

# Winter Term Newsletter 1

18<sup>th</sup> December 2025



**BROOKTHORPE  
HALL SCHOOL**

## Message from the Headteacher



While all pupils in Term 1 were familiarising themselves with new staff, pupils and classrooms, this term they have thrown everything into their academic learning and engaging with new opportunities. Indeed, this newsletter is packed full of pupils' participating in new opportunities and activities. Many pupils are now visiting local horse-riding stables, participating in sports events at local colleges and representing Brookthorpe Hall in our local community.

I must mention my absolute pleasure of being invited to Ash, Cedar and Elm classes' Dragon's Den presentations. As part of their careers and design technology learning, pupils were asked to identify an improvement that they would like to introduce to Brookthorpe Hall. Pupils were asked to research costs and assess opportunities and potential problems with their ideas. I was presented with a range of amazing ideas; ranging from outdoor shelters, cosy reading corners, hydration stations to chicken coops and a cover for our outdoor games area. I was particularly impressed with all pupils' independence and confidence when presenting their ideas to me in front of their peers. I look forward to working with upper phase pupils to implement their ideas.

I must say a massive thank you to everyone who supported our recent Christmas Fayre. As part of their career education, pupils have been working hard to make Christmas gifts for their stalls. This would not have been possible without the commitment and determination of staff and families to support them in their endeavours. The day itself was a huge success with visits from local farms and charities. We were also very lucky that Father Christmas found some time in his busy schedule to visit Brookthorpe Hall too! Thank you to everyone who supported the Christmas Fayre and I am proud to confirm that we have raised an amazing £475 that will be donated to the James Hopkins Trust and Smiles Café (Gloucester Feed the Hungry).

Finally, I would like to thank Kazhal and Joseph who have worked with pupils as a Learning Support Assistant and Teacher respectively this term. Both colleagues will be sadly missed by pupils and teachers alike. I also look forward to welcoming two new Learning Support Assistant, Jamie and Emma, to our team in January.

It is left for me to wish you and your family a very merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year. We look forward to welcoming all pupils back to school on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> January.

Jon Bell (Headteacher)



# Christmas Fayre



Thank you to everyone for their support to make our Christmas Fayre an amazing success. A special thank you must go to the local businesses who supplied prizes for our raffle and our friends at a local farm for bringing in donkeys Denzel and Daphne, along with some hard-reared sheep.



As a school we raised an amazing £475 for James Hopkins Trust and Smiles Café (Gloucester Feed the Hungry).



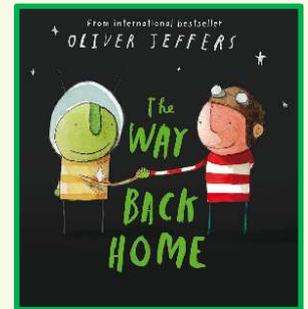


Acorn class has had another great term in Autumn 2. The children have done a brilliant job at engaging with all the learning related to our topic 'Home and Away'. We have explored the local area, looked at maps, compared types of houses and read some very interesting stories related to houses. Alongside this, we have also learnt to sew using a running stitch to create some Christmas hand puppets!



In English, the boys have begun using simple sentences to retell the stories that we have been reading. We especially enjoyed the book 'The Way Back Home' by Oliver Jeffers.

In maths, we have continued to learn about place value. We are at the end of the unit now and everyone is so impressed with everything the boys can remember from the whole term. Next term we will be moving on to addition and subtraction, which we know is already a favourite!





Within our topic this term, we got to go on a walk in the local area. The class were amazing walking to Brookthorpe Village Hall to see the Christmas decorations. We took photos of the landmarks we saw along the way and create our own map from them in another Geography lesson.



Well done for a fabulous end to the year Acorns class!

