

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the July edition of our Newsletter, the last Newsletter of this academic year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those students, staff, parents and governors who have positively contributed to St John's this year. We are incredibly fortunate to have such a vibrant Catholic school in our local community and one that strives each day to ensure that each of our stakeholders live their lives by our ethos of 'Excellence for All', 'Service to Others' and 'Inspired by Christ'. Indeed, one of the most rewarding aspects of being the Headteacher of our school, is hearing about just how well our pupils have represented St John's on the many trips that go out each week; the vast majority of students really do embody the values of our school that we hold dear.

I am delighted to report that the school is full in every year group, and we were heavily oversubscribed as far as the Year 7 intake for September 2019 is concerned (receiving over 600 applications for the 196 places available – 243 of which placed us as first preference). It also gives me great pleasure to announce that we have recently secured substantial funding from our partners at KCC and the Catholic Education Commission, to purchase further classroom teaching areas which will be placed on the ground floor across our three House areas. It is very much hoped that the installation of these teaching spaces will be completed over the summer holidays, meaning that our learning environments inside the house areas will be enhanced significantly. We will also be converting one of these areas into a bespoke library – something that we have been looking to do for a very long time indeed.

I would also like to take a moment to congratulate our Key Stage 4 & Key Stage 5 students for the way in which they prepared for and conducted themselves during the recent summer examinations. They really have done themselves, their families and the school proud, and I sincerely hope that they receive the results that their efforts so rightly deserve.

Finally, I would like to wish each and every one of you all the best for the holidays ahead. I hope that you are able to find some quality time to rest and relax as a family, so that your time together helps to create lasting memories full of joy and happiness. May blessing of grace and peace be with you each and every day.

Matt Barron *Headteacher*

“Crescendo” Gymnastic Showcase

Congratulations to all those pupils who took part in the recent gymnastic showcase – 'Crescendo' – which was held over two consecutive evenings, Wednesday 18th & Friday 19th July. Our students, in conjunction with the primary school, put on a wonderful spectacle and highlighted exactly why they are so successful across all age ranges at National Schools' Gymnastic events. A special 'thank you' must go to Mrs Weller for all of her support and dedication in ensuring that gymnastics continues to go from strength to strength at our school.

GOODBYE YEAR 11!

After a very successful and challenging year, Year 11 threw themselves enthusiastically into celebrations to mark the end of the formal examination period before they officially departed for a well-earned break. It is always an emotional process saying farewell to our leavers after all the hard work that Year 11 entails. Needless to say, we are immensely proud of them all for their conscientious efforts and dedication throughout this year.

Our leavers were sent off in true St John's style, many with new hoodies and a spring in their step. All students were invited to a celebratory mass and leavers BBQ on 21st June, and of course the highlight was the Year 11 Prom a week later on the 28th June.

Mass is an important opportunity for students to give thanks and reflect together on their personal journey through St John's and we are very grateful to Fr Innocent, Deacon Michael and Mrs Gibbons who led this special celebration for us. The leavers' assembly was an emotional and yet funny trip down memory lane. Both tears and laughter were shared as we presented photos from the students' time at school on the big screen and the staff showed their appreciation for all of the pupils' hard work by 'letting their hair down' in the leavers mass staff video. Students were then invited to participate in the ritual 'shirt signing' before heading outside for a burger with staff in the sunshine; it was a glorious afternoon!

Prom 2019... Year 11 students looked amazing in their new attire, and the staff didn't look too bad either. It was enjoyable to share a meal together and then make some shapes on the dancefloor. We would like to thank our students for a wonderful evening and their exemplary behaviour – many comments were passed by other hotel guests about how amazing they looked and how well they all conducted themselves.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our Year 11 students for their dedication and commitment to their studies this year, we very much hope that this is reflected when they collect and open their results at St John's on the 22nd August (9.00am).

We wish you the students all the very best of luck and success for the future and we look forward to welcoming very many of them back to the Sixth Form next year.

Finally, always remember as you move into the 'big world', you will always be part of a much bigger community, the St John's community.

