



The Smithsonian



The Easter 2025 Issue

WELCOME

Smithdon Head teacher



I don't know how it is possible, but this short term has crammed in even more opportunities and experiences than the long Autumn term did!

I am so proud of our staff and how far above and beyond they are willing to go to provide trips, competitions and special experiences for Smithdon students that they may not otherwise have.

Don't just read the article of events but be sure to look at the Enrichment page of the multitude of activities offered so far this year!

For me, personally as an English specialist, the Literary Festival is always a highlight, not least the excuse for me to get dressed up as favourite characters and confuse students as to who it is 'inside' - this year as Princess Fiona and the White Queen (not an intentional royal connection).

As always, I wish you a peaceful Easter break and look forward to seeing all the students when we return on Wednesday 23 April, St George's Day and Shakespeare's birth (and death) day!

Mrs Gibbins

Smithdon Head Students



Has time flown by, or is it just me? Unfortunately, this is mine and Hope's very last time writing in the school newsletter. Before I continue, I just want to take a moment to say a huge 'thank you' to all the staff at Smithdon. Without them, none of the incredible things you see online or in the news would be possible. This year has flown by, and I'm sure my fellow Year 11 students would agree with me as we close this chapter of high school and step out into the wider world. Smithdon has had a huge impact on my life, shaping me into who I am today. I still remember the first day - before I even stepped through the doors - I was hyperventilating because I was nervous about how I would fit in with the other students. And now, here I am with a blazer full of badges, a mind full of memories (and knowledge), and writing in the school newsletter!

So, what else has been happening? Before we broke up for Christmas, I had the incredible opportunity to be part of the King's Lynn pantomime *Cinderella*, which was such an amazing experience. It was even more special when some of my teachers came to watch and cheered me on from the audience. And trust me, the way I greet my English teacher is always like a little pantomime souvenir! I think it's fantastic that teachers support students beyond the classroom. It helps build even stronger relationships and creates lasting memories. Smithdon staff will not only encourage you but will also get their hands dirty to help you get where you need to be - even if they are staying till four o'clock on a Friday afternoon to help you with your maths exam. Teachers are people who want you to succeed.

We have started our final mock exams before the actual GCSEs. It's a time when the stress starts to build, but don't worry, because, here at Smithdon, the teachers provide lots of support through every twist and turn of the exam process. To me, this shows how Smithdon stands by each student, offering support through it all.

Hope and I have been really busy in meetings with the Student Leadership Team, brainstorming ways to improve the school - and I have to admit, I'm a bit jealous of the changes that might be

coming! If these ideas are approved by the Senior Leadership Team, they'll be implemented after my year group has left. I've also had the privilege where younger students have approached me to ask about the future of the school. As Head Student, that means a lot to me - it shows that people trust me and feel comfortable coming to me with their thoughts. It's something truly special, and it's one of the aspects of the Smithdon community that I'll miss the most. - **Ethan**

Hello, my name is Hope, and I am Smithdon's current Head Girl. What a crazy, jam-packed year 2025 has been! So far, my year has been filled with mocks, discussions about next steps and endless amounts of revision!

Reflecting back on my journey as Head Student as it quickly comes to a end, I have been blessed with numerous opportunities and experiences! One of the highlights has been attending several Student Council meetings. These are so beneficial, as they give us, as students, a platform to share our ideas and contribute to making a difference in our school community. Whether it's discussing changes to the food or addressing key issues, it's been truly rewarding to have a role in shaping our school.

As Head Student, I've also had the privilege of working alongside the Student and Senior Leadership Teams to help plan this year's Prom. It's been an exciting and rewarding experience to be part of creating a memorable event to mark the end of our high school journey. I have also been fortunate enough to have numerous opportunities to develop my public speaking skills. This has been so beneficial for me as it has challenged me to step outside my comfort zone and has contributed to my personal growth.

With my high school journey quickly coming to an end as I prepare for my GCSEs, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Smithdon for everything it has given me. I could not have asked for a better high school experience and that's all thanks to the dedicated staff who never fail to go above and beyond. Finally, I want to wish the class of 2025 the best of luck for the future! - **Hope**

SMITHDON IN THE NEWS

Smithdon's Ms Moat Honoured for Outstanding Contribution to Youth Development

One of our amazing teachers has been recognised by the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme for her amazing work with young people! Ms Moat was named as *Runner-Up Torch Bearer of the Year* at a ceremony, held at the Transport Museum in London. Ms Moat who teaches PE and Health and Social Care at Smithdon has co-ordinated the school's Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme since 2010.

Ms Moat was described as "breaking down pupils' barriers to participation and cultivating a dedicated group of valued volunteers" and of creating "a lasting legacy of inclusivity, community support, and pride among students and volunteers alike." She received her award from the Duke of Edinburgh chief executive, Ruth Marvel OBE, at the ceremony, which was attended by around 300 people, including nominees, award winners, celebrities and other special guests.

"It was an amazing experience," said Ms Moat. "I felt honoured to have received the award, and felt I received it for the volunteers at Smithdon, who are the people that help it to run. I am proud of what we do at Smithdon. I'm emotional, having done my bronze, silver and gold awards at Downham Market, volunteered with them, went on to be a Young Ambassador at uni, and then completed various challenges, such as the Diamond Challenge, and then became Duke of Edinburgh manager at Smithdon. It is a privilege to work with youngsters at Smithdon, giving them opportunities I had that made me who I am, and I am very proud of all the students that take the plunge to do the award with us. Without Duke of Edinburgh, I would not be where I am."

Smithdon has a Duke of Edinburgh programme that boasts a 94 per cent completion rate - almost double the national average!

"The plan was to have it up and running within five years when I joined Smithdon in 2008 as a newly qualified teacher. We did this thanks to lots of funding streams and grants. In the last month, we have been successful in receiving a grant from the West Norfolk Duke of Edinburgh Charity, grants for places on the award for alternative curriculum's, grants for equipment to help other departments in school deliver sectional parts of the award, like the Chess Club, PE Department, Maths Club and Dungeons and Dragons. During Covid, we successfully continued the award, making it stronger, and allowing us to not only deliver bronze to Year 9, but also silver to Year 10. I take pride and feel honoured to work beside some amazing volunteers, both school and staff, ex-staff and associates from outside school, who come back each year to allow us to deliver the award - without them it would not happen," she said.

Smithdon's Headteacher Mrs Gibbins praised Ms Moat's efforts

saying, "I am so proud of the work that Ms Moat has done with Duke of Edinburgh at Smithdon. The numbers of students achieving successful completion are a testament to her hard work and motivation to ensure students engage fully with the award. She fully deserves the recognition she has received."

Smithdon is incredibly proud of Ms Moat, for her dedication and unwavering support of all our students. Her commitment to excellence and inspiring approach to education make her an invaluable asset to our school community. Great teachers like Ms Moat play a crucial role in shaping the future of our students. They don't just teach subjects - they inspire, challenge and guide students to reach their full potential outside of the classroom, influencing the personal growth and success of every student they work with. Ms Moat's influence is felt by both students and staff alike, and her work at Smithdon is a reminder of how vital great staff are to the heart of the school.



Article taken from Lynn News

Smithdon students take over CWA restaurant!

Hospitality and Catering students from Smithdon recently had the opportunity to experience life as professional chefs! As part of their GCSE Food Technology course, they took over the College of West Anglia's Novus restaurant for a day, immersing themselves in the world of hospitality.

The day began with the students working in the restaurant's professional kitchens, where they spent the afternoon preparing a delicious three-course meal. Under the expert guidance of industry-trained chefs, the students learned valuable cooking techniques and refined their culinary skills. In the evening, the students served their carefully crafted dishes to parents and guests, giving them a real taste of what it's like to work in the hospitality industry. It was an exciting opportunity for the students to showcase their talents while gaining hands-on experience in a professional setting.

Throughout the day, the students had the chance to work with high-quality ingredients and state-of-the-art kitchen equipment, improving their skills in food preparation, cooking, and presentation. They also learned important lessons in teamwork, time management and the importance of organisation in a busy kitchen environment. Beyond cooking, the students also played a key role in setting up the restaurant and serving guests, gaining invaluable experience in front-of-house operations as well.

This experience not only gave the students a taste of the fast-paced world of professional cooking but also provided them with a deeper understanding of the hospitality industry as a whole.

Mrs Stewart, the Food Technology teacher at Smithdon, said, "this is a great opportunity for the students to see an industrial kitchen, focus on preparing food, types of equipment and different ingredients."

Year 11 student Daisy added, "I think that it is an amazing experience for us as hospitality and catering students to see how a professional kitchen is run and how much effort goes into everything behind the scenes."



Daisy proudly serving up her culinary delight! With a smile on her face, she presented her carefully created dish to her guests, showcasing the skills and creativity she had honed throughout the day. Her food was a true reflection of the hard work and dedication she put into the experience, and it was clear that she was ready to take on the challenge of the professional kitchen.

Team Smithdon Shines at Robotics Race!

