



WEST HILL SCHOOL

Aiming High since 1927

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Monday 23rd March 2026

Dear families,

As spring term ends this Friday 27th March at 12:30pm, we look forward to a well earned rest, returning for the summer term and the option of tailored, black shorts being worn by boys. As you are aware, this has been a tough term for us with two boys tragically passing away that are directly linked to our school community. As we have focused on allowing the boys to grieve with us, understanding this grief and speaking openly about it, on our return we begin working with our students around annual traditions, memorials, events and fundraising with our focus on Teenage Cancer Trust. To commence this, and to end this term with a sense of collectiveness, on Friday 27th March we will have an own clothes day with a football-related theme or PE kits worn to unite in the boys' passion of the game. As little or as much as you can donate would be appreciated and every action matters. We will share our plan once formed with our students, donations via https://www.justgiving.com/page/rememberinghaaris?utm_medium=FR&utm_source=CL

Key dates next half-term

Easter break: Year 11 revision opportunities have been sent to our Year 11 families.

Monday 13th April: return for a regular school day.

Tuesday 21st April: Music Department's Spring Concert, 7:30pm at St Paul's Church, Stalybridge.

Monday 4th May: May Bank Holiday, school closed, return Tuesday 5th May as normal.

Thursday 7th May: GCSE examinations begin.

Monday 25th May-Friday 29th May: half-term.

Monday 1st June: return from half-term for a regular school day.

W/C 1st June: KS3 non-core Assessment Week.

W/C 8th June: KS3 core (English, Maths and Science) Assessment Week.

Mobile phone use in schools

After Easter, as you may be aware from the news, the Department for Education and Ofsted have added additional scrutiny to schools around their mobile phone policy in schools. For us, our policy remains in place with our directive of phones switched off and away from 8:35am to the end of the day. When students return after Easter, we will repeat this message so that our boys are clear around the switching off element rather than on silent mode. Currently, whereby boys stop and ask staff permission to use their phone, we allow its use and then supervise the switching off again. When mobile phones are actively being used in the school day, they are confiscated. When multiple confiscations occur, we request that families collect the phone from our Student Reception. This is largely the deterrent needed to prevent repetition. In February, I was invited to attend a small panel with Mayor Andy Burnham around developing a GM-wide approach to mobile phones and potential funding of pouches to all schools. An update on action will occur in the upcoming summer term and communication will follow once all sectors (early years, primary, secondary, health and police) have created a plan with the mayor. The notion of removing mobile phones links to student concentration: with a phone on, but silent, the buzzing and distraction that this mentally causes deters from concentrating on work and creates busy brains that struggle to concentrate or balance the priority of school versus life outside of school. In turn, this links to wellbeing and mental health with statistics indicating young people are unhappier than previous generations with high screen time, and the impact of exposure to the world a smart phone creates, cited as a large factor. Necessity versus convenience: if students need to be contacted, schools have systems in place whereby messages can be relayed without the need of a phone. Largely, the national drive is around protecting young people and allowing school and its experiences to be the daily focus for all young people.

National uniform updates

From September 2026, with a focus on inclusion, the Department for Education have asked that all schools review their current uniform branded items (that require school logos) and ensure that only four branded items are required for any family to purchase. We have, therefore, reviewed and updated our branded items and have updated the



uniform section of our website alongside the parent handbook [West Hill School - Uniform Expectations](#) with our uniform providers updated for their stock. In summary our four branded items are:

- a school tie
- a school blazer with our crest
- PE: white t-shirt with school badge
- PE: royal blue shorts with school badge

Although we have other elements to our uniform, these are not branded and therefore can be purchased from a range of outlets without a fixed tariff. For families who have already purchased branded items not listed above, your son may of course wear these still, but certain items may not need to be replaced once outgrown/lost – only those listed above must be directly replaced as a branded item. Information will also follow about our Unicycle scheme and events for uniform purchase or recycling. Please read the link to our website for more details about our uniform from September 2026.