Mr A Rowlinson. *Head of Year 11*

And

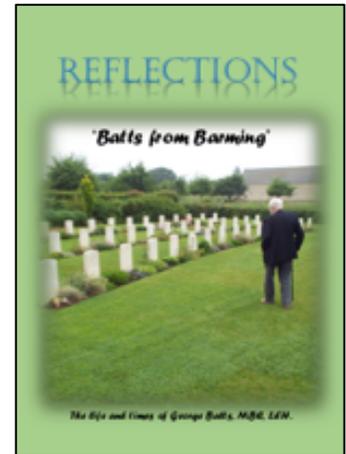
Mrs J Murray. *Year 11 Pastoral Manager*



'REFLECTIONS – Batts from Barming'

The biography of George Batts, patron of the Normandy Memorial Trust, will be published in late May in time for the 75th Anniversary of D-Day. George feels that at 93 years of age it is time to have his REFLECTIONS recorded in book form and it is fitting that the proceeds of the book will go to the Memorial Trust Fund.

George was among those who landed in the early morning of June 6th, 1944 on Gold Beach. He had enlisted the year before and his first combat experience was D-day itself. As a sapper he was based at Arromanches, working on the Mulberry Harbour before moving to Antwerp in late 1944. In 1945 George was transferred to the Far East. Here he ended his Army Career. On retirement in the 1990s George became fully involved with the Normandy Veterans' Association, becoming National Secretary and National Treasurer. His desire and wish for a suitable Memorial to all those who died under British Command during the Normandy Campaign is bearing fruition with the planned building of the Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer.



George's efforts are what the Hon. Henry Montgomery writes of George that he is - the driving force behind the efforts of the Normandy Memorial Trust to turn George's dream into reality. That dream was to build a lasting memorial behind Gold beach, where George landed on 6th June 1944, to honour in one place, all the 22,442 service men and women under British command who died in the Normandy campaign.

George's biography is covered in six Chapters with Chapter 3 covering his war time experience and Chapter six focusing on the Memorial. The memorial as Nicholas Witchell writes is the dream of George and the other veterans whom it has been my privilege to meet over the past four years – men like the redoubtable Harry Billinge, Joe Cattini, Ronald Clements, Jim Radford, Lord Edwin Bramall and many others – will become a reality.

The British Normandy Memorial will be built on a hillside overlooking Gold beach where George and so many other brave men came ashore on the morning of 6th June 1944 - and it will record the names of the 22,442 men and women who never came home.

The biography is based on interviews undertaken by 6th Form students of the History Society, St John's Catholic Comprehensive School, Gravesend under the guidance of Colm Murphy, Head of History. The biography is 170 pages, in full colour, softback and will be on sale at £15 with proceeds going to the Normandy Memorial Trust Fund. The book will be available from late May with book launches planned in June in Normandy and in the UK. Further details – cmurphy606@stj.kent.sch.uk / 01474 534718 or through the Normandy Memorial Trust website contact details.

Mr C Murphy. *Head of History*

Graduation

The past few weeks have been very exciting for Year 8. It is through hard work and determination that the cohort enjoyed their Graduation Ceremony on Thursday 6th June.

The evening involved a variety of acts including Khadija and Ryan reading a Graduation poem, a musical performance on the ukulele from Ellen, and Andrius & Kamile closing the ceremony with a prayer. Throughout the evening, students were invited to the stage to receive their certificates whilst parents and guardians looked on with pride. Students particularly enjoyed the opportunity at the end of the ceremony to have their photo taken with their scrolls. Special congratulations go to Riandeep and Shaan for receiving trophies on the evening for their outstanding efforts throughout the year. The following students also deserve a special mention for receiving a framed 'Graduating with Honours' certificate for the most progress made this year in core subjects; Pravjot (English), Mati (Geography), Millie (History), Inderpreet (Maths), Sean (RE) and Ilesha (Science).

The Year 8 team would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff and students who attended on the evening and for your continued support throughout the year. The Year 8 team wish all students the best of luck for their future studies in Year 9.

Miss K Munns. *Head of Year 8*



D Day, 75th Commemorations

Head of History, Mr Murphy, accompanied veteran George Batts to Normandy for the 75th Anniversary Commemorations of D-Day. The highlight of the week long programme was the inauguration of the British Normandy Memorial. There is no such Memorial in Normandy and George has been instrumental in creating the scenario where the Memorial will be unveiled this time next year. The inauguration was in the presence of Prime Minister May and President Macron. George is patron of the Memorial Trust.