By Miss Fairweather

On Wednesday 12 March two teams of 4 students took part in a cross-trust Lego Coding competition. All four high schools – Marshland, Terrington, Springwood and Smithdon were competing for the title of champion. Each school has been provided with a LEGO Spike set, which includes over 500 pieces of LEGO, along with hubs and sensors. This kit can be assembled and then programmed using the hub to create a range of robots, vehicles, or anything else your imagination can dream up!

The two teams consisted of Team 1, made up of Charlie, Elliott, Harry, and Zane, and Team 2, which included Amber, Alfie, Jorgie, and Abigale. We travelled to Springwood High School to meet the other schools, where we were given a challenge that had been kept a secret from us until that moment. The task set for each of the seven teams competing was to design a vehicle or robot that could be programmed to travel around a winding race track. The design also had to include some unique features.

Once the vehicles and robots were created and programmed, the students were interviewed by a panel of two judges - the Head of Springwood and a school governor, who is a local IT businessman. The students had to explain their ideas and showcase the unique features of their designs.

Team 1 designed a motorcar-style vehicle, complete with a smooth bonnet and eyes. Their unique feature was the ability to lift the back of the vehicle to reveal a compartment for carrying items (like a crème egg for an Easter delivery!). The hub was also programmed to light up with messages. Team 2 opted for a robot-on-wheels design, with their unique feature being a dance mode.

After the interview, each team had to demonstrate their coding skills by making their design navigate the race track. Some teams used a pre-programmed code that followed colours using sensors, while others coded the movement directly into the system. After a tense wait, the results from the judges were in. The joint first-place winners were announced – Smithdon Team 1 and Marshland Team 2. The winners were each awarded Amazon vouchers. All the students who attended were a credit to the school and performed exceptionally well. Well done, Team Smithdon!



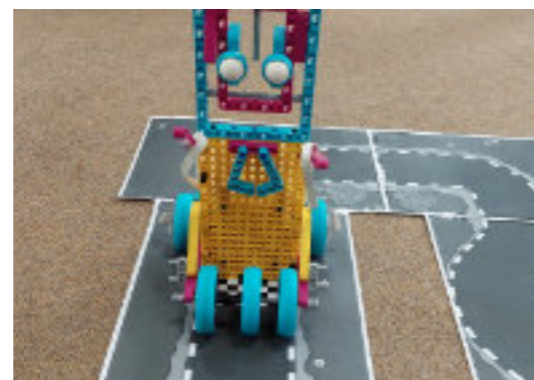
Team 1 - Harry, Elliott, Zane and Charlie



Team 2 - Jorgi, Abigale and Alfie



The winning robot!



Team 2's dancing robot!



A Night of Music, Fun and Dancing!

Smithdon hosted its highly anticipated Valentine's Disco, and it was truly an unforgettable event! The school hall was transformed into a vibrant, buzzing space with colourful lights, a lively DJ, and an atmosphere brimming with excitement. A special shout-out goes to our creative ASDAN students, who worked hard to make the stunning decorations that set the perfect mood for the night.

Students danced the night away to the latest hits from Katy Perry, George Ezra, Flo Rida, and more, with the DJ, Party Starters spinning some of the best tracks to get everyone on their feet. One of the highlights of the evening was the fantastic outfits! Students came dressed to impress, with some getting creative. From couples swapping their outfits to individuals rocking their own quirky styles - the party outfits added an extra layer of fun to the night.

The Valentine's Disco wasn't just about dancing – it was also a great chance for students to socialise and enjoy the fun spirit with friends. A tuck shop was available with treats, including sweets, drinks and Pringles, keeping everyone energised and satisfied throughout the event. The atmosphere was filled with laughter energy and the kind of fun that makes school memories last forever.

A big thanks to Ms Moat, the ASDAN team and the DJ for making it such a fantastic night! We can't wait for the next school event to keep the good times rolling!

RED NOSE DAY

A Successful Celebration of Fun and Charity!

By Iliana, Year 10 ASDAN student

For Red Nose Day, the Year 10 and Year 11 ASDAN groups worked together to organise a bake sale in support of Comic Relief. Comic Relief is a charity that supports a variety of causes, including homelessness, feeding initiatives like Feeding Britain, and black women's support centres, among many others. It's a cause that truly makes a difference to people in need across the country and beyond.

Me and the other ASDAN students started with creating posters to promote the sale, sending out invitations and designing decorations to transform the sales area into a welcoming place.

We enjoyed having the the chance to go into the food room to make rice crispy and cornflake nests, which we decorated with mini eggs. I really enjoyed the opportunity to be in the kitchen, making the cakes we would later sell. We worked in pairs, which helped us improve our communication and teamwork skills while baking. Since I'm also studying Hospitality and Catering, I was able to take the lead on the baking.

On the day of the sale, we decorated the table and set everything up for the bake sale. The cakes were sold for just 50p each, making them affordable for everyone while still raising money for a great cause. My Year 10 group took charge of the sales during break time. I handled the money, while others served the cakes. Later, the Year 11 ASDAN group took over the sales during lunchtime, keeping the sales going. In total, we raised just over £100 - an amazing amount that will go towards supporting Comic Relief's important work. It was a truly rewarding experience, not only because we raised money for such a worthwhile cause, but also because we got to work together as a team and build our skills in a fun and productive way.

In addition to the delicious cakes, some students participated in a sponsored event where we walked or ran laps around the school field. In total we ran or walked 1789km! Through JustGiving, we raised an impressive £100, which is fantastic! Lucas, a Year 9 student, ran an incredible 9km in just one hour. He later shared that his legs were still sore three days later! Also students and staff also took part in a non-school uniform day, wearing their red noses or red clothes. This raised £253.



Miss Brown and her ASDAN students are always excited to support charities with their delicious treats.



Mr. Tilley, along with the energetic students, ran for charity.

Thanks to everyone who participated, we raised over £450 for Red Nose Day. The money will go to help various charitable projects both in the UK and internationally – meaning we really made a difference whilst having a laugh. So, whether you ran, baked or wore a ridiculously large red nose, thank you for being part of the fun.

Smithdon's Literary Festival 2025

A Celebration of Words and Wonder

Smithdon wrapped up yet another thrilling and action-packed two-week Literary Festival in March, a vibrant celebration of reading, writing and poetry! From the whimsical adventures of Alice to the excitement of World Book Day, from meeting football journalist and author Dan Freedman to exploring the world of journalism, our Literary Festival offered something for every student.

Have you ever read a story so captivating that you felt like you were transported into another world? Like when Alice fell down the rabbit hole and found herself in Wonderland, or when you watch your favourite football team scoring a goal and feel the excitement as if you were on the field yourself? This sense of immersion is made possible through one powerful tool - literacy. Literacy isn't just about being able to read and write, it's about unlocking doors to new worlds, ideas and opportunities. Whether it's diving into the fantasy of Alice in Wonderland or understanding the strategies behind your favourite football game, literacy is key to experiencing the richness of these adventures.

As Alice said, "curiouser and curiouser!" The more you read, the more you uncover, just like Alice's journey through Wonderland. Each turn of the page is an invitation to explore a world that gets more curious and complex the further you go.

A perfect example of how literacy unlocks new worlds is seen when Alice tumbles down the rabbit hole into the fantastical realm brimming with talking animals, riddles and unexpected adventures. What makes this story so enchanting? It's the way the author, Lewis Carroll, expertly weaves his words to conjure a world bursting with imagination. Through playful twists of language and clever wordplay, he guides us on an unpredictable journey - made possible only by his ability to clearly express his creative ideas. Just imagine if Alice couldn't read the signs that read "Eat Me" or "Drink Me," she might have never embarked on that unforgettable adventure for us to read and enjoy!

Let's 'kick' off with a comparison to something a little closer to home for many of you - football! Whether you're on the pitch, watching the game or discussing it with friends, literacy plays a huge role in how you understand and engage with the sport. Have you ever heard a commentator break down the key moments of a match? Or read about the game after the match? That's literacy in action. A coach's ability to explain tactics, or a fan's ability to analyse a match afterwards, depends on their literacy skills, both reading and writing. Literacy is a powerful tool that can take you anywhere, whether it's down a rabbit hole into Wonderland or onto a football pitch. It helps you discover new places, understand how things work, and communicate better.

Reading and learning have the power to change us, just like Alice who discovers new versions of herself through each adventure. Every book you read, every match you watch, can change the way you see the world, just as Alice's journey transformed her perspective. So, next time you pick up a book or watch a football match, remember that literacy is the key that makes it all come to life. Keep reading, keep writing and keep learning, you never know where it might take you! You could become a sports journalist for your favourite team; a curious journalist, eager to uncover the truth and inform the public; a teacher, educating and inspiring the next generations, or even an author, sharing your magical stories that people enjoy 100 years from now! With Literacy, anything is possible!

Let's take a moment to relive the highlights of the festival that made those two weeks truly unforgettable! We hope you enjoy reading about our literary journey and the exciting adventures we experienced along the way!

World Book Day

★ Celebrating Literature! ★

World Book Day – the day the English Department eagerly awaits! A global celebration of books and reading!