Curriculum updates from our Curriculum Leaders

Ms Worthington: Computing

This term we welcomed Mr Macdonald into the team. Mr Macdonald has re-launched the KS3 coding club on Monday at lunch times in S9, all are welcome to get involved. Coding Club numbers for both KS3 and KS4 are very healthy; it has been particularly popular with our KS4 students, and it has been lovely to see some friendships develop across year groups as a result of having the same shared interest. 60 Year 9 students have had the opportunity to complete *A Day in the Life* of a BT employee when they took part in a virtual work experience. This is something we are going to look to run again in the summer term with Year 8, so watch this space. We finished last term off with a festive coding challenge for KS4 which broke a school record for the greatest number of entries we have ever had! Omari A (Year 11) and Da'Wud T (Year 10) were the lucky winners of Greggs gift vouchers and both Isa A (Year 11) and Marc G (Year 11) received a chocolate prize. Our Easter coding competition is now live with the closing date of Sunday 5th April; winners will be drawn on Monday 13th April. Good luck to everyone!

Mr Battarbee: PE

Tameside U16 badminton champions saw a fantastic result, with the A team finishing 1st and the B team securing 2nd place. The Year 8 team has reached the semi-final of the Greater Manchester Schools Cup, where they will face Altrincham Grammar School. Meanwhile, the Year 9 football team has also progressed to the semi-final of the Tameside Cup. In basketball, Years 7 and 8 competed in the first round of the Junior NBA at Wright Robinson, winning all three of their games. They now look ahead to the second round on 22nd April. Students across Years 7, 8, 9, and 10 have all taken part in rugby sevens tournaments, showing great commitment and teamwork.

Lucas R, Year 11, represented Great Britain in biathlon and performed strongly, although his race unfortunately ended in a crash, the high level in which he operates at is commendable and reflects his resilience and discipline. Tyler J, Year 10, is currently in Japan representing England in karate—an incredible achievement on the international stage. In chess, Jake G and Jyothis J (Year 11) both delivered excellent performances at the Junior Manchester Chess Tournament. Jake earned a silver medal, while Jyothis secured bronze. Overall, a fantastic set of achievements across a wide range of sports—well done to everyone involved!

Ms Currie: Geography

It has been a fantastic term in Geography; KS3 students have shown great enthusiasm, with Year 7 exploring weather and climate, Year 8 urbanisation, and Year 9 development. We are excited to move on to climate change and sustainability, ecosystems, and glaciation next term. Our Year 8s were outstanding on the Chester Zoo trip and were a real credit to the school. We are looking forward to more fieldwork next term. Year 10 enjoyed a brilliant visit to Manchester Museum and Manchester Metropolitan University, with fieldwork at Salford Quays and the Holderness Coast coming up after half-term.

Year 11 are working hard in the final run up to their GCSEs, and we look forward to seeing many of them at revision sessions over Easter. We will also be delivering the pre-release material after Easter to support the final preparations for the Paper 3 exam.

**Ms McDougall: English**

It has been a positive and productive term in English, with students across all year groups showing enthusiasm and growing confidence. Our Year 11 students have been working hard in their morning and after-school intervention sessions, demonstrating commitment as they prepare for their upcoming exams.

At Key Stage 3, students have produced some excellent work. Year 7 explored *The Tempest* through monologue writing, Year 8 responded creatively to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Year 9 engaged thoughtfully with *Lord of the Flies*, exploring ideas around society and responsibility. We also enjoyed celebrating World Book Day, promoting a shared love of reading across the school. Our creative writing clubs continue to be popular, with students developing confidence and creativity, and Key Stage 3 students working towards entries for a writing competition. We are proud of the effort and progress shown this term and look forward to continuing this momentum.