Other events included the British Legion event at Bayeux Cemetery, where both Mr Batts and Mr Murphy spoke to Prince Charles, the ceremony at Colleville-Montgomery and ceremonies in the American Sector. Mr Batts spent many hours in front of cameras and press photographers including BBC Breakfast Show and ITV Breakfast.

A thoroughly tiring week but momentous and full of remembrance.

The image shows Mr Murphy and Mr Batts with Mr Nick Witchell, BBC and Memorial Trust.

Mr C Murphy. *Head of History*



Dear Parents/Carers,

We are in the final term of the year and I thought with the summer holiday looming, the following articles may be of interest to you.

They give the latest research and some hints and tips on dealing with teenagers and their world.

I do hope you find them useful but as always if you have any concerns or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I wish you all a safe summer holiday.

Mrs Kelham

Senior Assistant Headteacher & DSL

New research reveals parent and teen divide over impact of tech on loneliness

TalkTalk Teenage Loneliness and Technology [report](#) published on the 2nd May 2019 reveals that nearly half of teens in the UK (48%) think that social media and the internet makes them feel less lonely, while only a quarter (26%) of their parents agree. The study explores parents and teenagers' attitudes to technology and loneliness and over 2,000 young people aged 13-16 years old and their parents were interviewed.

The report found that:

- Teenagers were more optimistic than their parents about the positive impact of technology
 - Half (51%) of 13-16 year olds said that during times when they have felt lonely, technology has also provided a solution to their loneliness: they made new friends, received support and advice, and received positive comments online.
 - However, of the teenagers that did feel lonely, just under a third (31%) admitted to not having discussed their feelings with anyone.
- Parents felt lonelier than their teenage children; 28% of parents said they felt lonely often, always or some of the time, compared to 21% of young people.
 - This may have an impact on how they advise and talk to their children about the issue.
- Most parents (70%) worry about their teenagers' use of technology; yet over a third (37%) felt ill-equipped or were unsure how to help manage or navigate their teenagers' tech and online use safely.
 - This lack of confidence may lead to inaction among parents towards their teenagers' safe use of the internet.

The top four causes of youth loneliness, according to both parents and teenagers, were issues relating to money, trust, friendships and shyness. Traditional economic and social issues are the main factors driving the feeling of loneliness among teenagers, while issues linked to the online world contributed less.

To help parents address this issue, Internet Matters have created a [guide to tackling loneliness with technology](#). Written with the support of digital parenting expert Dr Elizabeth Milovidov, the guide has 6 top tips that parents can use to help teens get the best out of their digital life and combat feelings of loneliness.

The guide shares the following suggestions for parents, which may also be useful for school staff to address these issues when working with children and young people in schools:

- Tackling issue of isolation with smart use of tech

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- Encourage children and young people to develop a healthy balance between screen time and face-to-face time doing activities with family and friends.
 - Create moments of shared experiences that can be with or without tech, but always shared with others.
 - Guide children to use tech in ways that support their passions, help them learn new skills and remove barriers to finding their voice, their identity and their community.
 - Creating connections for support
 - Help children be critical about the relationships they form online through social media or gaming platforms as bonds made online are not necessarily as real as In-Real-Life relationships.
 - Encourage children to have a balance between trusted friends on and offline to help them navigate issues that they may face.
 - Promote the idea that real connections, even if a few, are better than lots of illusory connections.
 - Managing expectations of social media 'only' friends
 - Social media can provide meaningful networking where teenagers can connect with, comment on and discuss things with others, but they should avoid using social media 'only' as a substitute for real connections.
 - Teens may believe that they are truly connected with everyone they have a social media 'connection' with, which may lead to feelings of loneliness and disconnection if those 'connections' do not respond in the same manner.
 - Being critical about what they see online
 - Encourage them to challenge what they see online, put it into perspective and understand that not everyone has a better, more exciting life.
 - Help them build their self-esteem by identifying the positive aspects of their own realities.
 - Striking a balance between on and offline activities
 - Scrolling social media feeds, looking for likes or comments, checking emails can be fun, but when those activities become obsessive, it might be helpful to change routines.
 - Suggest new ways to foster friendships offline so that they can engage in different activities and can get involved in diverse communities offline.
 - Using tech to give back and do good
 - Changing routines may help change their perspective; encourage them to explore the physical world around them, by volunteering for community activities or supporting a cause on or offline. They may find like-minded peers with whom they have many things in common, both online and In-Real-Life, thus promoting a real sense of belonging.