One of the best ways to nurture a love for literature is through events like World Book Day. Celebrated annually, this special day shines a spotlight on the importance of reading and storytelling while promoting literature for all ages. Schools around the world take part by organising exciting events, activities, and celebrations that encourage students to explore new books and discover the joy of reading. This fun day serves as a reminder that reading isn't just for school - it's for life! Whether it's donning costumes as our favourite book characters or taking part in book-themed activities, World Book Day highlights that literature is far more than just a school subject. It's a superpower that helps us understand the world, decode the mysteries of life and communicate without having to use emojis!

At Smithdon, both staff and students fully embraced the spirit of the occasion by dressing up as characters from a wide variety of books. The school buzzed with excitement as everyone from Pig-Pen and The Lorax to Voldemort

roamed the corridors in full costume. Voldemort definitely startled a few of us when he walked through the door! The green face paint was out in full force, with the Wicked Witch of the West and Fiona from Shrek fully embracing their roles. The atmosphere in the library was electric when all the characters gathered for a photo shoot, with students and staff alike proudly showcasing their creative outfits. Our students truly embraced their inner book characters - from Peeta Mellark of *The Hunger Games* to *Doctor Who*, and even a banana from the cover of *Noah Can't Even*.

What we absolutely love is how every department gets involved in World Book Day, no matter the subject, to demonstrate that we all share a passion for books. Whether it's our French teacher, Miss Collard, dressed as Wednesday Addams, or Mrs Drage, one of our fantastic cover supervisors, looking radiant as Glinda. It's clear that reading is a value we all hold dear. The day becomes a true celebration of creativity, with each department adding its own special touch. It's always a joy to see staff and students coming together to share their love of stories, proving that, no matter your subject, books are something we can all enjoy and celebrate! The day becomes a true celebration of creativity, with each department adding its own quirky touch.

The 500-word story competition was also launched and, ever since, the library has been filled with the sound of eager typing as students race to finish their stories!



The staff fully dedicated themselves to the day



The Alien and Banana were well disguised!



Dominic took his role of 'Doctor Who' seriously!



The Chipettes from Alvin and the Chipmunks



A Superhero and Chef make an unexpected yet perfect combination



Elphaba and Glinda embodied the perfect balance of power and light



Peeta from The Hunger Games transformed with amazing stage makeup!

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We were fortunate to welcome back Claire Wilkinson, an English Professor from Cambridge University. Each year, Claire's visits offer a deep dive into the connection between poetry and art and this year she included a focus on Conflict, exploring three poems that Year 10 have already started studying. These sessions are always incredibly insightful, as Claire presents them from the perspective of an undergraduate, offering fresh perspectives and sparking thoughtful discussions.

The Poems and Visual Art session included an analysis of the painting, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, comparing it to the poem of the same name. Claire encouraged the Year 9 students to dive deeper into the painting, exploring its details and connecting it to the themes and imagery in the poem. In the painting, the myth of Icarus is depicted, but the focus is not on Icarus himself. Instead, the painter, Bruegel, captures a busy, everyday scene - a farmer plowing his field, a shepherd watching his flock and a man fishing - none of whom seem to notice Icarus's tragic fall. The painting suggests that, even though something dramatic is unfolding, life goes on for the people in the scene. It highlights human indifference to suffering and the tendency to overlook the struggles of others. Some students picked up on this powerful theme, with one student, Oliver, even renaming the painting *The Reality of Life*.

The other poem that was compared to a piece of art was *Brancusi's Golden Bird*, a complex piece with intricate language that describes a golden sculpture. The students read the poem, identifying key words and phrases, then attempted to draw what they imagined the sculpture looked like, before finally seeing an image of the actual artwork.

The Year 10 session focused on three GCSE Conflict poems, *Cousin Kate*, *The Class Game* and *No problem*, looking at how the poets show the theme of conflict in both personal and social situations. Conflict poetry often explores the emotional, mental and physical effects of war, struggles and inner battles. The students discussed how the poets use language, imagery and structure to show the damaging effects of conflict and how it impacts individuals and communities.

A key part of the session was finding contrasting pairs of words. These contrasts are often used in conflict poems to show the opposing forces and struggles the characters or people face. Repetition was another important feature, as students looked at how poets repeat words or phrases to make the conflict feel more intense or ongoing. Repetition can help show the feeling of hopelessness or the cycle of war, making the emotional effect stronger. Finally, the students explored the representation of women in conflict poetry. They discussed how women are shown in times of war or conflict, whether as victims, fighters, or peacemakers. These poems give a chance to think about the role of women during conflict and how society views them in these situations. Through the discussion, the students gained a better understanding of how conflict is shown in poems, and how language can make us think more deeply about the world.

Claire also uses the sessions as an opportunity to talk to the students about the possibility of studying at Cambridge University, explaining that it isn't as expensive as many might think and that anyone can study there, regardless of their background. She shares insights into the application process and the exciting opportunities available to those who choose to pursue higher education there. We really appreciate Claire giving up her time to be with us, sharing her knowledge and inspiring the students with her insights into studying English at Cambridge University and the exciting opportunities available in the world of academia.



Landscape with the fall of Icarus by Pieter Bruegel

Journalism Day

The Story Behind the Headlines

Journalism plays a crucial role in literacy today. In a world where information is constantly being shared, journalists must sift through vast amounts of data to uncover the truth. Proficient use of language is essential, as it enables us to communicate clearly, ensuring that audiences can easily understand the issues at hand. This skill not only informs the public but also shapes opinions and helps keep society well-informed.

As a student, you might think of the news you read as just "news," but it's actually more tied to literacy than you might realise. Journalism is all about using language to be clear, persuasive and find the truth (no, not the latest TikTok challenge). Journalists need to read carefully, write well and tell stories that grab your attention - just like your favourite Instagram posts. Whether it's breaking news or a sports report, journalism is like the behind-the-scenes wizard of literacy, helping us navigate through a world of trending hashtags and viral memes, one headline at a time.

Chase the Story

One of the busiest days of the Literary Festival is always the *Chase the Story Day*, where students have the chance to step into the shoes of a journalist and chase down a news story! We are fortunate enough every year to have real-life journalist Chris Bishop come in to guide the students through the process of creating a news story - from the initial investigation to writing the final piece. After sharing a bit of his background, a rumour spread through the makeshift newsroom: Saturday detentions would be enforced if students failed to earn 30 reward points in a week or accumulated 5 consequence points within the same period! To make matters worse, the students would be required to clean the school!

The student team was given the rather thrilling task of tracking down the truth, interviewing staff and students from every year group, and piecing together all the information, quotes and opinions to write their own headline-worthy article. It was a day full of excitement, giving us a sneak peek into the hectic and unpredictable world of journalism. Chris shared his own intriguing stories, dishing out tips and advice to help the students uncover the facts behind the rumour, structure their stories and somehow survive the ever-looming deadline. Meanwhile, groups of reporters stormed politely into classrooms, requesting opinions from students and subject teachers - no one was safe!

Meanwhile, the rest of the journalists stayed behind to dig

deeper. Their mission? To uncover the legalities of Saturday detentions. Was this even allowed? Did it violate child labour laws in the UK if they were made to clean? And, most importantly, were other schools actually enforcing this, or was our school pioneering a new level of weekend misery? The investigation was on. We needed to get to the bottom of this rumour. Armed with notepads and an unshakeable sense of journalistic duty, teams of reporters and photographers grilled both staff and students for their take on the development. Reactions ranged from outrage to mild indifference, with one student reportedly asking, "Wait... we get reward points?"

Miss Fairweather delivered an enlightening talk on graphic design, revealing the secrets to making an article truly grab a reader's attention. She stressed the importance of composition, font and colour - because, as it turns out, a well-placed headline and the right shade of red can make even the dullest news seem like a front-page scandal.

It was a very much hands-on experience that allowed the journalist students to see how their writing skills could be applied in a real-world setting. The day featured a press conference with Mrs Gibbins, where students had the opportunity to ask their questions. They demonstrated professionalism, curiosity and excellent organisation, making the session both engaging and insightful. We rehearsed the news conference a few times, throwing in questions and practising our most serious "I'm a journalist" faces. Finally, Mrs Gibbins arrived, only to be quickly grilled about the burning issue of the day. It was less of a press conference and more of an interrogation with a notepad.

The reporters, feeling particularly bold after their rehearsed questions, came up with their own questions. Mrs Gibbins answered all with confidence and expertise and I am sure was glad when it was over! But she did praise the students on how well they did.

After a day crammed with research and information hunting, it was time to write the final article - and the deadline was looming like a storm cloud! The atmosphere was a chaotic mix of fun, stress and pure determination, with everyone frantically typing away, eyes darting to the time every few seconds. Reporters and writers teamed up, furiously swapping ideas and occasionally panicking about the word count. Photos were selected with the precision of a stressed-out editor, all to make the piece shine. And, as a well-deserved reward for surviving the madness, the day wrapped up with some tasty pastries, proving that no amount of stress is complete without a little sweet reward.



Chris and the team of reporters worked tirelessly throughout the day. It was a non-stop, challenging experience, but ultimately, incredibly rewarding. The students had a fantastic time and we can't wait to see what next year's scoop will bring!