Beth (Class Teacher)  
Kate and Claire (LSA's)

## Larch Class



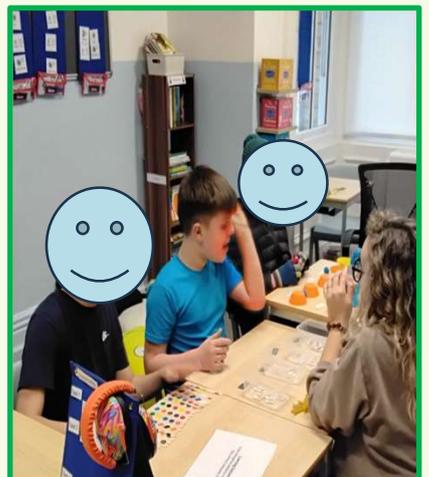
This half term Larch Class have been Scientists, Chefs and Geographers amongst other things!

We have enjoyed planning and carrying out experiments, cleaning coins with different substances and watching litmus paper change colour when dipped in different liquids - we matched it to the pH scale!

We have made everything from apple flapjacks and egg canapes to cheese sandwiches and chicken nuggets in our fortnightly Cooking lessons. We are good at following instructions in the kitchen and are becoming more and more independent. Our washing up skills are improving every week!

In Geography we have learned lots about maps and settlements. We know about Keys on a map and features of Hamlets, Villages, Towns and Cities. We've built different types settlements and created our own map of The North Pole.

We have also read *The BFG* and *The Storm Whale* and answered LOTS of Who, What, What Doing and Where questions. We loved Michael Rosen week, spelling the word 'spaghetti' out of spaghetti. We've been working on Addition and Subtraction in Maths, Christmas Fayre preparation in Art and we have a list of jobs to complete every morning all about Phonics, handwriting and fine motor skills... PHEW! We've been busy!



## Oak Class



In English, we have been wrapping up our journey through *The BFG*, while strengthening our use of connectives, adjectives, nouns and careful grammar to bring our writing to life.

In Science, pupils have been exploring the world of scientific investigations. We planned and carried out an experiment to discover which substances clean coins most effectively, comparing results like true young researchers. Maths has continued to build on addition and subtraction skills, with students growing more confident in applying different methods. In Geography, we have been learning about the type of settlement our school is part of and identifying important features on local maps.

Over the past few weeks, the classroom has also taken on a festive buzz. Oak Class has been creating salt dough Christmas decorations and gathering ideas for our upcoming Christmas Fayre.





Palm class have been busy developing their learning and their social skills. In English this term pupils have been studying the book “The way back home”. They explore the book about how a boy got stuck on the moon with an alien. Pupils have created a space suitcase of the objects they would take to the moon with them; they have created a walkie talkie conversation between them and their new friend the alien that they then recreated during role play.

Our class book is the new David Walliams book “Santa and son”. This links in with our preparation for the Christmas fayre in which Palm class are busy designing and creating a grotto for the all-important visit from Santa during our Christmas fayre. In humanities the class have studied winter environments, including the North Pole. Some pupils worked together to create winter survival kits.

In maths, pupils have been working hard on their part whole number, and they have all been fairly contributing to every starter to the lesson. Palm students have been using objects of their choice to set up two different parts of groups to improve their visual learning.

Jurell has been pleased with the progress Palm class have been making in PE. Pupils have earned weekly certificates for determination and their attitude to learning and improvement to their motor skills and social skills with key communication during their sporting activities.



We are incredibly proud of our pupils in Palm class, and we are delighted how pupils are learning to help and support each other.

# Palm Class



Hazel (Palm Teacher)  
Amelia & Kaie (LSAs)

## Pine Class



This term in English we have been reading *The Christmasaurus* by Tom Fletcher. The students have been listening to the story in class to inspire them to create and write a news report about a dinosaur that came to Brookthorpe Hall School. The students have been learning how to construct their news report using the correct features: a headline, photo caption, and how to create the main storyline.

The students also designed their own Pine Class themed dinosaurs, using pinecones as the spines etc. They all worked hard creating their dinosaurs and they are proudly displayed in our classroom.



