



HSL NEWS



Student Spotlight

Well done to our brilliant performers at our Christmas Celebration!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- * **First day of Spring Term**
Monday 5th January 2026
- * **Thick Jumper Day**
Friday 16th January 2026
- * **Year 9 Options Evening**
Wednesday 28th January 2026
- * **We Will Rock You tech rehearsals**
Saturday 31st January 2026
Saturday 7th February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we come to the end of a busy and highly successful term, I would like to thank you sincerely for your continued support of The High School Leckhampton. Like previous editions, this newsletter is a wonderful reflection of the rich and varied experiences our students enjoy, from academic awards and enrichment opportunities to performances, trips and community events that make our school such a busy and purposeful place to be.

I am extremely grateful to our dedicated staff, whose commitment and enthusiasm are evident every day and throughout these pages. Whether supporting students through competitions such as the House University Challenge, organising trips including the KS3 Paris visit, welcoming visitors to events like the Senior Citizens' Christmas Tea Party, or inspiring students by arranging visits from professionals such as the Carducci String Quartet, staff have gone above and beyond to create memorable and meaningful opportunities for our young people. Alongside these highlights, excellent progress continues in the classroom. Our Year 10 students continue to impress with their strong start to their GCSE courses, and our Year 11 students have shown great promise in their mock examinations, as well as ambition in planning their next steps beyond HSL. We are also immensely proud of individual and collective achievements, not least Alex's achievement as Royal Geographical Society Young Geographer of the Year, as well as the many sporting, musical and academic successes celebrated in this issue. Our Christmas Celebration concert was a joyful celebration of the musical and dramatic talent of our pupils, and with House Gym and Dance currently underway, the school remains full of festive cheer and House spirit. Thank you once again for your ongoing support. On behalf of everyone at HSL, I wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a happy, restful holiday.

With warm wishes

Helen Wood

PTFA Preloved Uniform & Lost Property

The PTFA Preloved Uniform team will be available at the same time as lost property viewings this Autumn Term. This is a great opportunity to check for any missing items and to purchase good-quality, affordable uniform. Dates (6.00–8.00pm):

27th and 28th January
24th February
24th March

If you have any outgrown uniform in good condition, donations are very welcome and can be dropped off at school reception. All proceeds go back into supporting our school community.

This Month in Pictures



Year 10 Windrush winning the first House University Challenge!



Year 11 Music students learning from the Carducci String Quartet



Alex Willett being awarded Young Geographer of the Year award!



Finley and James performing during our Christmas Celebration

Governors Update

The Governing Board would like to welcome three new governors, Aelred Down and Simon Wilson who were elected as parent governors and Sophie Wintle who has been co-opted by the board. Between them, our new governors bring a wealth of experience in education, school governance and risk management and we look forward

to them joining us as we provide governance and oversight of the school.

We're keen to recruit further governors from the wider community who have the right skills and experience to complement that of our existing governors.

On behalf of the Governing Board, I'd like to wish you all a Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

Tim Callaghan
Chair of Governors

Safeguarding Update

We know that Christmas can be a magical time for many, but also a time of anxiety and loneliness. As we move towards the Christmas Holidays, please find a list of different contacts and agencies you can use for support as a family, should you have any concerns about your child, or your child wants to seek support themselves.



Please also remember that we have the Safeguarding Flag on our school website if you have a concern that you want to raise. However, if it is an urgent safeguarding and welfare concern, please call the police on 999.

<https://cheltenham.foodbank.org.uk/>

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/your-community/support-hub/>

<https://yourewelcomeglos.org/>



The NSPCC are there to help 24/7 and children can call their Childline number on 0800 1111

ThinkUKnow - The National Crime Agency's CEOP Education team aim to help protect children and young people from online child sexual abuse and provides support for parents and carers.

Safer Internet Centre - allows you or your child to report harmful online content.

Shout is the UK's first 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help.

Text 85258



Young Carers

Is your child a Young Carer at Home, either for a parent or a sibling?

If you think your child might be a Young Carer please let us know so we can refer them to access additional support and outreach opportunities. Gloucestershire Young Carers are a charity that offers support to families and children who have caring responsibilities within the home.

The charity has been established since 1993, providing young carers with advice, advocacy, group support, short breaks, and safe spaces to share. They are currently supporting over 1000 young carers across Gloucestershire

If you would like more information on this topic, please contact Mrs Vaughan.