Mrs Gibbins and the team of Year 9 Journalists - Charles, Finn, Archie, Maddison, Iris, Lyra, Isobel, Maisie, Daniel, Noah, Maysie, Pippa, Lucy, Remi, Harriet and Rae.



The group of reporters, writers and photographers were given the opportunity to ask Mrs Gibbins about the rumour that had been circulating. With pens in hand and cameras at the ready, they carefully noted every detail of her responses, determined to capture the full story. Each student played a crucial role in gathering the information needed to piece together the final article. After a lot of hard work and collaboration, they were able to craft a detailed and engaging report. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as the students enjoyed the process of researching, writing and bringing the story to life!

The Smithdonian

Special Report by Year 9 Reporters

Rewards and Discipline Under Review at Smithdon High School

Smithdon High School is currently evaluating its behaviour and rewards policies, which has led to considerable discussion among both students and staff. One key proposal under review is the introduction of Saturday detentions, during which students would be tasked with cleaning various areas of the school. Despite these rumours circulating around the school, Headteacher Mrs Gibbins has confirmed that there are no immediate plans to implement them.

Mrs Gibbins, reflecting on her own school days when she, too, faced detention, explained, "As part of our regular annual review, we assess our behaviour system. While we have considered Saturday detentions, the Senior Leadership Team does not believe they are the right approach at this time. The review is still ongoing, and Mrs Gibbins confirmed that any changes to the behaviour policy will be communicated by June." She added, "I believe behaviour has been improving, and overall, I'm happy with the progress we've made."

The idea of Saturday detentions has divided opinions at Smithdon, with both students and staff expressing a range of views on whether such a measure would be effective. Saturday detentions are part of the West Norfolk Academies Trust's policy, meaning that member schools, including Smithdon, have the option to introduce them if they see fit, with one regularly holding 3-hour long Saturday detentions which students are required to attend. Several schools across the UK have already introduced Saturday detentions, often to address issues with a minority of students displaying persistent disruptive behaviour. Recently, a school in South Wales has implemented a two-hour Saturday detention as a response to increasing physical and verbal abuse from students. Students who fail to attend the detention face the consequence of exclusion.

Staff at Smithdon have voiced a variety of opinions about Saturday detentions, with some supporting the idea and others strongly opposed. Mrs Evans, head of Maths, made it clear that she would not be willing to take part in cleaning duties as part of a Saturday detention. "I'd rather clean my own classroom," she said, adding, "It seems unfair that some teachers give positive points while others don't. A life lesson could be learned here, but it should not involve unfair punishments."

Mr Plant argued that Saturday detentions are not a good idea, stating they would not encourage students to be better. "One student said it's a rubbish idea and shouldn't be a thing," he said. "Another person mentioned that students would just leave the school." He continued, "The school has cleaners for a reason, and they should handle that responsibility. Saturday is meant to be a day off, and it shouldn't be taken away from students."

Miss Collard, while acknowledging some potential merit,

suggested that Saturday detentions should be limited to students with more severe behaviour problems. "It sounds good in theory," she said, "but I don't think it will happen. It should only apply to those with over five consequences, not students who have earned fewer than 30 reward points."

Mr Yeoman was more supportive, viewing Saturday detentions as a useful tool for managing persistent misbehaviour. "If you accumulate lots of negative points, you're likely causing disruption," he stated. "But 30 positive points is too high a threshold. Five C points would be more appropriate. It's a good idea for students who are constantly disruptive." However, he added a caveat, "If I have to staff it, I think it's a terrible idea."

Other teachers, such as Mrs Drage, raised concerns about scheduling. "I have other commitments on Saturdays, and earning 30 reward points is nearly impossible for many students," she said. "Saturday detentions should be for consequences, not rewards."

Meanwhile, Ms Rham disagreed with the concept, particularly because she felt it would unfairly punish students who are quiet and well-behaved. "If students are misbehaving, they should be removed from lessons and given isolation, especially in cases of vandalism," she argued.

Mr Duncan shared concerns that parents would not be supportive of Saturday detentions. "Parents wouldn't be happy," he said. "Schools in Holland and France are stricter, and their students are better behaved. I think it would be good for students to have discipline, like I had when I was in school."

Miss Bucke added, "It's a bad idea. I'd prefer isolation over Saturday detentions. Disruptive students should be removed from lessons."

Mrs Gibbins agreed that it would be difficult to get teachers to supervise Saturday detentions. "Personally, I work on weekends as part of my job, so I couldn't expect others to do it if I wasn't willing to do it myself. Therefore, only the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) would be asked to supervise."

The views of students have been equally divided. While some are open to the idea of discipline, many are strongly opposed to the notion of Saturday detentions, citing concerns about fairness and practicality. Darcey, a member of the student council said, "If Saturday detentions are introduced, I'm moving schools. It's ridiculous. It's basically child labour. What if we have work or after-school activities?" Seb, a Year 11 member of the Student Council, suggested an alternative punishment, proposing that students could run laps of the field as a way to encourage discipline and physical activity.

One Year 9 student added, "It's a serious punishment and should only be for extreme cases of very poor behaviour." Another student remarked, "We already have five days of school, adding Saturday detentions is too much."

Many students voiced concerns about the logistics of Saturday detentions. "I don't think people would show up," said one. Another student noted, "It's not going to stop people misbehaving. The whole idea is stupid."

Several students also suggested alternatives to Saturday detentions, with one stating, "Instead of weekend detentions, isolation would be a better option." While the debate on Saturday detentions continues, there are also discussions around how rewards and consequences are applied at Smithdon. Teachers have weighed in on how to motivate students and encourage good behaviour. In contrast, other teachers suggested that cleaning duties could teach respect, commenting, "In many other cultures, students are required to clean their schools, which instils respect." In Japan, students are often required to clean their schools as part of their daily routine. This practice is deeply embedded in the culture and educational system, where students take responsibility for maintaining cleanliness in all areas of their school. The goal of this practice is not only to keep the school tidy but also to instil a sense of discipline, teamwork, and respect for others.

Mrs Gibbins believes that "Detentions should not be just about punishment, but about helping students learn from their mistakes. For example, if a student has been caught vandalising the school with graffiti, they may spend their detention cleaning and improving the environment. This way, they can make amends and learn to take responsibility for their actions. If the issue is rudeness or disrespect, the detention helps students understand why that behaviour is wrong."

Mrs Gibbins reiterated that Saturday detentions could create unnecessary inconvenience for both students and parents. "The school can apply Saturday detentions if necessary, but we do not think they are essential at this time," she said. "They would prevent students from spending time with their families, which is crucial for building relationships. She also pointed out that isolations and suspensions are effective alternatives, though costly. "If the budget allowed, we would love to offer physical

rewards such as gift cards or trips. However, isolating students is expensive and takes resources away from their education."

When it comes to rewards, students seem to prefer the kind that can be enjoyed immediately. Suggestions like Amazon vouchers, "skip the queue" cards, longer breaks, and even trips were top of the list. Ms Davey, not one to shy away from a sweet gesture, has taken a more delicious approach by handing out Percy Pig sweets as her go-to reward. It's safe to say, her sugary bribes are a hit – though we're not sure if it's the reward or the sugar that have students grinning! "We are still arranging reward trips that the students enjoy. We would love to give out more rewards, but the issue is funding. As you may have seen in the media, our budgets have been tightened, which has resulted in fewer rewards being available." confirmed Mrs Gibbins.

Mr Chapman emphasised the power of positive reinforcement, "Praise goes a long way. Everyone likes to be recognised for doing well." He added, "Everyone should receive a reward point at the start of the lesson to set a positive tone."

When asked about the fairness of the reward system, Mrs Gibbins replied, "The patterns show that Year 7 students earn more reward points, with the number decreasing as students progress through the school. Year 11 students, for example, have six fewer teaching weeks due to their exams, which explains why their reward points are lower."

The debate surrounding Saturday detentions at Smithdon continues to generate strong opinions from both staff and students. While some believe that the measure could be beneficial for addressing disruptive behaviour, many have raised concerns about its potential impact on students' well-being and its overall practicality. After careful consideration, the Senior Leadership Team has decided that Saturday detentions will not be implemented, as they are not deemed to be the right approach for Smithdon students. Any further updates or changes will be communicated by June.

Maysie asked her questions during the press conference, while the other reporters also asked some serious questions. Mrs Gibbins confirmed that Saturday detentions were not being considered at this time.



Author Visit:

Dan Freedman



A major highlight of the festival was the visit from Dan Freedman, the best-selling author of the Jamie Johnson football series. Dan shared his journey as a writer, discussed his passion for storytelling, and revealed some behind-the-scenes secrets about creating his much-loved character, Jamie Johnson. He also shared exciting stories from his career, including interviewing football legend Cristiano Ronaldo and travelling with the England team - where he had the unique experience of meeting Giorgio Armani, the designer behind the team's suits. These stories gave the students a fascinating glimpse into the world of football and the incredible experiences Dan has had along the way.