Anger is often seen as a negative emotion, but it is a natural state and one of the core emotions we all experience. Different people may be triggered by different things, and anger often occurs when we feel threatened, frustrated or powerless. However, it can become a problem if a child finds themselves getting angry a lot but without really knowing why, or if it is expressed through destructive behaviour. It is therefore important that we try to understand what the triggers might be. It is also important that young people can make sense of how they are feeling.

Cyberbullying advice for parents and carers

Online bullying can make young people feel alone, isolated and like there is no escape from it, but there are things that can be done to help, and places they can go for advice and support. In this blog we look at the things that parents and carers can do to support a young person who has experienced cyberbullying.

GCSE Computer Science Visit



St John's GCSE Computer Science students were visited by young local IT entrepreneur, Billy Ellis. Billy has just completed his A Levels at Wilmington Grammar School, has been completing his studies whilst building a career in iOS app 'jailbreaking' and development since the age of 12. Billy's career in technology has already led to him being 'head-hunted' to work for a software development company, self-publishing two books, gaining thousands of followers on YouTube, Twitter and other social media channels and speaking to large audiences at technology industry events in Europe and the USA. Billy

gave an engaging and informative presentation to St John's own budding 'Elon Musks' and 'Mark Zuckerbergs' about how to forge a career in the technology industry. Based on the questions Billy received at the end of his presentation, it was clear that he had given our students much to think about in terms of turning their passion and interest in a subject into a career. Billy's visit is another example of how St John's is helping to raise the aspiration levels of its students.

Mr M Murray. *Head of year 10*

Students raise money for Memorial

Students at St John's Catholic School in Gravesend have set themselves the task of raising £1,000 for the British Normandy Memorial by the end of the Summer Term in July 2019. The fund raising is being organised by the School History Society, which has over 100 committed members and is led by the dedicated Head of History, Mr Colm Murphy.

St John's is a Voluntary Aided Comprehensive School situated in Denton, a parish to the east of the town. Gravesend itself lies on the north Kent coast between Dartford to the west and the Medway Towns to the east. There are over 1,200 students attending the school, which is co-educational. St John's is a popular school and is oversubscribed. History is a key subject at the school and the Department organises a great many events and tours to the Battlefields of both World War 1 and World War 2, which include an annual tour to Normandy. Veterans of World War 2 are regular visitors to the school and include George Batts, Patron of the Normandy Memorial Trust and Jim Radford, the celebrated folk singer.



Mr Matt Barron (Headteacher) is delighted to be associated with this particular venture of the History Society with regards to the fund raising and writes that 'the students of the Society show an initiative, which is remarkable. Being inspired by George Batts, Jim Radford and the other veterans that come into the School, they have set themselves the task of raising £1,000 by the end of the Academic Year in July. This effort shows the appreciation the students have for these quite remarkable men and links most appropriately with one of our three tenets at St John's, 'Service to Others'.

The fund raising activities include money raised through a non-uniform day, through cake sales at break and lunch times and through a Fayre where various donated items were sold. These various activities created a solid base from which to drive forward towards the final target of £1,000.

Students studying GCSE Citizenship at the School have taken up the torch; the course includes a practical element, which involves a Community-based project. The students decided to create a Tote Bag which is environmentally friendly – made from recycled cotton and locally sourced. Proceeds from the sales of the Bag will go to the History Society memorial fundraising endeavours and will ensure that the target set is met!

The design of the Tote Bag compliments the biography of George Batts with relevant design and suitable 75th Anniversary logo. The biography will be available in June as will the Tote Bags. The bags will be sold at £4 each and are available from the History Society, St John's Catholic Comprehensive School, Rochester Road, Gravesend DA12 2JW. Payment either by cheque [payable to St John's School] or directly to the school by Bank Transfer – sort code 30-93-60 [Saint John's Catholic School] / account No. 00002381; ref; Batts. Do not forget to send email name and contact details] to above email address if using this method! Further details – cmurphy606@stj.kent.sch.uk / 01474 534718 or through the Normandy Memorial Trust website.

Mr C Murphy. *Head of History*

Fundraising campaign for St. Philomena's School in Kenya.

