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Plymouth High School for Girls

"For life, not school, we learn"

3rd July 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this finds you well.

We have had a busy week with the open evening, Year 11 prom, and the Year 6 into 7 transition events. As usual, our young people have risen to every occasion and represented the school admirably. I have been particularly impressed with the students who gave speeches to a hall full of parents. It's quite something for them to do and they were magnificent, coping with nerves and displaying tremendous oracy.

You will have seen the Benedict's Law letter that I sent you this week along with the mobile phones letter. There is a parent action element to the Benedict's Law letter if your child has an allergy (rather than an intolerance). The mobile phone letter details the changes to school rules from 1st September following guidance from the Department of Education.

Please do read the letter carefully and note that smartwatches, wireless earbuds, and other 'smart devices' will not be permitted from 1st September.

I do hope that all of our students enjoy either their curriculum enrichment week or their work experience. My thanks to parents for ensuring that all the necessary preparations have been made to support our young people in their week of wider learning.



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: **Madlin K, Year 9** – “Madlin (whilst unable to take part in her own PE lesson) helped me to teach a Year 7 RS group about the different parts of a mosque and the items you will find inside. She used her own personal knowledge and experience to confidently teach younger students”. Nominated by Miss N Barnett
- Group of the week: **8H Te 2, Year 8** – “They worked exceptionally well in their practical food tech lesson in a heat wave. They were resilient and determined and didn't let the weather stop them producing some technically challenging dishes. True chef mentality as when the going got hot, they didn't get out of the kitchen!” Nominated by Mrs Banks

Free school meals update

There are some important changes to Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility that will take effect from 1st September 2026. These changes mean that many more families may now be entitled to free school meals and we encourage all parents and carers to check their eligibility and apply where appropriate.

What is changing?

From 1st September 2026, the government is expanding Free School Meal eligibility so that all children living in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals, regardless of annual earned income. This expansion is expected to make free school meals available to many more children who were previously not eligible.

We encourage families to apply even if:

- Your child currently brings a packed lunch
- Your child has not previously had school meals
- You have applied before and were not eligible
- Your circumstances have changed recently

Understanding the different types of free school meal provision:

– Expanded Free School Meals

From September 2026, children living in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals, even if household earnings are above the previous income threshold.

– Targeted Free School Meals

Some families may also qualify under the existing criteria linked to lower household incomes or other qualifying benefits. In these cases, schools may receive additional funding, such as Pupil Premium, and families may be eligible for other support including holiday activity programmes, transport assistance or additional local authority schemes.

Why it is important to register:

It is important to register, even if your child does not usually eat school meals, registering can be extremely important. By completing a Free School Meal application, the school may be able to access additional funding which can help provide:

- Extra teaching and learning support
- Educational resources
- Pastoral care and wellbeing services
- Enrichment opportunities and interventions

Although all children in households receiving Universal Credit may qualify for free meals, Pupil Premium and some linked funding arrangements will continue to be based on existing criteria. It is therefore essential that eligible families complete the registration process so that schools can accurately identify pupils and access any available funding.

Annual reapplication and changes to entitlement:

A significant change is that the previous "transitional protection" arrangements are ending on 31 August 2026. Since 2018, many children who became eligible for Free School Meals were able to retain this entitlement even if family circumstances changed. From September 2026, eligibility will be based on current circumstances, and local authorities will undertake regular eligibility checks.

Parents and carers should therefore note that:

- Applications will need to be renewed each academic year.
- Families should not assume existing entitlement will automatically continue.
- Local authorities may automatically verify eligibility or may ask families to submit a new application.
- Schools and local authorities will contact families where action is required.

Once approved, entitlement will generally remain in place for the full academic year, regardless of subsequent changes to circumstances during that year.

What should you do?

If you receive Universal Credit, please check your eligibility and apply as soon as possible. Many local authorities have already begun accepting applications in preparation for September 2026.

If your child already receives Free School Meals, please watch for communications from your local authority or the school regarding reapplication or eligibility checks.

Applying is quick, straightforward and confidential. Apply here: [Free school meals | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK](https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/free-school-meals)

Need help?

Further information and frequently asked questions are available on our website:

[Plymouth High School for Girls - Pupil Premium](#)

We understand that discussions about finances can sometimes feel sensitive. Please be assured that all applications and enquiries are handled confidentially and with care.