Dan also introduced students to some of his other popular books, including *Unstoppable*, *50 Ways Into Football*, and *I Am Lenny Brown*. Each of these books reflects his deep connection to the world of football and his talent for bringing the sport to life through captivating characters and stories.

During his talk, Dan shared a personal story that resonated with many of the students. While he always dreamed of becoming a footballer, he wasn't fast or good enough to make it on the pitch. But instead of giving up on his passion for football, he looked for other ways to work in the sport, eventually becoming a writer. His journey from dreaming of playing to finding his own unique path within football was a powerful message, showing students that if one door closes, there are always other ways to pursue your passion.

Dan also revealed that he went to his first football match at the age of three and, as a child, wasn't great at reading - unless it was the newspaper for the football scores! His journey from struggling with reading to becoming a successful author was a powerful reminder to the students that passion, persistence and thinking outside the box can lead to success.

We really enjoy the chance to bring in authors like Dan to meet the students, as it gives them a unique opportunity to connect with writers and gain insights into their creative processes. The students were

thrilled to meet Dan, who hosted an interactive talk where they could ask questions about his books, the inspiration behind his characters, and his experiences in the world of football. His talk was engaging and lively, and he encouraged everyone to follow their dreams - whether that meant becoming authors, journalists, or pursuing any other passion. Dan's visit was especially inspiring for students interested in both literature and sports, giving them the chance to hear firsthand what it's like to turn a love for football and writing into a successful career.

Dan said, "It was an absolute privilege to visit Smithdon High School to help celebrate the joys of reading and writing with the students. I couldn't have hoped for a better day - the whole event was such a positive experience. I thought the session went really well and it was very impactful to see how many students wanted to ask a question! The students were a great combination of enthusiastic as well as being very polite and listening well."

Dan also shared some key takeaways from his visit, "We discussed the power of reading and writing - and how sport and stories allow us to make bonds and build friendships. We also talked about resilience and how real-life stories can be weaved into fiction. Plus we explored together all the varied and incredible career opportunities that are available within football."

He was particularly impressed with the school's dedication to the power of books, saying, "It was a pleasure to speak with the students and I was particularly struck by how the school really values the positive power of physical books and reading in the overall development of the students. Big thanks to Miss Taylor for inviting me and organising such a great day. I hope the experience encourages the students to go for their goals."

Archie was lucky enough to win a football signed by Dan, which he was absolutely thrilled about. The photo will be sent to the Premier League! Many students who had bought books also had the opportunity to get them signed and even snap a few selfies with the author!



Archie won a signed football and the photo will be shared with the Premier League.



Dan was thrilled to sign autographs for his fans and the books they had purchased. The students were absolutely delighted by the opportunity to meet the author behind the beloved TV series Jamie Johnson.





Alice in Wonderland Day

We concluded our two-week festival with a whimsical Alice in Wonderland-themed day, where the school library was magically transformed into a Wonderland straight out of Lewis Carroll's imagination! The room was filled with peculiar tea parties, curious flamingos and oversized flowers, all bathed in vibrant hues. From teacups and playful decorations to fluttering butterflies, toadstools and enchanted bunting, the space was an utterly surreal sight - creating the perfect setting for students to wander into the fantastical world of Alice. It was the ideal finale to our festival, a chance for everyone to come together and celebrate creativity while losing themselves in the magic of Wonderland in the most unforgettable way.

Throughout lunchtime, we tumbled down the rabbit hole into the whimsical world of Wonderland through a series of fantastical activities. Students had the chance to get delightfully creative, painting their own teacups, writing riddles worthy of the Cheshire Cat, designing personalised

bags or pencil cases, and even playing 'Pin the Crown on the Flamingo.' In true Wonderland style, Mrs Pike performed a curious demonstration of a 'Drink Me' potion, which, to everyone's amazement, turned out to be a wonderfully tasty lemonade! This day was not merely about dressing up, it was a journey into the imagination, a celebration of classic literature, and a joyful exploration of the true magic of storytelling. It was the perfect way to step into the nonsensical yet magical world of Wonderland and celebrate the whimsical power of books.

Teachers joined in the madness by dressing as beloved Alice in Wonderland characters, including the Mad Hatter, White Rabbit, Tweedledee and Tweedledum, Queen of Hearts, the White Queen and Alice herself! Their costumes added an extra layer of magic, bringing Wonderland to life in full, fantastical splendour. It was a fantastic way to wrap up the festival, celebrating creativity, joy and the eternal charm of storytelling.



The 6-Word-Story Competition

Miss Howlett launched the six-word story competition - and let's just say, the students' imaginations soared, with some stories that could easily be expanded into entire novels! The short-tales were filled with unexpected themes of ducks, cheese and horror, proving that creativity knows no bounds.

Short stories are a brilliant way to spark imagination, especially for those who may find longer books challenging. They prove that a captivating narrative doesn't need pages and pages of text, just the perfect words to keep us hooked and craving more. But how do you capture an entire story in only six words? Our students, particularly Year 7, gave it their all, and the results are nothing short of impressive. Every single story is a winner in its own right, showcasing the creativity and talent of our students. Enjoy the journey through their brilliant creations!

My name is death. It's time - Miss Thrower

Alice fell. Wonderland waited. Madness began - Miss Taylor

And secrets lead to blood lies - Emily

Hi this six story is amazing - Jessica

The duck went to the moon - Fletcher

She turned around, it was gone - Mabel

I ate some yummy cheese sticks - Eden

Midnight struck...a shadow still lurked - Jasmine

They woke up. He was gone - Mrs Carlton

The duck was a super spy - Charles

Lovers separate and one runs off - May

His hand tightened around his throat - Amelia

We felt that Jasmine truly won the competition with her intriguing choice of words. Her creativity and clever use of language captivated everyone - congratulations, Jasmine!



Miss Howlett also organised a fun and exciting Masked Reader event, where several staff members read a passage from a book of their choice, with their faces hidden behind animal masks and their voices completely disguised by an app. Students then watched the videos in their forms and tried to guess who was behind the masks. After all, it's not every day you hear an alien telling Harry Potter that he's a wizard! Over the course of two weeks, students voted for who they thought was behind each mask.

The winner was Mrs Barnes' form, who earned a sweet reward of chocolate!

As part of Smithdon's annual tradition during the Literary Festival, the English Department launched the 500-Words Creative Story Competition for KS3 students. This competition gives students a great chance to show off their talents and highlights the importance of creative writing in boosting imagination, self-expression and critical thinking. Creative writing helps students explore new ideas, create interesting stories and find their unique voice, while encouraging them to think creatively. Through storytelling, students are encouraged to go beyond the limits of reality and explore imaginary worlds, helping them develop a greater appreciation for language and creativity. Along with the joy of writing, there are exciting prizes to be won, giving students an added incentive to stretch their creativity. It is a chance for them to challenge themselves, improve their writing skills and share their unique ideas, all while competing in a fun and supportive environment.

The winner will be announced next term, so we hope you look forward to reading a selection of the fantastic stories and celebrating the talent of our students!

3rd Prize - £10 Amazon voucher

2nd Prize - £20 Amazon voucher

1st Prize - Mystery Prize

Hospitality and Catering

By Mrs Stewart

On Tuesday 14 January, the Year 10 Hospitality and Catering students were off timetable to take part in a *Game Workshop*. They were visited by former Smithdon student, Ryan Darby, who was taught by me! I even recall when Ryan, during a poultry assessment, brought in a pheasant to cook.

Ryan now works for the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC), where he promotes the use of game in schools and colleges. As part of his role, he advocates for the conservation of game species in the UK, which is vital for maintaining biodiversity and supporting healthy ecosystems. Many game species, such as pheasants and grouse, rely on well-managed habitats and conservation efforts to thrive. By supporting the sustainable shooting of game, we can help to ensure that these species are not only preserved but can continue to play their important roles in the natural environment.

For the workshop, Ryan brought along wild ducks and pheasants from a local shoot that took place over the weekend. The students had the unique opportunity to pluck the birds and remove the breasts, which they then used in their recipes.

While some students found the task more challenging than others, all managed to complete it successfully. Ryan also delivered an informative presentation about game, covering its seasons, the importance of conservation and why we should see more game being included in our diets. By eating game, we support ethical and sustainable practices that contribute to the preservation of wildlife and habitats across the UK.

The students then cooked dishes such as Popcorn Pheasant and Pan-Fried Duck Breast with noodles and chilli sauce. The results were truly outstanding!



Pan fried duck



Popcorn pheasant

Looking Ahead: More Literary Adventures!

As the Literary Festival came to an end, we couldn't help but take a breath and reflect on how much fun we'd had! From the imaginative world of Alice in Wonderland, where we followed Alice down the rabbit hole into strange and whimsical adventures, to exploring the realm of journalism and discovering the power of words, these two weeks were a true celebration of the magic of storytelling. At Smithdon, we believe that literacy is about more than just reading books - it's about connecting with the world, developing your creativity and expressing yourself.

