools in expectations, deadlines and sanctions.

What students say helps most:

Students across Plymouth suggested:

- A clear purpose for homework (not set “just because”)
- Reduced volume and better-spaced deadlines
- More visible and accessible homework support
- Opportunities to start homework in class
- Greater flexibility and understanding when difficulties arise

The student who conducted the survey on behalf of the Youth Parliament was not a PHSG student, but we are sharing with our students (and parents) as the report aims to represent all Plymouth students.

Plymouth High School for Girls’ response to the report:

Our homework rationale

At PHSG, we recognise both the value of homework and the concerns raised by young people in this report. Our approach is built on balance, clarity and care.

Why we set homework

Our homework is designed to:

- Reinforce and consolidate learning from the classroom
- Help students practise and apply key knowledge and skills

- Build independence, organisation, and resilience
- Prepare students gradually for examinations and future study

We do not believe homework should simply extend the school day indefinitely or negatively impact wellbeing.

How we aim to get the balance right

In light of student feedback locally and nationally, PHSG is committed to:

- Setting homework with a clear learning purpose, not as a routine task
- Ensuring homework is proportionate, age-appropriate, and manageable
- Co-ordinating deadlines to avoid unnecessary overload
- Providing support and guidance when students struggle
- Encouraging students to ask for help early, without stigma

Supporting wellbeing

We recognise that students' circumstances differ. Where homework becomes a source of significant stress:

- We encourage parent–school communication
- Adjustments and flexibility are considered where appropriate
- Support strategies are prioritised over sanctions

Working in partnership with parents

Parents play a vital role by:

- Encouraging good habits and routines
- Noticing signs of stress or overload
- Contacting school if homework is becoming unmanageable

Together, we aim to ensure homework supports learning without compromising wellbeing.

In summary:

- Homework can be valuable, but too much or poorly designed homework causes stress for many students.
- Young people across Plymouth are asking for balance, clarity and support.
- PHSG is committed to a thoughtful, purposeful approach that supports both academic success and student wellbeing.

If you have any questions about homework expectations or support, please contact the school; we welcome open dialogue.

Please find [link to a short survey here](#) where we are asking parents to answer a few questions about homework to help inform our planning for 2026/2027.

Very best wishes and thank you for your ongoing support,



Simon Underdown
Headteacher

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

Dates for your diary:

Year 11

6th May Celebration Day (student only event)

Year 13

8th May Celebration Day (student only event)

All Years

4th May Early May Bank Holiday

5th May Early lunches start to accommodate the public examinations

11th – 15th May Mental Health Awareness week

11th – 22nd May GCSE and A level examinations

22nd May Last day of school before the May holiday

1st June First day back after the May holiday