Two years ago, St. John's raised £400 to help with the classroom construction at St. Philomena's Primary School in Kenya. This is the school that Mr Juma helped co-found in a rural village in Kenya.

Mr Juma is going to be travelling there this Summer and will be spending some time at the school.



The year 8 class 8G/RE1 have been putting on a NUT FREE fundraising cake sale event to help St. Philomena school to purchase essential resources that will help pupils to learn.

The school now serves 70 children and has 5 teachers from Nursery to Year 5.

Mr Juma would be humbly grateful if everybody would get behind this campaign organised by the Year 8 class to raise £500 for St. Philomena school.

During Sports Day, there were ice-lollies and ice-cream sale and possibly more other nibbles in aid of St. Philomena, Many thanks to Sharon for your help with this. Any help is greatly appreciated by St. Philomena's school community.

Mr F Juma. *RE Teacher*

D-Day Assembly

The whole school assembly on June 11th focused on D-Day. A number of distinguished guests joined us for the assembly including the Mayor of Gravesham, Councillor Gurdip Ram Bungar, Councillor Harold Craske and Deputy Lord Lieutenant Rosemary Dymond and the staff and students of the school. Mr Murphy, Head of History opened proceedings with a review of the significance of D-Day. Special guest speaker, George Batts, a veteran of D-Day spoke eloquently of his experiences, the desire for peace and the new British Normandy Memorial.



The photo shows Mr Batts with the Mayor.

Mr C Murphy. *Head of History*

Maths Gifted and Talented

In years 7 and 8 the students that show exceptional talent in mathematics are invited to join a small breakfast club held each Friday, supported by Mrs Taylor and a Year 12 student. The club aims to stretch their understanding in a fun way by challenging mathematical concepts and improving even further their skills in this subject. Last year at St John's, we pioneered the Inter-School Key Stage 3 championship and successfully competed against St George's. In 2019 we were thrilled to be invited to Meopham and had a fantastic time in competition with them despite losing the cup this year. We hope to expand the competition further in future years. The glowing comments below show the value of the group from both the parents and children's perspectives.



(My daughter) 'has become more confident and approaches the challenges in maths with a deeper understanding.'

(My son) 'has enjoyed these sessions and found new techniques to solving mathematical equations and has made me so proud.'

'I think I definitely learnt more about maths and practiced a lot. I learnt loads that you wouldn't necessarily have studied in year 7.'

'I am glad my daughter was chosen to attend this class. She remained committed to it and has made me so proud with her grades. Thank you for your support.'

'My daughter has been given an excellent opportunity to grow her maths skills in a fun way and also grow her confidence in the subject.'

Mrs S Taylor. *KS3 Maths Coordinator*

Draughts Contest

Many thanks once again for all your support this year with the draughts contest. The students continue to love learning the game and it is wonderful to see them develop their strategic play.

The winners of the annual draughts contest and receivers of Maltesers at assemblies are as follows:

Year 7s

Annabelle

Diogo

Katerina

John

Steven

Alisha

Katerina and John will play a final match.

Year 8s

Andrius
Valentino
Gerrard
Taylor
Bailey
Patrick
Ziede

Valentino is the champion of Year 8 and will receive a voucher for Creams. He is due to play the Year 7 winner for a chance at winning the overall Key Stage 3 cup (for the second year running!)

Many thanks also to Mr Acquah and Mr Magee for playing a return match today with Mr Magee this time being triumphant.

Mrs S Taylor. *KS3 Maths Coordinator*

HISTORY DAY

The annual History Day took place in late June with the focus on 75th Anniversary of D-Day. The students were joined by veterans of the Normandy Campaign and other distinguished authors and historians. The day started for Year 7 with an assembly from Mr Christoph Bull who spoke on Gravesham and the Wars. As the Year 7s went to their classes and workshops, Year 12s had an assembly from veteran Jim Radford who spoke on his experiences of veterans for peace and the CND Campaign which he was involved with.

The Year 7s focused on commemoration and remembrance and excellent work was generated. They were entertained in their classes by the many visitors and attended workshops given by Mr Jim Broome and Mr Chris Stoneham. The day ended with another assembly lead by Mr Phil Terry, Trustee with the Spirit of Normandy Trust.

Mr C Murphy. *Head of History*





GRAVESHAM ARMED FORCES WEEK

The annual Armed Forces Week in Gravesham is opened by a flag raising ceremony at the Woodville Halls. This year the school was represented by Mr George Batts, D-Day Veteran and Mr Murphy.