We're already looking forward to next year's Literary Festival and thinking of themes and events we can't wait to see. We'll be dreaming up new ways to make it even bigger and better, and we're eager to continue this adventure of words and stories. We're always eager to hear your ideas too - if you have any suggestions for themes, activities or events, please do share them with us!

In the meantime, let's keep the spirit of reading and writing alive by diving into a new book, trying our hand at writing and continuing to explore the endless worlds that books have to offer. After all, as Alice wisely said, "It's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then." Let's keep moving forward, discovering new ideas and creating our own stories! As the world changes, literacy remains one of the most important skills we have. It helps you understand the world, share ideas and use new technology. Whether you're reading a book, watching a football match, enjoying a poem or keeping up with the news, literacy is at the core of it all.

The English Department hopes that this year's Literary Festival inspired you to pick up a new book, try your hand at writing or even think about pursuing a career in journalism, writing or the arts. After all, in the world of storytelling, there are no limits - just endless possibilities waiting to be explored!

A big thank you to everyone who made the festival possible, including the catering staff and the site team.

Exploring COWA: A Hands-On Experience for Students

By Ms Moat

Recently, a group of students had the incredible opportunity to visit COWA (College of West Anglia) to explore their new nursing suite and gain a firsthand look at some of the equipment used in the healthcare field. The trip proved to be both educational and engaging, providing students with an interactive experience that will help shape their future career decisions.

A Day of Learning and Discovery

The day began with a recap of CPR, where students refreshed their knowledge of vital life-saving techniques. This was followed by hands-on sessions where students had the chance to use a variety of medical equipment. Afterwards, they moved into the training suite, where they had the opportunity to practise checking a dummy's heart rate and breathing. This practical exposure to real-world scenarios gave them a deeper understanding of what working in healthcare truly entails.

The visit was well-received by both the students and the staff members who accompanied them. The hands-on nature of the session, coupled with interactive activities such as quizzes, games and demonstrations, kept the students engaged throughout the day. The students also enjoyed seeing realistic medical mannequins, including one with a heartbeat they could listen to!



Students' Feedback

The feedback from the students was overwhelmingly positive. Here are just a few comments from those who attended:

"I enjoyed the experience very much. I found it very helpful. I liked looking at and working with the equipment used in the healthcare industry."

"I enjoyed the whole experience. It was amazing. I learned

a lot about the area we were looking at, and I also liked seeing COWA before deciding what I want to do when I leave school."

"It was great to see the realistic dolls and be able to hear the heartbeat. The presenters were really lovely."

"The day was really interactive. I liked being able to play with the equipment and especially enjoyed seeing the robots."

While the overall experience was highly praised, some students made suggestions for improvements, such as having a small break with squash and biscuits. This feedback has been taken on board to further enhance future trips.

Staff Perspective

From the staff's perspective, the trip was a success. One staff member highlighted the importance of the DRABC (Danger, Response, Airway, Breathing, Circulation) component of the training, noting that it was crucial for students to learn the fundamentals of preserving life in an emergency situation. The quizzes and interactive games were also praised for keeping the students engaged.

A few staff suggestions for improving future trips included providing a certificate of attendance for students, which could be added to their Record of Achievement. This would also benefit staff members, offering valuable CPD opportunities. Additionally, a brief tour of the college, including the canteen and study areas, could help students get a better feel for the environment.

The trip to COWA was a valuable experience for both students and staff. It not only gave students a glimpse into the healthcare profession but also allowed them to explore potential career paths in a hands-on, supportive environment.

A special thank you goes out to everyone involved in organising the trip - it truly makes a difference in the students' learning experience. The fact that the trip was free allowed for even more students to participate, making it an opportunity that many wouldn't have otherwise had.

For those who missed the trip, we have made some of the COWA leaflets available in the school library. We hope this inspires more students to explore the healthcare field and take part in similar events in the future.



'Operation Blackout' Challenge

By Ms Moat

Restoring energy after a 'major power outage' was just one of the many challenges Smithdon students faced when they took part in *Operation Blackout*.

120 Year 7 students spent the day battling team-building exercises that included everything from creating an SOS box and transporting water and equipment across various locations, to learning how electricity travels along a line (spoiler: it's not magic) and constructing a tower for electric cables.

The day began with a 'breaking news' clip that set the scene. There had been a major power outage and the students had to figure out how to get the lights back on – no pressure!

The students were then given a list of roles to choose from, which were advertised in a 'newspaper' about the situation. They had to pick the perfect person for each role, including Team Leader, Lead Scout, Second in Command, Chief of Design and Logistics Specialist (basically, the dream team of problem-solvers). Throughout the day, students worked in groups to complete nine missions, all while trying to figure out how to collaborate with people they probably hadn't spoken to before. Who knew working together could be this fun (and sometimes chaotic)?

The event was based around the RESPECT Framework: Resilience, Empathy, Self-Awareness, Positivity, Excellence, Communication and Teamwork. Students reflected on these values throughout the day, learning what they were good at – and, let's be honest, where they could use a little extra practice.

This year marked the second time that we have participated in *Operation Blackout*, with the current Year 8 cohort having taken part last year.

Highlights included watching students gain confidence and sharpen their communication skills – although there were a few "what did you just say?" moments. The best part? When a student successfully completed a task after multiple attempts (and probably a few dramatic sighs). They showed incredible determination, perseverance and maybe a bit of stubbornness!

The day was an important part of settling in for the students, helping them make new friends and learn how to work as a team - without getting too many wires crossed. It also gave them a taste of teamwork before their PGL residential trip in July. We're sure they'll be more than ready for that adventure!

ASDAN

By James, Olivia and Grace

In our ASDAN lessons we have been given an exciting task: to redesign the garden in D block. This project provides us with a great opportunity to apply our practical skills and creativity to improve our school environment. The main objectives of the project are to tidy up the garden area, introduce new plants and enhance the aesthetics of the space.

The first part of the project involved clearing the area, removing any overgrown or unwanted plants and ensuring the garden space was neat and well-organised. This has included pulling up weeds to give the garden a fresh start. Once the space was cleared, we moved on to planting new trees and vegetables. The trees we've chosen will not only add beauty but also provide shade and a sense of tranquillity to the area, while the vegetables will help teach us more about growing food and sustainability.

To improve the garden further, we will be working on painting and decorating various elements of the garden. The goal is to transform the garden into a relaxing, inspiring environment that the whole school can enjoy.

Both Year 10 and Year 11 students have been collaborating closely on this garden project. It's been amazing to see how much effort and enthusiasm everyone has put into the project. Even though the weather has often been cold, we've all enjoyed being outside, working together in the fresh air and making the most of the opportunity to improve our school grounds. Thanks to the teamwork of all involved, we have made fantastic progress and we can't wait to see it bloom in warmer weather.



Back in September, Year 11 harvested the vegetables from the D block garden and had the exciting opportunity to turn them into their very own homemade soup. After picking the vegetables of their choice, they were also provided with stock cubes and broccoli to enhance the flavour.

They used the food room to prepare the soup, ensuring they followed all the kitchen rules and regulations to maintain safety throughout the process. They took great care with each step and thoroughly enjoyed their time in the kitchen.

In Year 10, we also did a lot of work in the garden. We built a bench plant pot and planted onions. In every lesson, we made sure to rake the leaves to keep the garden tidy and well-maintained.



Year 10 has also been exploring different cuisines from around the world, and one of the highlights was making our own pizzas. They turned out to be delicious! We researched famous pizza styles from Italy and then designed our own unique creations. You can see the results below.



Year 10 had the amazing opportunity to visit the Bloom Orchard in Hunstanton. During our first visit, we helped prune the trees, a task that was both informative and hands-on. Under the guidance of experienced gardeners, we learned the importance of pruning for the health of the trees, ensuring they would grow strong and produce plenty of fruit in the future. On our next visit, we took part in planting fruit trees, an exciting and rewarding experience.

What made this experience even more special was the opportunity to work alongside the volunteers at the Bloom Orchard where they shared their knowledge and expertise.



SCIENCE

By Mrs Pike

It's been another exciting term in Science! I had the pleasure of hosting a KS3 Science event called *Potion Class*, where students were given the chance to engage in a series of fun and fascinating experiments. During the event, they had the opportunity to burn icing sugar, experience the explosive sound of cannon fire, create the iconic 'elephant's toothpaste' and mix some rather magical ingredients, like 'eye of newt' and unicorn tears! (Don't worry - no mythical creatures were harmed in the making of these experiments!) The students were absolutely fantastic, throwing themselves into each activity with enthusiasm and curiosity. It was wonderful to see them experiment with different concoctions and enjoy the science behind the magic. The event was a huge success and everyone had a fantastic time learning through the hands-on experiments!

There will be two more KS3 Science events this year, so be sure to keep an eye out for dates and more information coming soon!

Year 10 - Sets 1 and 2 Space Masterclass

We were fortunate to welcome back Mrs Ling from the National Space Academy, who shared invaluable insights into the vast array of careers within the Space Industry, inspiring students with the endless possibilities available, from engineering to research and even the role of astronauts. The students also had the chance to launch rockets, handle moon rocks, a rare and unforgettable experience that allowed them to get up close to a piece of the lunar surface and see a space suit that had been worn on the International Space Station giving them a tangible connection to the astronauts who work and live in space.