Gloucestershire **30** YOUNG Carers YEAR ANNIVERSARY 1993

Home About ▾ What we do Support Us ▾ Info Hub ▾ Contact us

Supporting the 'young' in young carer

Empowering young carers to find support, connection, and a voice of their own

[REFER A YOUNG CARER](#)

Food Bank Donations

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our recent collection in support of Cheltenham's food banks. This collection was organised by the Rights Respecting School Award Steering Group, ably led by students with only a small amount of adult support and guidance.

The generosity of our community was clear, and donations for both the Trussell Trust and Springbank Community Pantry have been gratefully received.

These donations will make a real difference to local people and families. Both organisations have asked us to pass on their thanks, including Alice from the St George's Road foodbank collection point, and Molly from Springbank.

Thank you to all those who supported this collection.



A Big **THANK YOU**



The High School Leckhampton
for supporting Cheltenham foodbank.
Your donation of 70.3kg of food makes a **BIG** difference to local people in crisis.



Cheltenham foodbank is part of the Trussell Trust's UK wide foodbank network.

Registered Charity Number: 251549 | Registered in England and Wales

Royal Geographical Society Award Success!



The High School Leckhampton is delighted to announce that Alex Willett has won the prestigious 2025 Royal Geographical Society's Young Geographer of the Year for Key Stage 4. On 5th December, Alex, his family and Mr Newman travelled to London for his award ceremony at the society's headquarters in Kensington. Alex was 1 of only 2 winners for the Key Stage 4 category and everyone at the school extends their warmest congratulations to Alex for his achievement.

This international award is given to pupils from primary years up to A Level who have demonstrated creative and analytical thinking about geography in line with our annual theme.

For this year's competition, entrants were asked to design posters or ArcGIS StoryMaps that engaged with the theme, 'Understanding islands,' highlighting the unique geographies, challenges, and connections between islands around the world and the communities and ecosystems they support.

With over 400 schools participating and many holding their own preliminary heats, the 1,200 entries received by the Society this year represent just a fraction of the overall number of participating students.

Judges evaluated entrants' analysis of the unique geographical challenges and opportunities present on their chosen island(s), as well as their visual representation and storytelling. Alex's entry is shown above and was praised for its clear and concise presentation style as well as the high quality of the categorisation of issues facing the islands.

Professor Joe Smith, the Society's Director said:

"I'd like to give my warmest congratulations to all the winners and to everyone who entered this year's Young Geographer of the Year competition. Islands, including the one we live on, are uniquely affected by climate change, but they also have unique opportunities to address these challenges. The high standard of entries we received across this year's competition gives me confidence that the next generation of geographers is already asking the right questions about the issues facing island communities and how these can teach us about the wider world."

To view Alex's winning entry and other winners, please visit the following the website: <https://www.rgs.org/schools/competitions/young-geographer-of-the-year/2025-winners>



Heads of Houses Update

As we come to the end of another busy and rewarding term, we would like to take this opportunity to reflect on what has been a truly fantastic period across all Houses. The energy, commitment and positivity shown by our students have been a real highlight, and it has been a pleasure to see them engaging so enthusiastically with school life.

One of the most pleasing aspects of this term has been how proactive students have been in making the most of the wide range of opportunities available to them through HSL. Whether through academic enrichment, creative pursuits or sporting involvement, students have demonstrated a genuine willingness to challenge themselves and step outside their comfort zones. This positive approach has been reflected in the significant number of ePraise points awarded this term, recognising not only achievement but also effort, attitude and contribution to the wider school community.

Our House Captains and Prefect Team deserve special mention. They have been a real asset within the school, consistently modelling excellent behaviour and showing strong leadership qualities. Their support of staff and younger students has not gone unnoticed, and they have played an important role in fostering a positive and inclusive House culture. It was a pleasure to share a well-earned Prefect Privilege event with them recently; an enjoyable afternoon of pizza and Mario Kart, which provided a chance to thank them for their hard work and dedication.



House competitions have been exceptionally busy since September, with something for everyone to get involved in. Students have embraced opportunities across sport, academics and the arts, including House Cross-Country, Netball, Hockey, The Big Draw competitions and University Challenge, to name but a few. The enthusiasm and House spirit on display have been wonderful to see. As we write, House Gym and Dance is in its final stages, and we are eagerly anticipating the final performances and routines, which promise to be a real celebration of teamwork, creativity and perseverance.

This term also saw a highly positive Anti-Bullying Week, built around the theme "Power for Good." As part of this, we ran a whole-school kindness initiative entitled "Charge Someone's Day," which was embraced with enthusiasm across tutor groups and Houses. Tutor room doors displayed battery charts that were gradually 'charged' throughout the week as students carried out acts of kindness, courage and inclusion. It was wonderful to see so many thoughtful actions taking place. The initiative was also run as a House Challenge, adding further motivation and friendly competition while reinforcing our core values.

