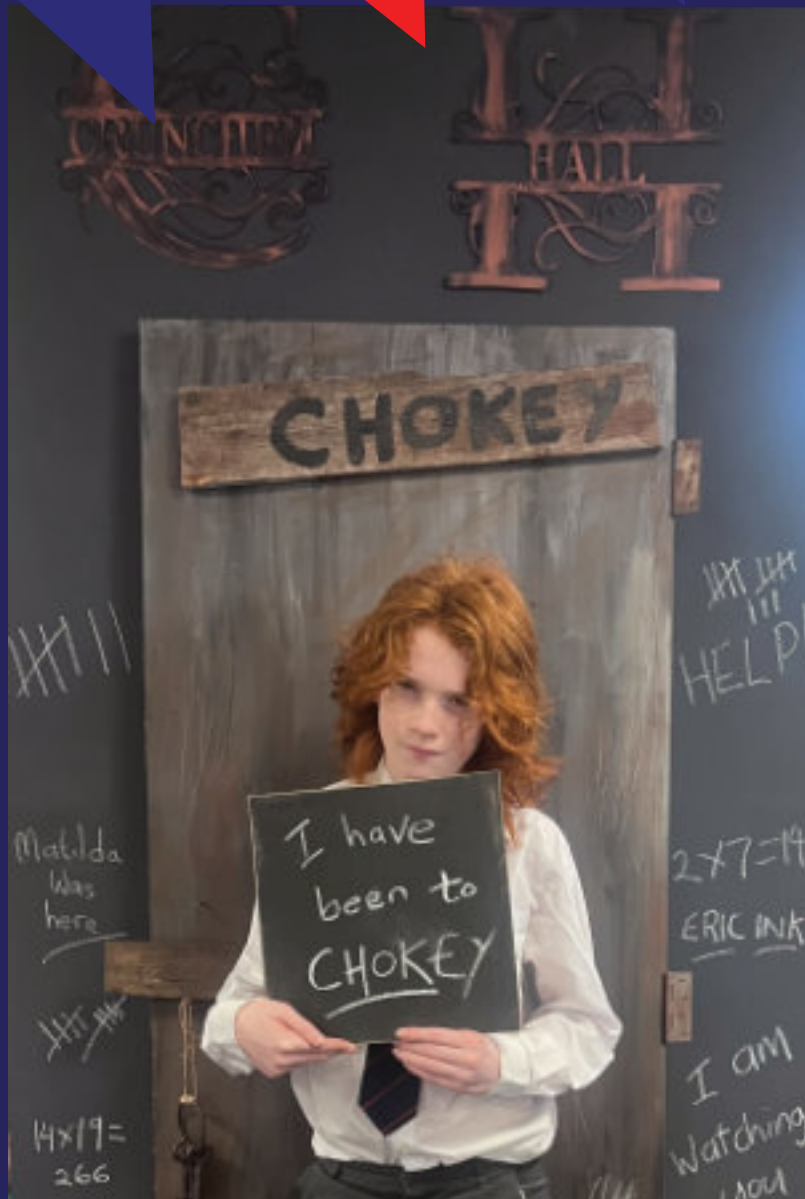




The Smithsonian



The Easter 2026 Edition

Work hard, be kind and smile

Welcome to Smithdon High School

A message from the Head Teacher



As I write my final introduction for The Smithdonian I am reminded of how amazing all our students and staff are - with so many activities and events put on and attended.

Drawing my time as Headteacher to a close with the annual Literary Festival seems apt for my English teaching background - and my love of dressing up as a character where I am unrecognisable (this year as the Grand High Witch from Roald Dahl's The Witches - modelled on the Anjelica Huston film).

I am so proud of all our community and their endeavours in studying and co-curricular activities from drama to sports, technology to science, English and beyond.

As always I wish you all a restful holiday - with hope for some sunnier and warmer weather than of late. But I also want to take this opportunity to wish Mrs Robinson the very best as she ably takes on the reins of Smithdon leading the school into its next phase, supported by Mr Warner-Lynn, who will join the leadership team from Springwood High School within the Trust, and the rest of the senior leadership team.

We also say goodbye to Mrs Heyhoe from the English team and wish her all the best. As an experienced English teacher, Mr Warner-Lynn will also be taking on her Year 10 and 11 English classes.

With best wishes

Amanda

Smithdon Head Students 2025-2026

Inspiring leadership, teamwork and excellence.



Daisy: It has been another busy term here at Smithdon with so many different activities for us all to get involved in. I really enjoy representing the school in sport and recently I have competed in the regional cross country finals in Wymondham and played in a badminton tournament where we competed against other schools in our Trust. As we approach the end of term all of us Year 11 students are busy revising for our GCSE exams, so we are excited for the holiday! At school we have had an Easter egg competition where one lucky student won a 1.5kg chocolate egg. All the money raised for this went to the RNLI.

I will be incredibly sad to leave Smithdon, because I have had a brilliant time here. Everyone is so kind and welcoming and they have helped me so much during my time at school. Next year I plan to head to KES sixth form to study PE which is a subject I am extremely passionate about and would like to pursue in the future. Have a happy Easter from me and everyone here at Smithdon.