British Science Week

This year's theme for British Science Week was 'Change and Adapt', a concept that's relevant to all of us. In fact, even the plants in my garden are adapting to the milder weather and blooming earlier than usual - it's like they got the memo! I started off the week with an assembly, discussing how we adapt to change as we grow older and shining a light on how green careers are quickly becoming the careers of the future. Who knew science could be so forward-thinking?

In addition, Miss Soper took students from Years 8, 9 and 10 to our local primary schools, where our students had a fantastic time guiding younger pupils through experiments they had created themselves. It was an inspiring day of hands-on learning and showcasing how fun science can be, no matter your age!



British Science Week

By Miss Soper

Science students had the exciting opportunity to challenge and engage younger pupils during British Science Week, which took place from 10 to 14 March.

Our enthusiastic Science Ambassadors spent the week visiting five local primary schools, where they guided students through a series of engaging experiments, all centred around this year's theme: 'Change and Adapt'.

A group of Year 8, 9 and 10 students took the lead in planning and delivering six exciting experiments. These experiments included investigating how bird beak shapes adapt to different types of seeds, exploring the shapes and dispersal methods of seeds, examining how lenses affect image production, experimenting with static electricity, and testing the voltage produced by coin batteries.

This programme has been running for approximately eight years and, during British Science Week, a group of 12 Smithdon students visits a different primary school each morning. There, they set up and lead a variety of engaging science activities. It provides an excellent opportunity for our students to serve as science ambassadors and role models. It also provides younger pupils with the opportunity to meet students from the secondary school they will soon be attending, helping to ease their transition to secondary education. Many of the primary school students even remember our visits from when they were in Year 3 and Year 4 and can recall the experiments we did back then.

In addition to the outreach work, exciting British Science Week events also took place at Smithdon. The 'Change and Adapt' theme remained at the forefront of the week's activities. An assembly explored how scientists adapt to new ideas and evolving scientific fields, including the rise of green careers, such as those in renewable energy and electric vehicles, which are shaping the future of science.

Throughout the week, lessons also included experiments on chemical changes, how animals adapt to their environments and the impact of climate change.



Cambridge University Maths Days

By Mr Plant

On Monday 13 January and Tuesday 14 January, a group of Year 9 and 10 Maths students had the exciting opportunity to attend the annual Eureka Maths Days at the prestigious Cambridge University Maths Centre of Excellence. This event is always a highlight of the academic year, offering students a chance to immerse themselves in a variety of mathematical workshops and hear from prominent mathematicians.

Both days were packed with engaging activities, presentations, and hands-on workshop. The students also had the chance to hear from two special guest speakers, both of whom are presenters of the popular YouTube channel *Numberphile*, bringing even more excitement to the event.

Year 9: A Magical Journey Through Maths

The highlight of the Year 9 event was a fascinating talk by mathematician Ben Sparks, who delivered a session titled *Magical Maths*. For centuries, magic and maths have gone hand in hand, and Ben demonstrated how many magic tricks are rooted in mathematical principles. He explained how understanding the maths behind these tricks can reveal the secrets of the illusion - if you're brave enough to learn the logic behind them.

Year 10: Unlocking the Secrets of the Digital World

For the Year 10 event, the guest speaker was James Grime, a world-renowned speaker on the history of codes and code breaking. James' talk, *Bits and Pieces: Secrets of a Digital World*, explored the hidden mathematics behind the digital technologies we use every day. He delved into questions like:

How can so many people use mobile phones at the same time without crashing the network?

How does a film studio know if someone is illegally sharing movies?



How are messages transmitted from space without errors?

How can a scratched CD still play music?

James took the students on a journey from World War II to modern-day WiFi, showing how mathematics underpins the technology we rely on daily. It was an incredible opportunity for our students to see the real-world applications of the maths they've been learning in the classroom.

One of the standout moments occurred when our Year 9 student, Pippa, took the stage in front of a packed auditorium to answer a series of Maths Magic questions. Despite the pressure, Pippa rose to the challenge and got every question correct.

Another highlight was when four of our Year 9 girls won the overall competition for designing and building a crane out of paper and tape. The challenge was to create a crane that could hold weight off the end of a table, but the students went above and beyond, designing a crane that could also rotate like a real one. Their innovative solution impressed the organisers, two of whom were engineers, and the girls were awarded a massive prize. While the prize mysteriously disappeared by the time we got home, their achievement was no less impressive!



Throughout the two days, our students were a credit to Smithdon. They were professional, polite and courteous, engaging superbly with everyone they met. They were smartly dressed and were a credit to the school!

The Eureka Maths Days were an invaluable experience for all the students involved and we are incredibly proud of their participation and achievements.



United Kingdom Mathematics Trust Intermediate Mathematical Challenge

Every year, Smithdon students from across both Key Stages are selected to enter the UKMT (United Kingdom Mathematics Trust) Maths Challenges.

At the very end of January this year, our top set students in Years 9 and 10 were selected to participate in this year's UKMT Intermediate Mathematical Challenge.

The Intermediate Mathematical Challenge is a 60-minute, multiple choice competition aimed at students across the UK. It encourages mathematical reasoning, precision of thought, and fluency in using basic mathematical techniques to solve interesting problems. The problems are designed to make students think. Most are accessible, yet still challenge those with experience.

The thresholds for certificates this year were:

Gold 72+

Silver 52+

Bronze 37+

I am pleased to announce that we achieved:

Six Bronze awards in Year 9: Archie, Freddie, Lyra, Isobel, Fletcher and Jessica.

Two Silver awards in Year 9: Hadleigh and Harrison.

Congratulations to Harrison for achieving the Best in Year 9 award!

Four Bronze awards in Year 10: Larissa, Amanda, Kate and Jack.

One Gold award in Year 10: Freya Mae.

Congratulations to Freya Mae for achieving the Best in Year 10 award and for also achieving the Best in School Award!

A huge well done to all of those that took part and congratulations to those that received a certificate. We're very proud of you all!

Performing Arts

By Mrs Proctor



Building on the success of last term's co-curricular opportunities - from trips to the local pantomime to our annual school musical spectacular - we are thrilled to share the incredible experiences we've offered to Smithdon students this term!

The Drama Department has been busy organising an array of theatrical opportunities, giving our students the chance to engage with the arts in unique and inspiring ways. On Wednesday 22 January, 48 Year 10 and 11 students visited the renowned Norwich Theatre Royal to watch a performance of *An Inspector Calls*. This trip was extremely popular, with tickets quickly snapped up by students currently studying the play for their GCSE English. It was an excellent opportunity for students to witness the text come to life on stage by a professional theatre company. Geo loved the characterisation of Mrs Birling and was captivated by the dramatic implosion of the household. Staff were also pleased to receive glowing comments about the exemplary behaviour, manners and conduct displayed by Smithdon students throughout the trip.

On Thursday 6 February, it was the turn of Year 9 and Year 10 to enjoy a trip to the theatre, this time to see *The Girl on the Train*, starring Giovanna Fletcher, in Norwich. The modern thriller, full of suspense and tension, had students on the edge of their seats. During the interval, Annabel couldn't hide her excitement, saying, "They can't leave it there, I need to know what happens!" Luckily, the story picked up again shortly after, and Ellie was mesmerised with the minimalist staging and clever use of gauze and flats to reveal and conceal key moments. Tom, another GCSE Drama student, shared his enthusiasm: "I really enjoyed the show! I especially liked the part where the train was represented by a flash of white light through the wall, and everyone got a jump scare. The actors were also really inspiring!" It was another fantastic co-curricular opportunity that left all students excited and inspired.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to offer even more theatrical experiences for our students. In July, Year 7, 8 and GCSE Drama students will visit *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*! In May, we're also offering our very first Arts Residential to Lake Garda, where students will explore a variety of arts-based activities, such as visiting galleries, mask making and more!

As an Arts team, we understand how important it is to expose our students to professional work, and we are committed to continuing this tradition. We already have three exciting trips lined up for the next academic year and we look forward to providing our students with even more opportunities to engage with the arts in the future!

We can't wait to see where these co-curricular opportunities take us next!

London Film Music!

We also embarked on our annual trip to the Royal Albert Hall for the Film Music Gala, where students had the chance to experience the breathtaking venue and listen to Academy Award-winning scores performed by the Royal London Philharmonic Orchestra. To make the day even more special, we drove along the Thames, taking in some of London's iconic landmarks along the way!



Workshops!

This term, we were fortunate to take part in two enriching music workshops. First, our Year 10 GCSE music students visited St. Clements High School for a composition workshop hosted by Cardiff University's Music Department. During the session, students learned how to take a brief and create the different components of a song from scratch.

Later in the term, we were excited to host the IEMusic Taster Days, where our GCSE music students, along with a hand-picked group of Year 8 and 9 students, participated in a songwriting workshop. Working alongside two professional musicians, the students learned how to form a band and create a song. In just two hours, each group had formed a band, written a part of a song and performed it for one another, receiving valuable feedback. To top off the day, we invited all of Year 7 and 8 to a concert where they enjoyed a performance by the talented guest musicians who had worked with our students throughout the day.