Mr Butler: Art

Another busy and creative term in the Art Department with many extra-curricular offerings proving popular across all year groups. Art club continues to run every Monday lunchtime and after school and is open to all creative minded students. Year 11 have been busy preparing for their GCSE exam in lessons, and students have been making use of the department every breaktime, lunchtime and after school in the run up to the exam. Our Year 10 students have been making excellent progress on their portraits project in recent weeks, and a group of students will be attending an exhibition and tour of the Art Department at Ashton Sixth Form just before the Easter break. Year 9 have been tackling *Pop Art* portraits with great success, while Year 7 and 8 have been inspired by a diverse range of art and artists from Michelangelo to Modern Abstract! Well done to all our creative students!

Mr Wells: Music

In the Music classroom, our Year 7s have been learning how to read and write music notation. They have then applied this knowledge practically to playing the music keyboard. Meanwhile, our Year 8s have been using Garageband on the Apple computers to understand the role of a film composer, composing the music and sound effects to create emotion and atmosphere for a film clip is not easy! Our Year 9s have been using our DJ decks to understand how they work and learn how to mix music together, skills they can use as a hobby or potentially for a future DJ career. Our GCSE students have been working hard to complete their music coursework. Two compositions and two performance recordings each, ready to be submitted to the exam board. In addition, our busy co-curricular provision is in full swing! Our Jazz Orchestra, Samba Band, Guitar Group, Brass Ensemble, Jazz Collective, Handbells, Keyboard Club and myriad of individual instrumentalists continue to practice and rehearse during and after school. With our Spring Concert taking place on Tuesday 21st April, there is a lot practice for! Please email wells@westhillschool.co.uk if your son would like to learn a musical instrument.

Mr Wilson: Design Technology

In Design Technology, we continue to focus on bringing the subject to life by providing students with meaningful, hands-on opportunities to apply the skills they learn in the classroom. A key priority this term has been embedding sustainability across all areas of the curriculum, encouraging students to think critically about the impact of design in the wider world. This term, Year 8 students have taken part in an exciting new CAD project, exploring real-world applications in interior design and architecture. This has allowed them to develop both technical skills and an understanding of potential future career pathways. Our Year 10 students have been working on practical projects, including the design and manufacture of an ergonomic bottle opener. This project has enabled them to successfully apply theoretical knowledge to create high-quality, functional products. We are also currently selecting our team for the Year 9 Greenpower Challenge at Tameside College—an excellent opportunity for students to engage with engineering in a competitive and inspiring environment. This is something to look forward to in the coming months. Alongside this, we are continuing to expand our co-curricular offer, with a range of exciting activities planned for the summer term to further enrich students' experiences in Design and Technology.

Ms Kenworthy: MFL

Last term we welcomed two primary schools (around 25 students) to sample lessons at West Hill with Mr Leckey. We are thrilled that due to the active learning and interactive curriculum the number of boys opting for German and Spanish at GCSE continues to grow. Our Year 9s visited Brian Clarke, focusing on careers with German and what skills employers and universities most value.

**Mr Tabernor: Science**

This term the Science team took 32 boys to Heysham Nuclear Power Station near Morecombe. The day was filled with lots of activities centred around the GCSE Physics curriculum as well as a guided tour of the facility where the boys got to see the day-to-day workings of a nuclear power station, including the big red button that said, 'Do Not Touch!' Staff at the facility commented on the boys' behaviour saying it was *impeccable* and they were a *credit to the school*. Our Year 7 STEM Club have been busy learning about propulsion and carrying out a range of practicals to measure the speed of objects in preparation for their rocket car project. Next term will see them move over to technology to start the design and build of their cars. Educake was introduced as our new home learning platform at the beginning of the month for all year groups, the boys have done an amazing job engaging with this with over 50,000 answers submitted already over two weeks.

Ms Fisher: Maths

Back in February on the off-timetable day, all Year 7 participated in this year's NSPCC Number Day with maths games such as 'who wants to be a mathionaire?' and the classic 'Blockbusters'. We also celebrated Pi Day with some phenomenal pies in our canteen! Another excellent term has been had from the Axiom Maths members, the Year 8 cohort have been looking into Euclid's theory for factors and multiples, with some of the students coming up with the theory on their own before being presented with it! The Year 7 cohort have been introduced to combinations and permutations, with many of them seeing tree diagrams for the first time. Our Maths Puzzle Club has been buzzing this term, with keen problem-solvers taking on challenges inspired by Mr Beast's \$1,000,000 treasure hunt. While no millionaires just yet, enthusiasm is high and our puzzlers remain confident that a breakthrough is just around the corner!