Social media and young people

WhatsApp has always been one of the most popular messaging apps used by adults and young people and has been accessed by some children under 13. This has always been a concern for a lot of different reasons, but now Meta have created a parent-managed service which parents and carers may find very helpful. Similar to other parent-managed accounts, a parent can pair their device/account to the child's device/account which then gives a lot of flexibility such as: No 'view once' messages, no location sharing, messages and group invites from unknown contacts sent to the parent for approval, parent notifications such as *new contact added*. Please do investigate this with your child to decide if this additional protection is something you want.

Children's Commissioner report and survey

The Children's Commissioner annual report (published 29th June 2026) is now available [here](#). The Children's Commissioner has asked young people across the country to take part in a big survey. Students in Year 7 to 9 have completed this in school and students in Years 10 and above are invited to complete it at home. Thank you to those parents and carers who have already encouraged their Year 10 and above

child to complete the survey. If your child has not completed the survey, there is still time. The link is below:

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/thebigfuture>

Summer concert

The PHSG Music department cordially invites you to attend our summer concert on Thursday 16th July at 5pm on the courts (weather depending). Gates open at 4:45pm.

Please join us for a relaxed performance of music inspired by the movies of Disney. The event will feature singers and musicians from KS3 & 4 and refreshments provided by our wonderful PTFA.

*"There once was a concert so grand,
With Disney and songs close at hand,
With scones piled up high,
'Neath a midsummer eve sky,
A magical evening well planned."*

To help make the evening extra special, we would be very grateful for any donations of scones for our cream tea atmosphere!

Thank you in advance for considering supporting us. Your generosity would be very much appreciated. Tickets are priced at £5.00 and can be purchased on Arbor. We look forward to seeing you there.

Oxford University open day stay

Year 12 students had the opportunity to visit the University of Oxford for 2 days this week. Bed and breakfast in the stunning Keble College allowed students the chance to test out college accommodation and food in the stunning dining halls. A sunny first day of college visits and tours allowed students to see the range of places that could be home for 3 years. Then a morning of subject taster lectures, Q&A with tutors, and admissions guidance to find their course of choice before a reflective train ride home.



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.

“Magical July awaits!”

Discover the author who created a world loved by millions and try a magical activity at home.

Author	Birthdate	Year	Birthplace
Franz Kafka	3 rd July 3 1883	Prague	The Metamorphosis, The Trial
Ernest Hemingway	21 st July 1899	Oak Park, Illinois	The Old Man and the Sea, A Farewell to Arms
Emily Brontë	30 th July 1818	Yorkshire, England	Wuthering Heights

And because there won't be a letter from me in August:

“August adventures are here!”

From mysterious creatures to thrilling tales, this month's authors will spark curiosity and creativity. Ready for a challenge?

Author	Birthdate	Birthplace	Famous Works
Herman Melville	1 st August 1819	New York City, USA	Moby-Dick
Mary Shelley	30 th August 1797	London, England	Frankenstein

Extreme reading competition

Competition time

The **PHSG Extreme Reading competition** is a fun reading initiative run by the Plymouth High School for Girls to help celebrate 2026 as the National year of Reading. Students **and their families** are challenged to submit photographs of themselves reading books in unusual, out-of-the-ordinary, or creative locations (e.g., on a trampoline, riding a horse, or standing up on a surfboard, upside down).

Please email your entries to Donna.Roughton@phsg.tsat.uk by the 30th September.

By entering you agree for the photo to be used on the school website



My Bookshelf – Spotlight on Mrs Young, Curriculum Lead for Design & Technology

“I like reading books that really draw me into the story and make me think about people and their experiences. I especially enjoyed *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* and *Where the Crawdads Sing* because they’re emotional, beautifully written, and focus on relationships and resilience. I also enjoy lighter, more humorous novels, particularly books by Jane Fallon, which are easy to read and great for switching off.

Alongside fiction, I like reading non-fiction about health and food, as I’m interested in wellbeing and learning how small lifestyle choices can make a difference. Overall, I enjoy books that are engaging, meaningful, and enjoyable to read.”



Very best wishes,



Simon Underdown
Headteacher

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

Dates for your diary:

All Years

6 th – 10 th July	Curriculum enrichment week
14 th July	Sports Day (reserve date: 16 th July)
16 th July	Summer concert
17 th 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)