This year has also seen the introduction of our new Head of House "Choc and Chat" events. These informal sessions have provided a lovely opportunity to meet with some students and strengthen relationships in a relaxed and welcoming environment, made even better by the sharing of sweet treats. Thank you, as always, for your continued support. We are extremely proud of all that our students have achieved this term, and we look forward with great excitement to the opportunities, successes and challenges that the Spring term will undoubtedly bring.

KS3 Paris Trip



Imagine arriving in Paris on a dark evening after a long journey, getting off the coach into the cold, scurrying across a crossing into a square and seeing the Eiffel Tower lit up in front of you. 5 seconds later it starts to twinkle..... magical! The Eiffel Tower by night, Chocostory, a trip on les Bateaux Mouches, the Eiffel Tower by day, a walk along the Seine, the Louvre and the Mona Lisa, Eurodisney, the Sacré Cœur and the streets of Montmartre what a programme for a 3 night trip! Year 9 and Year 10 students had a wonderful time, spoke lots of French and enjoyed the sites and food.

As summarised one one pupil on the trip: "A magical, once in a lifetime experience!"



Senior Citizens Tea Party



On December 4th The High School Leckhampton welcomed over 60 senior citizens into school for our second Christmas Tea Party.

Mr Bunting organised some super entertainment which included Jazz, Voices, soloists and the Orchestra. At the end Voices were joined by Ms Claydon's British Sign Language group who all sang 'We Wish you a Merry Christmas' together.

Students welcomed our visitors in true HSL style. Our team of 'meeters and greeters' were enthusiastic and the 'servers' ensured they were never left wanting. Food had been lovingly prepared by some kind yr 8 and 9 volunteers. Our 'sitters and chatters' were engaging and it was lovely to see 12-15 year olds talking effortlessly to 60-100 year olds! Both our students and our guests were keen to share stories and talk about their lives and experiences.



Thank you once again to all local businesses, friends and families who donated gifts. This meant every guest left with a Christmas present.

It was a delight to welcome members of the local community into our school; building our relationships with those around us and really being 'a flagship school at the heart of the community'.



Christmas Celebration

Our school's Christmas Celebration concert was a joyful showcase of talent and festive spirit. Audiences were treated to performances by the Orchestra, Jazz Ensemble, Guitar Group, Keyboard Orchestra, Wind Group, and String Group, each bringing their own unique flair to the evening. A special highlight was the debut of our new four-part singing group, Fourte, and of course the annual staff boomwhacker performance!



Year 10 House University Challenge



Our Year 10 students took part in a thrilling House University Challenge last week, with Chelt, Isbourne, Lilley Brook and Windrush going head-to-head in a battle of knowledge and quick thinking. Teams were tested across a wide range of subjects, including Maths, Science, Humanities and Literature, with each round pushing contestants to think fast and work together under pressure.

Competition was fierce from start to finish, with every House showcasing impressive teamwork and determination. After a closely fought contest, Windrush emerged victorious—huge congratulations to them on securing the win!

The event was made even more exciting thanks to the enthusiastic support from House members in the audience, who cheered their teams on throughout. A special thank you also goes to Mrs O’Riordan, whose firm but fair approach as quiz master kept everyone on their toes.

Well done to all who took part, and keep an eye out for the next House University Challenge event coming up in the Spring!



MFL Christmas Card Competition



Our annual MFL Christmas Card Competition has once again been a wonderful opportunity to celebrate creativity, cultural awareness and a love of languages across the school. Students and staff were challenged to design an original Christmas card with a festive message written in a language of their choosing. We were so impressed with the range of languages represented including Ukrainian, Hungarian, Mandarin, German, Norwegian, Swahili and Braille, to name just a few. We were delighted to see such a wide range of ideas in the designs too, from traditional seasonal scenes to designs reflecting cultural customs from around the world. This year's entries were judged on linguistic and artistic creativity as well as presentation, and the standard was exceptionally high. We would like to congratulate all those who took part. Their competition such a festive and inspiring success.



Carducci String Quartet



GCSE Music students in Years 10 and 11 recently enjoyed a visit from the Carducci Quartet, a professional string quartet. Through live performance and practical demonstrations, students explored a range of string instrument techniques and gained valuable insight into how composers develop ideas for quartet writing. The interactive workshop gave students a deeper understanding of both performance and composition, supporting their GCSE studies and providing some inspiration!



Cut Your Carbon Campaign Results

Thank you for all your support in helping our students take action against climate change during the month of November as part of the Cut Your Carbon Campaign. At the end of the month, tutor groups recorded how many of the six challenges on the checklist were completed by each student.