Mr C Murphy. *Head of History*

THE VITAL ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC YOUTH COMMITTEE (YEC)

I am involved in the Catholic Youth Committee (YEC), our role is to discuss what is going well in R.E. and to provide feedback about how R.E. is being taught in our Catholic School. We also suggest ways of improving R.E. so that it is of more benefit to the wider student community.

There are two sessions a year where we discuss what has happened in the 6 months since our last meeting and to review the changes that have been made to our previous suggestions.

At St. John's, the three Year 11 students, Leah, Temi and myself represent students and give feedback to the Archbishop and Heads of R.E. across the whole of the Southwark Diocese on what needs improving in the R.E. curriculum.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED FROM BEING A MEMBER?

I have learnt a lot about how much thought and consideration goes into the delivery of R.E. lessons. I have also learnt about how other Catholic Schools feel about R.E and what difficulties they have faced. Learning about other schools' points of view has helped me gain a better understanding of how R.E. is taught in other schools.

Being a member of YEC has helped me to understand and appreciate the wider goal of studying R.E. which goes beyond simply getting a band 8 or 9 in your R.E. GCSE examination.

In Summary, YEC is important in giving a voice to young Catholics so that they can strengthen their faith and get a good quality education in R.E. It encourages students to grow in their faith.

Cameron. *Year 10*

Chaplain's Corner



Phew! Fourteen Retreat days with up to forty-five young people each day over the last two months; but I have to say it has been wonderful! Year 7s went to Aylesford Priory, Year 8s to Canterbury, and Year 9s to St. John's Seminary at Wonersh. We must now gear up for some more in late September; watch this space!



It is that time of year when our Year 13s and some of our Year 11s fly our nest; it invokes both joy that they are off to begin the next chapter of their lives and sadness that they are to leave; God bless them all. But endings are often accompanied by new beginnings and here at St John's we are running our 'taster days' for our feeder

primary schools; they look so tiny and wide eyed at our comparatively large school building but we endeavour to help them feel what a sense of family there is here.

It is also that time of year when the summer holiday brings mixed feelings for many families. Those that are financially comfortable and secure will go on holiday; perhaps to Spain or some other sunny place, but for many it is a time of financial worry and anxiety about the cost of time off work or providing



Retreat to St. John's Seminary, Wonersh



care, and how to entertain the children and have quality family time together; a holiday for many is out of the question! We do tend to feel the pain of what we haven't got and forget that the goal for rich and poor is Heaven, where lack of what we need will never occur again; we must hold on to that in our struggles.

What matters most in this life is for our hearts to become each day more like that of Jesus by the grace of God; this is a treasure that will last beyond the grave and into eternity. But just as those that are secure financially should be thankful for what they have and be generous to others, so those of us that have the grace of faith should be thankful and generous in our duty to help others know Jesus; to play our part in the mission of the Church.

Life is precious, and we all need to remind ourselves sometimes of what is most precious in life. May you all have the opportunity this summer holiday to spend time with family and loved ones and, difficult though it may be if you have children to care for, find some time to rest, to 'smell the roses' and recharge your batteries.



Stay blessed

Deacon Michael

*Learn gratitude and you learn
how much God loves you.
Learn how much God loves you
and you learn to trust God.
Learn to trust God and by grace
you will grow into the fullness of
the loving person God gave you to*

Key Dates for the Summer and Term 1

Thursday 15th August – A Level and L3 BTEC Results Day

- 09:00 – Year 13 Results
- 10:30 – AS Level Results

Thursday 22nd August – GCSE/Level 2 BTEC Results Day

- 09:00 – Year 11 Results
- 11:00 – Year 9&10 Results

Friday 23rd August – Year 12 Enrolment

- 09:00 – 12:00: External Students
- 13:00 – 15:00: Internal Students

Friday 30th August – Year 13 Enrolment

- 09:00 – 12:00: All students

Monday 2nd & Tuesday 3rd September – Staff Development Days

Wednesday 4th September – Years 7-12 return to school

Thursday 5th September – Year 13 return to school too

Wednesday 25th September – Year 6 Open Evening

Examination results collection

For examination results, please enter the school via the main doors and proceed to the Sports Hall