In Maths we have been learning about Place Value. The students have shown a good understanding of the subject and completed an end of unit assessment.

In Geography, we have continued our learning about different counties within the United Kingdom. The students have also looked at the different types of food that are produced within these counties and which countries the foods are exported to.

## Pine Class



The students are continuing to enjoy their Forest Green sessions and PE with Jurell. This term in PE the students were introduced to rounders, and they have been working hard on their catching and throwing skills.



The students made us very proud helping to raise money and supporting a good cause by wearing their Pudsey t-shirts for Children In Need this term.





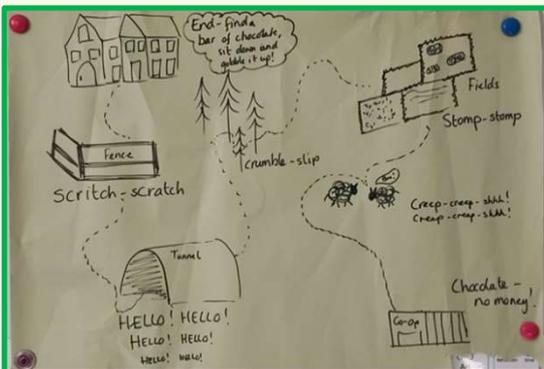
We have been working hard this term, in Yew class. In November, we commemorated Armistice Day and learned about the different coloured poppies that are worn and what they represent, before making a wreath. We then took these to the ceremony that was held at Brookthorpe Village Hall to lay on the memorial.



We also took part in the Challenge 25 for Children in Need. We designed 25 different socks in just one week! Our designs were fantastic!



It was the *Michael Rosen Live* lesson in November, where we all tuned in to watch and listen to the poet read some of his work and tell us about his life. We followed this up in Yew class by creating our own version of the classic poem, 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt!', but renamed it, 'We're Going on a Food Hunt!' This was our finished poem in picture form.





In DT, we have been designing packaging for a Fidget spinner. We have studied how packaging is made and what materials it is made from, then used these ideas to create our own environmentally friendly packaging.

We have continued to look at settlements in Geography, and as part of our fieldwork we needed to count the number of vehicles that passed by the school to help us decide what type of settlement Brookthorpe is. After looking at the evidence, we decided that it was a village.



**Finally, we've done a lot of cooking, crafting and making for the Christmas Fayre this month. Here are a few things we have enjoyed doing.**



## Upper Phase English & History

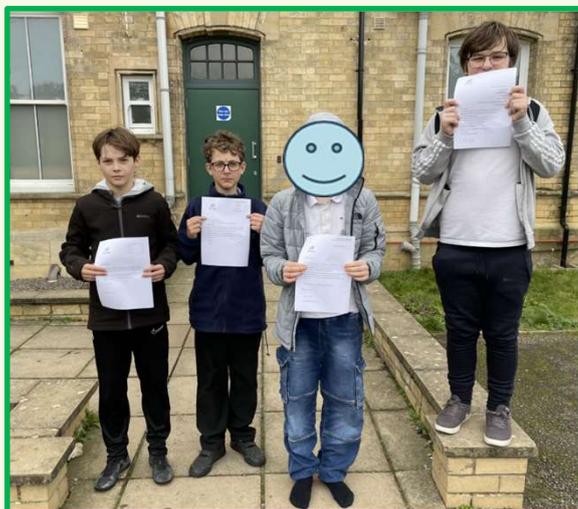


The students in Upper Phase English classes have had a busy and productive term. Both Elm and Cedar students are working towards their Level 1 Functional Skills exams. Students in Elm took the Reading paper back in October and we are pleased to have 100% pass rate. Well done to Zeph, Hugh, Amelie, Evie and Jack for passing the first part of the exam! We are currently awaiting results for the Writing exam, taken this week.