Below is an infographic showing our total impact as a school. Well done to Year 8 students who completed the most challenges and therefore cut the most carbon! We have reported our results to Eco-Schools who have entered us into a draw to win an Eco Mural for HSL.



Winter Travel Survey 2025 Results

Thank you to all staff and students who completed the Winter Travel Survey on Wednesday 3rd December. Below is a graph showing our results.

It is great to see that 70% of the 537 that completed the survey either cycle, walk or scoot to school. However, our student Active Travel Ambassadors have some work to do to convince the 20% who still drive into school of the health advantages and benefits to the planet of travelling more sustainably.

The next travel survey will take place on Wednesday 6th May 2026

Gloucestershire Schools' Christmas Lecture

On Monday 8th December a group of Year 9 students, accompanied by Mr Taylor and Miss Gell, visited the Bacon Theatre at Dean Close School for the annual Christmas Lectures organised by The Honourable Gloucester. We didn't really know what to expect but we were treated to two interesting shows, one about 'What is normal?' where we were treated to investigations and demonstrations that taught us about aspects of ourselves and our brains and the other was called 'Explosive Food'. It was certainly explosive and the presenter from the Royal Institute was enjoying it as much as we were. He blew up cornflour, projected bottle rockets and showed us what happened in the digestive system, in a very messy way.

We had a great morning!



Volunteers needed to collect Air Quality Data using PurpleAir Monitors

Calling Citizen Scientists!!

The Risks of Particulate Air Pollution

Cheltenham is at particular risk from air pollution due to the surrounding hills.

Tiny particles (particulates) made up of dust, dirt, soot, smoke, and liquid droplets can penetrate deep into the respiratory system and even enter the bloodstream.

- Health Risks:

Exposure to high levels is linked to respiratory diseases (such as asthma and bronchitis), cardiovascular issues, and an increased risk of heart attacks and strokes. Vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions, are particularly at risk.

- Environmental Impact:

Particulate can reduce visibility (creating haze), damage crops, and affect the health of wildlife.

- Economic Costs:

The health impacts of particulate pollution can lead to increased healthcare costs and lost productivity due to illness.

PurpleAir monitors allow us to monitor air quality in real time. Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council has several which it would like to place in the local area.

The monitors are affordable, easy-to-use devices that use laser particle counters to measure particulate concentrations. They connect to the internet, allowing users to view live air quality data through an online map. There are a few monitors in Cheltenham already, including one in Bath Road. Worldwide readings are available to anybody simply by searching 'PurpleAir map' and you can zoom in to access local monitors. Last Winter Cheltenham often had worse air quality than Oxford or London.

The Parish Council is looking for residents who would like to host a monitor. Initially we would like to concentrate on busier roads if possible: Shurdington Road, Church Road, Leckhampton Road and Old Bath Road. However, we would like to hear from anybody who is interested. A monitor is roughly the size of a pint glass and they do need an electricity supply and internet connection, but the demands are very small.

We hope that some students can take an active interest in this and become monitors of our air quality – it's a very important job! If you are interested in learning more please contact the Parish Clerk

clerk@leckhamptonwithwardenhill-pc.gov.uk



Winter Holiday Eco Challenge: Ocean Friendly Home Planner

All students have been set a Winter Holiday Eco Challenge to make their homes ocean friendly using the Ocean Friendly Home Planner created by the Ocean Conservation Trust.

Many of our students care about the ocean and want to do more to protect it.

Please see below for actions you can take build pro-Ocean habits.

You are part of the Hands Shoal!

You enjoy the activities the Ocean has to offer and use it as a creative space. You visit the Ocean to have fun! You work to create a healthy Ocean for the benefit and enjoyment of all.

We are now part of a Shoal of like minded individuals, if we all think Ocean everyday and make small changes in what we do, this will add up to some big benefits for the Ocean!

START
Go with the flow! Gradually build your pro-Ocean habits on your #thinkOcean journey...

