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Plymouth High School for Girls

"For life, not school, we learn"

26th June 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you are well and managed to stay as cool as possible during the recent hot weather. Thank you for your support and encouragement as we worked hard to mitigate, as best we could, the hot weather conditions in school. Although students and staff found the last few days uncomfortable, our school community made the best of it with good humour and understanding. The weekend and next week are set to be cooler. Students will be able to choose whether they would like to wear their blazers for the remainder of the term, but the rest of the uniform rules will apply. Jumpers are not part of the compulsory school uniform, and I would encourage students to leave their jumpers at home for the remainder of the term.

Student successes

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

- Student of the week: **Ayva H, Year 10** "For working really hard in Art, making sure all of her coursework is well documented to allow her project to progress. Ayva has also handed in her 1st Significant Piece which she has done a fab job on. Well done and keep up the good work Ayva!" Nominated by Miss Walsh.



- Group of the week: **Orlaith M, Annabelle R, Jess N, Ella F (Year 9), and Ellen S, Zara U, Cat L and Beatrice W (Year 12)** "At very short notice, this group of students enthusiastically represented our Year 7-11 and Sixth Form cohorts in front of visiting BBC cameras and spoke eloquently on a national topic. They really showcased what balanced and thoughtful views a PHSG student has". Nominated by Miss Redmond.

Our amazing swimmers, Jess, Ava, Anna and Alice, are at it again. Well done to these top athletes. Click on the link to see what they have been up to: [Plymouth High School for Girls - Plymouth High students making a national splash!](#)

The Proms

Year 13 had a wonderful time at their prom last week, celebrating together their time in school and marking the end of an era. Our students were a credit to themselves, the school, and their families and we wish them the very best of luck in their future plans. We look forward to seeing Year 13 for results day on Thursday 13th August.

Year 11 will have their prom on Tuesday of next week and I am sure they will have a great time. Year 11 will be joining us for their results day on Thursday 20th August.

Year 11 Offer Holder event

We were delighted to welcome our 'offer holder' Year 11 students into school this week for a day of Year 12 preparation. Our 'new Year 12' took advantage of the opportunities on offer, asked lots of questions and went away knowing what to do to be ready for September. Find out more in the article here: [Plymouth High School for Girls - Year 11 Offer Holder Day](#)

Long Service Awards

This week, staff came together to celebrate and thank colleagues who have dedicated many years of service to Plymouth High School for Girls, recognising both teaching and support staff whose commitment has helped shape the lives of generations of students. It was a pleasure to award a few members of staff for an incredible 25 years' service to the school and adding an extra layer of significance to the celebrations, a further number of those staff recognised were once PHSG students themselves, meaning their connection with the school stretches back far beyond their years of employment.



Whether in the classroom or behind the scenes, it is clear that the loyalty and dedication of staff at Plymouth High creates a lasting impact – on each other and the families who grow with us – and I am proud of everything we continue to contribute to our community.

AI Quality Mark Bronze award

We're really pleased to share some exciting news with you – PHSG has achieved the AI Quality Mark Bronze Award.

This recognises the work we've been doing to carefully and positively introduce artificial intelligence into school life, supporting both teaching and learning.

We are particularly proud that we are:

- one of the first schools in our trust to receive this award
- the first state school in the South West to achieve it

Over the past year, staff and students have been exploring how AI can be used responsibly – whether that's to support learning, develop digital skills, or reduce staff workload so teachers can focus more on high-quality teaching.

This award reflects the strong progress we've made so far – but we're not stopping there. We were very close to achieving Silver, and this is something we will be working towards in the new academic year.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support as we ensure our students are prepared for a rapidly changing digital world.



Success at the 2026 SWAT Challenge Cup

We were delighted to see Lilly P, Katie W and Scarlett D (Year 10) represent the school so impressively at this year's SWAT Challenge Cup, a competition between grammar schools across the South West of England. This year, teams were asked to present on the theme: *"What does the perfect school of the future look like?"*

Lilly, Katie and Scarlett gave a thoughtful, confident and ambitious presentation, exploring how schools might develop over the next 10 and 20 years. Their vision included environmentally conscious buildings, stronger financial education, study spaces designed for independent learning, improved media literacy and importantly, a continued focus on genuine human connection between teachers and students, cautioning against the allure of AI alternatives.

The students also faced questions from other schools and from an expert judging panel. This year's panel included Sandhya Dave, Anti-Racism Consultant and Cultural Champions Coordinator at Devon Development Education; Fiona Collier, Governance Consultancy Team Lead at Devon Education Services; and Amy Bickford, who oversees the SEND Participation Team for Devon County Council. Their areas of expertise brought together equality, diversity and inclusion, school governance, pupil voice and co-production.