Performances, Performances, Performances!

A term in Performing Arts wouldn't be complete without showcasing some incredible performances. This term, all of our Year 11 GCSE music students completed their coursework, rising to the challenge and delivering exceptional drama and music performances. They worked tirelessly, demonstrating their dedication, creativity and growth.

Our Show Choir also had the exciting opportunity to take to the stage at the Music for Youth Regional Festival at Springwood. They performed two carefully rehearsed pieces, captivating the audience with their talent and energy. The choir received glowing feedback, with special praise for their professionalism and stage presence. Their performances were a true testament to their hard work and commitment. We couldn't be prouder of their achievements!



Next, three of our talented students - Rae, Geo and Millie - had the exciting opportunity to participate in the WNAT Vocal Evening. Each of them performed solo pieces, showcasing their individual musical talents. They were joined by other gifted students from across the West Norfolk Academies Trust, creating an inspiring and dynamic evening of performances. It was a fantastic chance for our students to shine on stage and connect with other young performers, sharing their passion for music and gaining valuable experience.



A week later, our Year 8 band, The Unknown, took part in the WNAT Battle of the Bands, competing against students from across the trust once again. We're thrilled to announce that they finished in second place! Huge congratulations to Harry, Sam, Udaesh and special guest, Toby!



We wrapped up the term with our annual spring concert, Smithdon Salutes Broadway - a night dedicated to celebrating the iconic music of film and stage. The concert took place at Hunstanton Town Hall, featuring performances from students across all year groups! These events are a wonderful way to close out the term and showcase the incredible talent at Smithdon.

Get Ready for Sister Act Jr.: The Musical Journey Begins!

To top it all off, we're already gearing up for next year's highly anticipated production, *Sister Act Jr.* Rehearsals are well underway and the excitement is building as students from all year groups come together to bring this vibrant musical to life. With catchy tunes and amazing choreography, it's sure to be a show you won't want to miss. Stay tuned and keep an eye and ear out for more details coming soon - we can't wait to share this incredible journey with you!

ART

As a school, we are excited to announce that we've signed up to compete in Art Bytes! This competition showcases the creative talent of students, and we're thrilled to have 30 Year 9 students whose artwork has been submitted for consideration. Their pieces will be part of a wider display and we can't wait for you to see the incredible talent on show.

Public voting for the competition will open on 3 April and run until 28 April, giving everyone the opportunity to support their favourite pieces. The school and the individual students who receive the most votes will be rewarded with fantastic prizes, making it a fun and competitive event for all involved! We encourage everyone to get involved and cast their votes to help our talented students shine! Stay tuned for more updates as the voting period approaches.

Art Bytes is a national art competition in the UK for Year 5 and Year 9 students, where schools submit student artwork to be showcased in a virtual gallery. The programme encourages creativity, boosts students confidence and offers a chance for students to engage with art in meaningful ways, with celebration events held at cultural venues. It also supports schools on their journey to achieving Artsmark status.



The artwork from each school with the most votes wins a place in the Art Bytes virtual gallery exhibition.

The primary and secondary school with the most votes cast each win a Community Engagement Award.



ENRICHMENT

These are just some of the opportunities offered to students at Smithdon, including extracurricular activities, trips and events. These events and activities give students the chance to develop their talents skills and engage with the local community, and create lasting memories whilst making new friends.

SCIENCE: Smithdon offers a range of engaging Science opportunities, including regular KS3 Science events, the STEM club and the Garden club. Students also participate in British Science Week primary school visits, the Faraday Challenges and the UEA "Bringing Scientists to You" trip. Additional highlights include a visit from the National Space Agency, the National Scientific Thinking Challenge and the Kitchen Chemistry visit, all designed to inspire students and enhance their scientific knowledge.

PERFORMING ARTS: Regular theatre trips, a Christmas pantomime visit, an annual school musical and a GCSE performance of a play at the Hunstanton Drama Festival. Other activities include the weekly Just Dance club, a Royal Albert Hall film music gala, a composition workshop at St. Clements with Cardiff University and an IEMusic Taster Day workshop at Smithdon. Students also participate in the Music for Youth Festival, carol singing and care home visits at Christmas, a Christmas concert at the Town Hall and the Hunstanton Christmas Festival. There are also events like the WNAT Christmas Carol Service, WNAT Vocal Evening, WNAT Battle of the Bands, WNAT Piano Evenings and the Spring Concert: Smithdon Salutes Broadway. Additional opportunities include the Smithdon/Heacham collaborative singing project, Hunstanton Summer Carnival, the Summer Concert, WNAT Community Music Week – Band Night, Rock and Pop Night and Vocal Celebration. Students also enjoy the Into Film Cinema Trip, the Sister Act production, workshops for Wicked the musical, a War Horse GCSE trip, a Year 8 casting competition, an arts trip to Lake Garda and a trip to see Hamilton. This Department never stops for breath!

SPORTS: Smithdon offers a variety of sports clubs, fixtures and tournaments, including badminton, football, netball and GCSE rock climbing. Students can also participate in the "This Girl Can" club, the PE Holland trip (focused on football) and the Race to the Line competition, providing opportunities for both participation and competition in various sports.

AFTER SCHOOL AND LUNCHTIME CLUBS: Smithdon also offers a variety of clubs, including the Dungeons and Dragons Club, Chess Club and tournaments, the DT Mini Makes Club (held half-termly), History Revision Club, after-school GCSE help sessions, Homework Club and the Young Carers Club. These clubs provide students with both academic support and fun extracurricular activities to enhance their school experience.

CAREERS: We offer various career-related opportunities, including a careers trip to Searles, work experience placements and one-to-one career advice from a Level 6 Careers Adviser. Additionally, students have access to virtual work experience and careers-focused activities, particularly for Key Stage 3 students, helping them explore future career paths and develop essential skills.

MATHS: The Maths Department provides a wide range of exciting opportunities for students to engage with mathematics, including the Eureka Maths Days at Cambridge University for Year 9, the UKTM Intermediate Maths Challenge, the Year 10 Maths Feast and the UKTM Junior Maths Challenge. Students can also participate in the Weekly Maths Club and attend the Weekly Saturday Maths sessions for Year 11 GCSE students.

LANGUAGES: Smithdon also offers exciting language opportunities, such as the French and German Spelling Bee and a visit to the German Christmas Market. The annual trip to France is also a must!

ENGLISH: The English Department offers a variety of literary activities, including the Creative Writing Club, Reading Ambassador trips to primary schools and the annual Literary Festival featuring author visits and events. Students also enjoy seasonal story-times, participate in writing competitions and celebrate World Book Day, all of which help foster a love for reading and writing.

ART AND TECHNOLOGY: Smithdon students participate in a variety of creative and competitive activities, including decorating the Christmas tree for the Town Hall, an Art trip to New York, the Rotary Technology Tournament and the Lego Club, where they competed at Springwood and emerged as winners!

HOSPITALITY AND CATERING: Culinary students have the opportunity to take part in exciting culinary and creative experiences, including a trip to Novus to cook a three-course meal in a professional kitchen, a Game Workshop and the Ready Steady Cook competition, allowing them to showcase their cooking skills and creativity.

CHARITY: Smithdon students actively participate in fundraising events such as Comic Relief, which includes sponsored laps, non-uniform days and bake sales, as well as supporting Children in Need, helping to raise money for important charitable causes.

ADVENTURE AWAITS: We offer students a range of outdoor adventure opportunities, including the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award for Year 9 students, which involves two expeditions, and the Silver Duke of Edinburgh Award for Year 10 students, with two additional expeditions. Year 7 students also take part in the PGL trip, providing all students with valuable experiences in teamwork, leadership, and personal development.

Attendance Matters

Attendance is high up on our agenda, as (unfortunately) our whole school attendance rate is well below national and Norfolk figures, meaning we are looking into ways to improve students' attendance at school as we move forward.

As you know, every day counts and the target of 96% attendance for each student is provided by the Government due to evidence of the impact attendance has on assessment outcomes. However recent research following a group of students through high school and into their careers, now aged 27, has also highlighted the impact of good attendance on adult salaries: students whose attendance at school was 90-95% are now earning £10,000 a year less than their peers who attended over 95% of the time.

Remember headaches, period pains, sore throats are all lifetime experiences - please give your children painkillers and send them into school. With your permission, we can issue more during the day, if needed, to help them get through the day.

Well done to the forms with the best attendance this term:

Year 7: Miss Ruskin

Year 8: Mrs Mandal

Year 9: Mrs Mortoza-Cowles

Year 10: Mrs Fysh

Year 11: Mrs Carlton

To report a student's absence, please use one of the following methods:

Phone: 01485 536123

Text: 07935 059774

Email: attendance@smithdonhigh.org.uk



Get in touch:

Phone: 01485 534541

Email: office@smithdonhigh.org.uk

Website: www.smithdonhigh.org.uk

**We hope you enjoy the
Easter break and we look
forward to seeing you on
23 April.**