The students in Cedar class are working towards sitting their Functional Skills Level 1 exam in February. Students put their learning to the test by writing to local businesses to request donations to our Christmas Fayre. Well done to Turner, Shay, Jack, Lucas and Jonah for your eloquent powers of persuasion; we now have a good range of prizes for our Christmas raffle!

In Birch and Ash, students finished reading *Holes* and enjoyed watching the film. Students made play scripts of different scenes and practised writing from the viewpoint of different characters. Next term, we will continue to read texts for pleasure, as well as start Functional Skills preparation.

This term has seen the continuation of our Accelerated Reader programme. At the start of the school year, students took a test to ascertain their reading ages. They are now reading for pleasure from our diverse collection of books and doing Accelerated Reader quizzes. After a second test, we can already see an improvement in reading ages. Well done to Shay for improving his reading age by 6 months!



Louise Taylor (Head of English)

Carina, Michaela, Sue, Cat and Leanne (Learning Support Assistants)

## Upper Phase Maths & Science



### Maths

It has been another brilliant term across Upper Phase maths with students preparing for their upcoming Functional Skills Exams at the end of Term 2. The success of Term 1's maths exams saw a 100% pass rate (subject to external verification) across Upper Phase for students who sat their Functional Skills Maths Entry Level 1 exam. This is a fantastic achievement not only for the individuals but for the school as a whole, this reflected all of the hard work and effort put in by each and every student throughout the first term. Onto this term and the students have again kept up their high standards, we have really tried to solidify our non-calculator methods, which all students have done brilliantly and mastered new ways of multiplication and division. We have also given a lot of focus to the number topics, including decimals, rounding, checking and inverse operations. We have spent time looking and mastering graphs and charts and students this term have really developed their problem-solving skills which they need for their upcoming exam.

### Science

For science, this term we have been looking at the topics of electricity and magnetism, within this topic students have been looking deeper into electrical circuits, comparing series and parallel circuits whilst looking at voltage and resistance. Students have been able to identify components of circuits and translate this into drawing scientific diagrams of these circuits. For our practical lessons students have continued to follow the STEM focus, they have made weight bearing buckets, bridges and will hopefully have designed a rollercoaster before the end of term.

Students are beginning to really demonstrate excellent scientific thinking skills and are able to form their own hypothesis during our practical sessions.

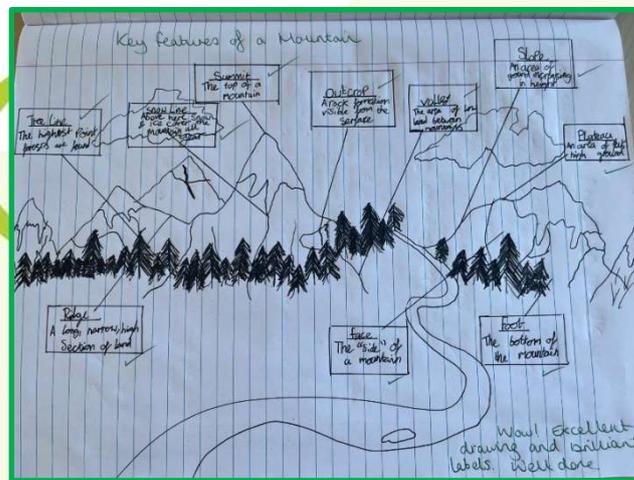
(Russell – Head of Maths/Science)

Carina, Michaela, Sue, Cat and Leanne (Learning Support Assistants)