Within the UK Maths Trust competition (UKMT) we gained some fantastic results this year, with 5 Year 9 students being invited to compete in the follow up round of the Intermediate Maths Challenge! A huge well done to Albie M, Joshua H, Jordi C, Jake F and Frankie-Lee B on securing 5 golds. We then had 6 silvers from Kean P-P, Muhammad T, Ethan R, Hugh P, Max C and Kylan B, again a huge achievement. Finally, we gained 9 bronzes from Ronan E, Ronnie H, Micah K-B, Archie G, Freddie F, Oscar M, Hayyan A, Daniel S and Isaac T. This is reflective of a real Maths talent as they shortly venture into GCSE Maths studies. Within the Year 10 cohort, we also gained some excellent results with 19 students achieving gold, silver and bronze awards. The overall results in Year 10 were: 2 gold from Samuel G and Dominic S, 5 silver from Dawud T, Evan W, Abdullah T, Eesa A and Michael L and 12 bronze Rudra J, Alfie R, Dominic A-D, Sam W, Tyler J, Tyler A, Jacob B, Hassan O, Alfie T-W, Leo C, Finley T and Jack T.

Mr Merlo: Business Studies

A huge well done to our Year 11 Business and Enterprise students for completing their Non-Examined Assessments (NEA) this term! This was a significant undertaking requiring immense focus and hard work, and the boys should be very proud of reaching this milestone. Looking ahead, we are excited to enter a Year 10 team into the upcoming Stock Market Challenge competition shortly after the break. Please keep a close eye on the West Hill App for further details and selection information.

Ms Mason: Food and Nutrition

We are celebrating our Year 11 boys who have completed their 3-hour GCSE with some final hours and preparation to complete as we head into the final stages of their GCSE. So far, we have seen a showcasing of their technical skills and the production of some fabulous results. Next term, the MasterChef competition will launch for KS3 pupils to get through the rounds of creating and making their own dishes from scratch to impress our staff judges!

Mr Harrison: RE and IDP

We finish the term with a busy week for visitors in some IDP classes with visits from Magistrates in the Community with Year 10, healthcare professionals with Year 9 and Reuben's Retreat with Year 8 as we bring our curriculum to life exploring its relevance in the real world beyond school. Our Year 8 IDP students have continued with their fundraising or awareness projects for Reuben's Retreat with a notable mention for Jack G in 8T for his baking and entrepreneurial skills after selling his cakes at his brother's football games! Thank you to all students for their efforts with this active citizenship, to parents and carers for their support, and to Mrs Sumner and Mr Cross for their continued work in facilitating this.

**Mrs Gallagher: History**

In History we have rolled our Structured Reading format which is there to support all learners read and succeed! Year 11 Intervention continues to be a huge success, with the lads getting in before school to get some support with exam technique. Next Term we are looking to explore more co-curricular opportunities to encourage our young Historians

I would like to close with my usual gratitude and thanks to you as families. Our boys who have just finished Ramadan were respectful and reflective throughout this period and a credit to you. We thank our families for the support in ensuring all learners are equipped and ready to learn every day, helmets are worn from our cyclists and as we return we will have a further drive on readiness to learn and consistency of with equipment, punctuality, mobile phones and uniform standards to ensure distractions from our learning are removed as best we can, enabling everyone to continue thriving in our school community. Just as a reminder, if your son comes to school without an item needed for the day, they should make their way to our Student Reception before school begins to loan items needed.

We enter our GCSE exam season upon our return and begin our transition work with our current Year 6s joining our community into Year 7 shortly.

Many thanks and have a well-rested Easter break,

Ms C. Cronin
Headteacher