Having won the competition last year, we were thrilled that the team again made the podium for a second year in a row. The judges were highly complimentary about the quality of the students' presentation, praising the professionalism, confidence, and articulation shown by such young public speakers.

The event is part of the wider work of the South West Academic Trust (SWAT), a collaborative alliance of grammar schools from Plymouth to Bournemouth. SWAT provides valuable opportunities for students and staff across the South West to share ideas, celebrate excellence and learn from one another.

Finally, our sincere thanks go to our colleague, Miss Lizzie Sturdy, from Parkstone Grammar School, who has organised the competition over the last seven years and helped to create such a valuable opportunity for students across the region.

National Year of Reading 2026

As we reach the midpoint of the National Year of Reading, we would like to remind you just how important reading is for your child's success.

Students need a reading age of 15 years and 8 months to fully access GCSE examination papers. Supporting your child and encouraging them to read regularly is therefore vital.

Reading in all forms helps develop vocabulary and understanding this includes:

- Fiction and non-fiction books
- Magazines and newspapers
- Online articles
- Audiobooks and storytelling

The UK's National Year of Reading 2026, led by the Department for Education and the National Literacy Trust, aims to address the decline in reading for pleasure.

The campaign encourages families to:

- Model positive reading habits
- Swap scrolling for storytelling
- Help children discover a genuine love of reading

Why Reading for Pleasure Matters

- Brain Development – Listening to stories and reading regularly strengthens communication skills and supports brain development.
- Wellbeing – Reading helps children relax, understand emotions, and develop empathy.
- Life Opportunities – Regular readers tend to achieve higher academic outcomes and have improved future opportunities.

Tips for Supporting Reading at Home

- Every Word Counts – Let your child read what they enjoy: comics, graphic novels, magazines, websites, or sports programmes all count.
- Lead by Example – Children are more likely to read when they see adults reading too.
- Make It Routine – Build reading into daily life:
 - Share a story before bed
 - Read together on journeys
 - Enjoy a short text before dinner

Useful Resources:

- Age-specific advice: “[Go All In](#)” family resources (for all age ranges)
- Book recommendations: Books for Topics website

- Campaign information: National Literacy Trust

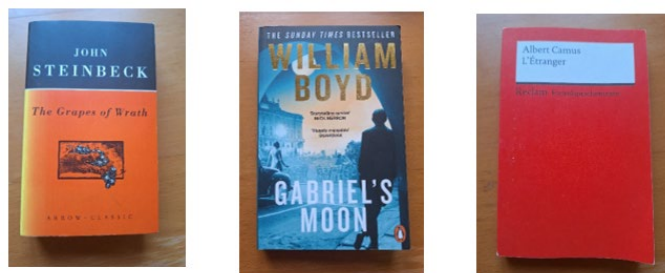
By working together, we can help every child build confidence, improve their literacy, and develop a lifelong love of reading.

My Bookshelf – Spotlight on Mr A Walmsley, School Governor

“My bookshelf continues to evolve, and grow, as I find relinquishing myself of books I’ve read an incredibly difficult task (and, truth be told, there are plenty of books on my bookshelf I have yet to read). I do have a virtual bookshelf, but personally, I still enjoy the physicality of picking up a real book, especially an old book where both the book’s content and feel provide a bridge to the past (time-travel *is* in fact possible).

On the topic of nostalgia, reflecting on what I might write here, I realised that many of the books I read at school did serve as an introduction to a range of authors. For example, Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* led me to read some of his other works, and he is one of my favourite authors – his portrayal of America away from the glitz and glamour has something real, gritty, authentic to it. Albert Camus is another example; I have just started re-reading *The Stranger* (“*L’Étranger*”, in its original) – I wouldn’t say this is a ‘light read’, but his prose again has something very ‘earthy’ and honest to it.

I love being recommended books as I find this often results in me reading material that I would probably not otherwise have chosen myself. At the moment, my main source of recommendations in this regard comes from my aunt who is more than happy to pass on novels she has read (she clearly does not suffer from my book hoarding affliction). Her choices tend to relate to more contemporary authors, e.g. Maggie O’Farrell, William Boyd, John Boyne. My next read? *Cities of Lies* (Ramita Navai), donated to me by my brother this time, which covers life in modern-day Iran; very topical of course.”



Free bus travel in August

Children aged 5 - 15 years will be able to travel on local bus services for free in August – whether for a day out, visiting family, or just getting around your local area! You can find more information on the government website [here](#).

Very best wishes,

Simon Underdown
Headteacher

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

Dates for your diary:

Year 11

30th June Year 11 Prom

Year 13

19th June Year 13 Prom

All Years

6th – 10th July Curriculum enrichment week

14th July Sports Day (reserve date: 16th July)

17th July Music Festival

Last day of term (students finish at 1.30pm, the DHSB buses will run their pick up at this time rather than 3.30pm)