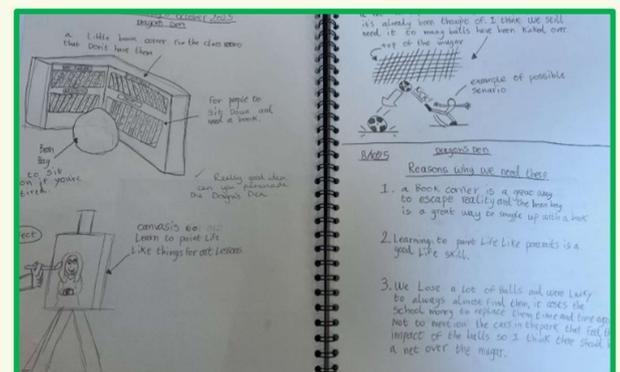
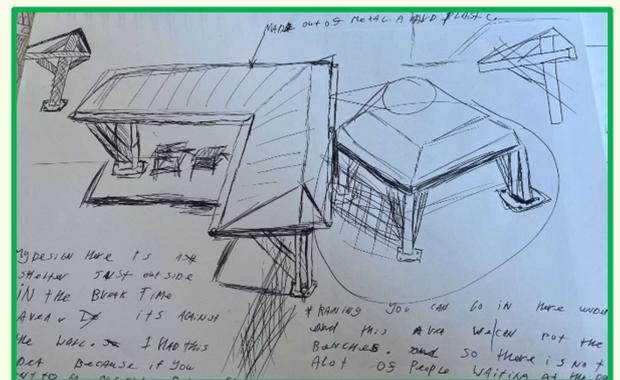
## Upper Phase Wider Curriculum



Upper phase pupils have been learning about physical Geography in **Humanities**. We have covered topics that link in with and embed areas of scientific knowledge. The students particularly enjoyed learning about how and why a Volcano erupts and where they can be found on Earth and on Mars! They also developed their knowledge of tectonic plates and learnt about earthquakes and their effects across the world. They finished this term with an in depth look into the water cycle and mountain features.



In **DT**, the pupils had the opportunity to design and present their own Dragon's Den ideas to the Headteacher, Jon Bell. Jon commented that, 'I was very impressed ...many of these ideas have really helped us to plan improvements to the school site; from a cover to the MUGA and outdoor shelters to pop-up libraries and cosy spaces. It was also wonderful to see our pupils confidently presenting their ideas about potential costs. I honestly look forward to working with our upper phase pupils to make some of their ideas a reality.'



Maxine Hughes (Upper Phase Teacher)

Carina, Cat, Michaela, Sue and Leanne (Learning Support Assistants)

## Upper Phase Wider Curriculum



**Cooking** – the pupils really enjoy cooking and have made a selection of sweet and savoury dishes over the term. They have been able to hone their skills in the kitchen by independently following recipes and tweaking the cooking times and ingredients to perfection.

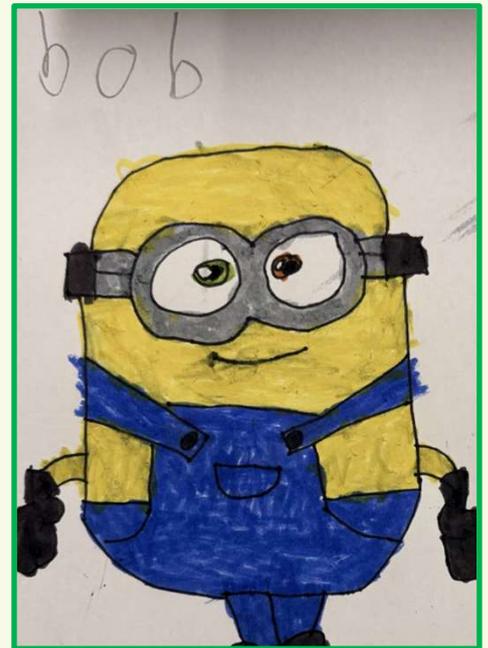
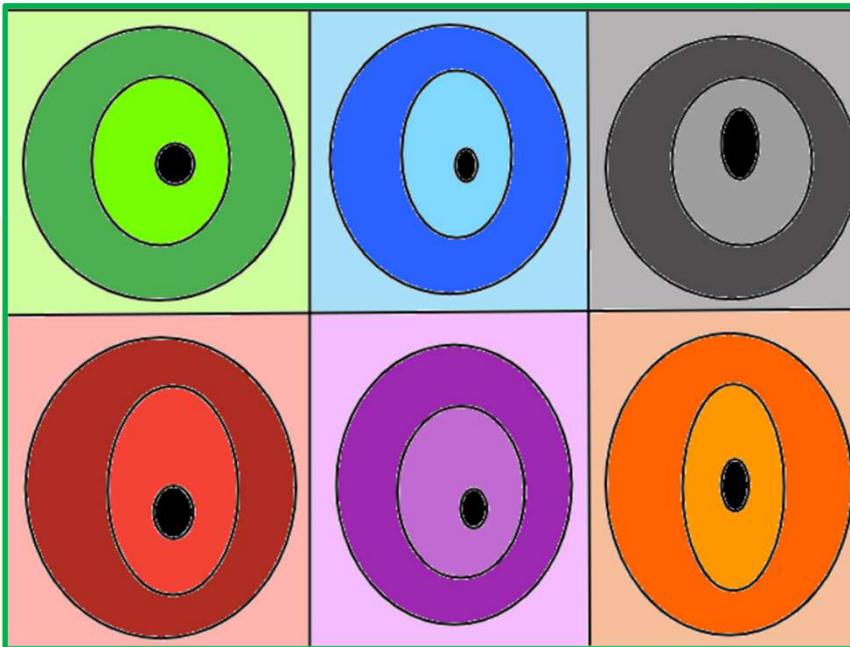