- 1 Cut down on single-use plastic.**
Why? Millions of tonnes of single use plastic enters our Ocean each year. Stopping it at the source conserves materials, saves energy, and reduces waste, all of which help support a healthy Ocean.
How? Invest in reusable bottles, cups and bags for when you are out and about. When shopping, consider if there are alternatives to products wrapped in plastic. Keep your eye on the UN Plastic Treaty, to see what is being achieved at a global level.
- 2 Blitz your bathroom!**
Why? Plastic on our beaches often originates from items we use in the bathroom, and products entering the sewage system down the toilet! How?
Make a plan to gradually switch to plastic free products e.g. shampoo bars and soap bars, Use Bamboo toothbrushes and Ocean Friendly exfoliants.
- 3 Raise money for an Ocean charity (like us!)**
Why? One of the most impactful ways to make a difference is by supporting non-profit organisations dedicated to protecting our Ocean through both public awareness and political action.
How? Choose an Ocean-focused charity you're passionate about and start a fundraiser. While you're at it, spread the word about the #ThinkOcean challenge to your friends and family.
- 4 Volunteer for hands-on work or advocacy.**
Why? Your time and skills are just as valuable as donations to Ocean charities, playing a crucial role in their conservation efforts.
How? Get involved through citizen science projects, long-term volunteering, or other activities. Find your local Ocean charity and reach out—every contribution makes a difference!
- 5 Encourage your workplace to go blue.**
Why? Organisations have a big impact on Ocean health, from energy use to purchasing choices.
How? Start a blue group or integrate Ocean conservation into your sustainability network. Reduce electricity, use eco-friendly products, go paperless, recycle, switch to ground coffee, and encourage sustainable commuting.
- 6 Walk, cycle or take the bus when you can.**
Why? Being car free is considered to be one of the highest impact personal choices you can make to reduce climate change.
How? Find what works for you, it should be an easy switch so that you can stick to it. You could try walking, cycling or taking the bus one day a week to start off with and slowly build it up.
- 7 Explore the Ocean for yourself.**
Why? "People protect what they love" said Jacques-Yves Cousteau and we totally agree!
How? Get outside and explore the Ocean near you! If you don't live near the Ocean, visit your local lake or river or find a video online. All water is connected to the Ocean and when you visit you will be too.

CONGRATULATIONS!
You have made it to the last step, but your journey doesn't end here, keep trying some pro-Ocean habits to support a healthy Ocean.
The other Shoals are doing their bit too. Together we can create a huge #thinkOcean community. People from around the world have taken the challenge, creating a united effort to value, care for, and take action to support Ocean health. Every small action makes a difference—let's make it count!
If you have signed up to our annuals, we will keep you updated with good news stories for some legislation and new challenges to try!

#thinkocean ocean conservation trust

Top Tips for a Sustainable Christmas

Make this Christmas the most sustainable one yet!

Read the WWF's (World Wide Fund for Nature) top tips for a sustainable Christmas here:

<https://www.wwf.org.uk/top-tips-sustainable-christmas>

LEARN ACT SUPPORT ABOUT

CHRISTMAS GIFTS ADOPPT DONATE JOIN

TOP TIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE CHRISTMAS

The season of goodwill is the perfect time to be part of the movement towards a more sustainable future. So if you're dreaming of a green Christmas, check out our top tips below and help bring our world back to life.

Eco-Schools

Distinction | 2025 - 2026

Cross Country

Congratulations to our Cross Country runners who represented Cheltenham District on the weekend. Kitty Lorraine and Ben Sholly competed in the U17 race. Will McFarland, Theo Litman, Maisie Little and Ivy Hodgson all competed in the U13 race. With Kitty Lorraine and Ivy Hodgson earning a place to race for Gloucestershire at the South West competition. A fantastic achievement for all our students involved.

Congratulations to Jack Boyd and Josh Copeland who came 1st and 2nd recently at the Gloucestershire Schools Ski competition. We are hoping to have our HSL Ski team competing at the next round of the Schools competition in January. If your child signed up to be involved in the Ski team the letters will be sent out in January to notify you of training sessions and competition dates.



Individual Sporting Success

Congratulations to Max Valentine in Year 8 who has recently gained selection for the Gloucestershire Golf Team in his age group.

Congratulations to Josh and Ollie Nock who have been competing recently for the Gloucestershire U15 Table Tennis Team, whilst both only U13's.

We look forward to hearing about your successes as the seasons progress. If your child is competing at a sport outside of school we would love to hear about their success and please do share any of their news with the PE teachers.





THANK YOU

Thanks to your generosity, the
Christmas Raffle raised £1,744 — and
with a further £237 in donations, we
raised just shy of an incredible

£2,000!

You're all amazing — thank you!

Wishing you a peaceful, happy Christmas
and a wonderful New Year.

The HSL PTFA Team

E-SCOOTERS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



LEGAL

- ✓ Over 18 with a valid driving license.
- ✓ Insured.
- ✓ Taxed.
- ✓ Legal to use on any public road.
- ✓ Subject to drink drive and other driving offences legislation.

ILLEGAL

- ✗ Insurable.
- ✗ Taxable.
- ✗ Legal to use on any public road/pavement.
- ✓ Subject to drink drive and other driving offences legislation.
- ✓ Likely to be seized and crushed by Police.