Maxine Hughes (Upper Phase Teacher)

Carina, Cat, Michaela, Sue and Leanne (Learning Support Assistants)

## Computing Update

In the lower phase computing lessons, we have been exploring the use of digital technologies to create various pieces of art, whilst also comparing these methods to more traditional ways of being artistic such as drawing and painting. The students have really enjoyed the opportunity to be expressive and creative during their lessons, and it has been lovely seeing some of our young people who struggle with art finding enjoyment within it through using a different medium.



Upper phase have been looking at networks, the internet, and internet services. Spending time looking more in depth of the infrastructure and the protocols which allow us to use the internet in their everyday life. The lessons have been eye opening, as our young people have realised how much has to be in place for them to do something that seems as simple as a google search or to stream a video on Youtube.

Since computing was introduced at the start of the autumn term, students have been excited at the prospects of using technology more within lessons, and across the board engagement levels have been very high which has been a pleasure to see.

## PSHE Update

Students have had a busy term with PSHE. We have marked a number of significant events, including Remembrance Day and Anti-Bullying Week. We have also been preparing for the Christmas Fayre.

For Remembrance Day, and as part of PSHE, a group of students attended a service, held by one of the Village Practitioners, which they arranged just for us. Paul said a few words, held a two-minute silence and Turner, from Upper Phase, recited the poem, 'In Flander's Field'. It was very moving. Students were then invited to enter the village hall for a presentation, about the Practitioner's grandfather, who fought in the World War and showed them some artifacts which had been passed onto him, including his grandfather's metal helmet and some shrapnel. Classes also made wreaths, which they presented at the memorial plaque.



Anti-Bullying week, was enjoyed by all students, wearing odd socks and taking part in various activities across the classrooms. They were reminded about the importance of being kind and what to do if they feel they are not being treated with kindness and respect. Students showed a good level of knowledge about bullying, but for the majority, picked up on new ways to challenge those negative behaviours, in a positive and respectful manner. Students also learnt that targeted negative behaviours only become bullying when they are being repeated time and time again. Some, were able to acknowledge when this may have happened to them in the past, and too, when they had treated others in this way. I was very impressed with their ability to self-reflect. During students' lessons, they have been learning under the umbrella topic, 'Celebrating Differences'. Whether talking about what makes them unique or about their families and homes, each student has enjoyed bringing their backgrounds and personalities into each learning environment. The upper phase classes have talked much about prejudice and discrimination and about the importance of including everyone; being kind to all, no matter who they are, where they come from or their background.

Emma Prendergast (Head of PSHE)

## Physical Education Update

This past term in PE we have been developing a variety of new skills through ball sports. The focus has been on hand-eye coordination, control, and confidence when handling a bat and/or ball. Through a range of structured games and warm up activities, students have practiced throwing, catching, positioning as a fielder and striking the ball as a batter. These activities have been supporting in the progress towards their AQA award. Students have shown excellent engagement in the fun, small activities that make up their criteria's, whether it has been through colouring and block building challenges or games of rounders out on the MUGA the students have all worked hard to hit their goals.

### Brookthorpe Hall 'versus' National Star College

With Their growing confidence and independence in sports and outdoor activities, a group of upper phase Brookthorpe Hall pupils visited National Star College in Gloucestershire. In a friendly and supportive environment, pupils engaged in competitive sports against students at the National Star. They kicked things off with competitive double table-tennis matches, before joining forces for a mixed volleyball game.

And of course... we had to finish with a National Star vs Brookthorpe volleyball showdown. It was a close one, but Brookthorpe just edged the win!

A brilliant day full of sport, communication, teamwork, confidence-building and friendly rivalry.



## Careers Update

Next year we will be planning in visits from the Police to talk about careers. We will have our first **Careers week in March from the 9<sup>th</sup> of March and on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March** we will host a Careers Fayre where we will be inviting employers and colleges, this will enable students and parents to talk to them and find out what is on offer.

On **January 28<sup>th</sup> at 10am** we will have a careers parent coffee morning, Oli Masters OFG's Regional Futures Advisor will attend. Any questions or just an opportunity to network with other parents

We had the school Christmas disco, where students used this as an opportunity to ask the DJ about his job. Students have been working hard on their class mini enterprise projects for the Christmas Fayre, making decorations, cookies and collecting prizes for the Tombola and Raffle.



Pine Class have continued to work on the Incredible Futures Workbooks and Archie and James have achieved AQA Awards for module 1 and 2 this term.

Upper Phase are working on The Incredible Futures Curriculum. Students who have achieved AQA Awards this term are:

- Module 1: Lucas, Jonah, Izzy G, Simrah, Ezra, Poppy, Kitty, Dalton, Jess
- Module 2: Jess.
- Module 3: Jess, Sam W
- Module 4: Sam W, Amelie, Evie, Theo, Shay.

Five students from Year 10 and 11 visited Stroud College to see what they offer for Post-16 education and to have a look around a college. It was a positive experience, and we are hoping to build further connections with them going forward. There is another open day coming up and we will share the details once they are available.

Emma Watkins (Careers Lead)

## Outdoor Education

It's been another busy term at the Wilderness Centre and beyond! Well done to all students that have braved the wet and cold in recent weeks and thank you to all parents and carers for making sure that students come in with appropriate clothing.

This term Lower Phase have been focusing on teamwork and teambuilding and have especially enjoyed rescuing "Bob" and "Gerald" from their various predicaments. Upper Phase have been focusing on map reading and navigation and many students have made amazing progress with their map reading skills. We also have nine students signed up for the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze award which is really exciting!

Looking ahead to next term we have lots of exciting things on the horizon: Lower Phase will be starting to follow the new Wild Passport curriculum, this gives us a wide range of bushcraft-style activities that will be tailored to suit the Lower Phase groups. There's a lot of great stuff in the Wild Passport and details can be found here: <https://www.wildpassport.co.uk/what-is-the-wild-passport>

For Upper Phase, as mentioned some of the students will be starting their DofE Bronze programs and will be undertaking their Physical, Skill and Volunteering sections over the coming months. The expeditions will be taking place in July - let's hope for nice weather! We also have lots of plans for various trips including Cheddar Gorge, Go Ape and maybe even further afield...

Thanks to all staff and students for your efforts and enthusiasm this term, have a lovely Christmas and New Year and let's hope for snow in January!!



Ed Farrow (Head of Outdoor Education)

## Clinical Team Update

Firstly, we are delighted to welcome Eden, Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT), into our team. She is a full-time member of staff and has already started working with students on an individual and universal level.

Alongside other members of the Clinical Team, Eden has been supporting with Quiet Lunch. Quiet Lunch is open to all students who require a quiet space to eat their food, away from the main canteen. Quiet Lunch is also for students who prefer indoor activities at breaktimes. We have a range of games that students can choose from. This term's favoured games have been Uno, Ono 99 and chess. Some students have also learnt how to play backgammon, connect 4 and scrabble. Board games develop a range of motor, cognitive and social skills. If you would like to know more about the skills a specific game develops, please contact us.

We know that Term 1 is traditionally always the longest term, with grey skies and wet break times. The weather and changes to routine during the holidays can be difficult for some students. We have therefore put together a short list of suggestions which may be supportive over the Christmas break:

- **Identify with your child a space they can go to if they need a break from the festivities.** This may be their bedroom, a bedroom of a relative if staying away from home, a space within a quiet room.
- **Create a calming bag with your child.** This can be filled with items they find soothing and can be taken with them when visiting friends and family.
- **Consider having some areas free from decorations** if your child finds visual input overstimulating.
- **Where possible, keep routines predictable.** You may find using a visual sequence, social story or discussing the plan for the day in the morning with your child significantly reduces their anxiety.
- **Prioritise connection over correction.** This may be some one-to-one time away from the festivities, playing a game together, a cuddle. It is often in these moments a child is able to share with us why they have acted in a certain way, allowing the adult to find a solution.

If you require any supportive resources to be created, please email [therapy.team@brookthorpehallschool.co.uk](mailto:therapy.team@brookthorpehallschool.co.uk) before 17<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

You can also use this email address if you have any comments, concerns or queries. We look forward to continuing to work with you in 2026!

Hollie Blunt (Clinical Lead)

## Safeguarding Update

At the end of Term 1 – 24.10.25 - the upper phase students took part in a Safeguarding/PSHE curriculum performance of Chelsea's story. The performance is part of a proactive programme of work around raising and tackling the complex nature of Child Sexual Exploitation and being supported by Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership and all Partner Agencies in the county.



The safeguarding team would like to share the following information from the Gloucestershire Families in Partnership:

Christmas can be magical, but for children with additional needs, it often comes with a whirlwind of sensory challenges. Bright lights, loud music, bustling crowds, and changes to routine can feel overwhelming. Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum have prepared some hints and tips to help get you and your loved ones through what can sometimes be a tricky period. For more information, please click the link below:

[Helping your child navigate sensory pressures of Christmas](#)

Rhiannon Trevethan (Designated Safeguarding Lead)

# Children in Need 2025



**A big thank you to all the pupils and families for helping us raise such a fantastic amount for Children in Need 2025!**

## Brookthorpe Hall School's fundraiser for BBC Children in Need



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**£150**

raised by 14 supporters

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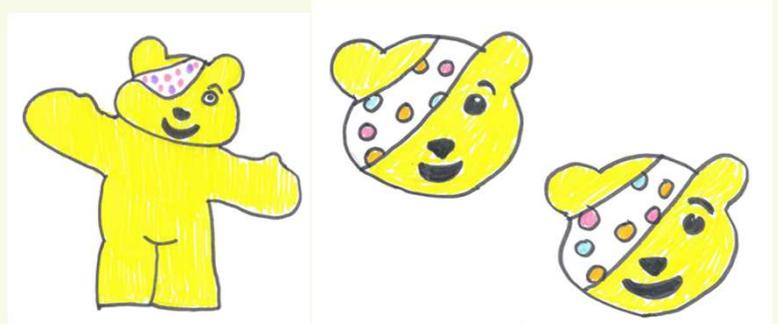
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**Primary School, BBC Children in Need 2025**

Campaign by BBC Children in Need (RCN 802052 (England, Wales) SC039557 (Scotland))

Jurell Williams (Sports Instructor)







# **BROOKTHORPE HALL SCHOOL**



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