Miles: My recent focus has been on preparing for my GCSE exams. I have been attending as many after-school revision sessions as possible, as well as Saturday Maths classes. Outside of school, I continue my revision at home using the techniques we have been taught, focusing on one subject each evening to help organise and retain key information effectively. Following an enjoyable work experience placement with a local carpenter last year, I am looking forward to enrolling on a Level 2 Carpentry course in September.

It has been a true honour to serve as Head Student and I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities and experiences this role has given me. I would also like to wish Mrs Gibbins all the very best as she leaves the school to begin an exciting new chapter in her life. On behalf of both Daisy and myself, thank you for all the support, guidance and opportunities you have provided - they have made a lasting impact on us. Finally, I would like to wish everyone a very Happy Easter.

SMITHDON IN THE NEWS

Celebrating Achievements and Excellence at Smithdon

A Baa-riliant Visit!



Iris said "this one's coming home with me!"

Smithdon students enjoyed a truly memorable hands-on experience in March as a sheep from North Elmham, cared for by shepherd Josh Hill, stayed at the school for five days in a specially prepared pen. Among the visitors were her two lambs, just a week old. The experience allowed our students to explore where their food comes from and learn about the geography of sheep across the UK. They discovered how wool is used in everyday life and gained a real understanding of the importance of sheep farming.

Students particularly loved interacting with the animals and as a special memento, each was given a wooden sheep to take home. Eden, a Year 8 student, said, "I got to pet the sheep and I loved my little wooden sheep!"

To round off the visit, students also watched a video montage of Mrs Dibble's family sheep, offering a fascinating look at a year in the life of a sheep. By bringing the farm to school, this activity provided a hands-on, immersive experience that the students won't forget, combining fun, learning and a connection to rural life.

Running into Royalty

Sandringham parkrun received the royal seal of approval at the beginning of the year as King Charles paid a surprise visit.

The King's appearance came ahead of World Cancer Day on 4 February and was organised in partnership with Move Against Cancer and Sandringham's 5K Your Way group. He delighted runners during their opening lap, smiling and waving as they jogged by, leaving many participants stunned.

One of the lucky runners was our very own student, Beau, who was thrilled and pleasantly surprised by the royal encounter. During their brief conversation, the King showed great interest in Beau's involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Reflecting on the moment, Beau said, "The King had asked me about my DofE experience and how I did a fundraising activity for Cancer Research UK in September."

It was a memorable moment and a wonderful opportunity for Beau to share his achievements and commitment to supporting an important cause.



The Literary Festival 2026

A Whizz-popping Celebration of Stories and Imagination



Smithdon concluded yet another exciting and action-packed two-week Literary Festival in March - a vibrant celebration of reading and writing. From exploring the imaginative worlds of Roald Dahl to the excitement of World Book Day and from meeting author Lisa Thompson to delving into the world of journalism, the festival offered something for every student.

In a world increasingly shaped by AI and digital technology, literacy remains as vital as ever. The ability to read, write and critically engage with texts empowers students not only to absorb information but also to question, imagine and create. Books offer experiences that no AI can fully replicate, the thrill of adventure, the twists of a plot, or the spark of empathy that comes from seeing the world through another character's eyes.

Take, for example, the works of Roald Dahl and Lisa Thompson. Dahl's stories are timeless journeys into fantastical worlds, filled with mischievous heroes, inventive villains and the kind of

imagination that stretches the mind beyond everyday reality. Lisa Thompson's adventure stories, meanwhile, captivate with fast-paced plots and relatable characters who confront challenges in ways that feel immediate and modern. Together, their works show that literacy is not just about decoding words, it's also about entering worlds, solving problems and understanding human experience, whether in a chocolate factory or on a daring adventure. Even in an AI-driven age, reading remains a uniquely human skill. While technology can generate stories or summarise facts, it cannot replicate the joy of discovering a hidden clue, laughing at a clever twist, or cheering for a hero you've come to know and care about. Literacy gives students the tools to navigate both the digital world and the real one with curiosity, creativity and confidence. In short, books remain an essential adventure and one that no algorithm can replace.

Join us as we look back on the unforgettable moments of the festival - two weeks filled with imagination, discovery and literary excitement! From whizzpopping activities to gloriumptious moments, here's a glimpse at the utterly splendid experiences that made our celebration of reading and writing so scrumdiddlyumptious!



WORLD BOOK DAY

Every year, stories have a way of bringing us together, as educators, as colleagues and friends and this year was no exception. As we celebrated World Book Day, our school was transformed into a vibrant world of imagination, creativity and inspiration. It's a day we always look forward to, from choosing which characters to portray to discovering students' favourite books and personalities - many of which are new to us, making the experience even more exciting. What makes the day truly special is seeing the effort and creativity our students put into their costumes, often designing and making their own accessories. Their enthusiasm and originality bring the stories we love to life and make the celebration unforgettable.

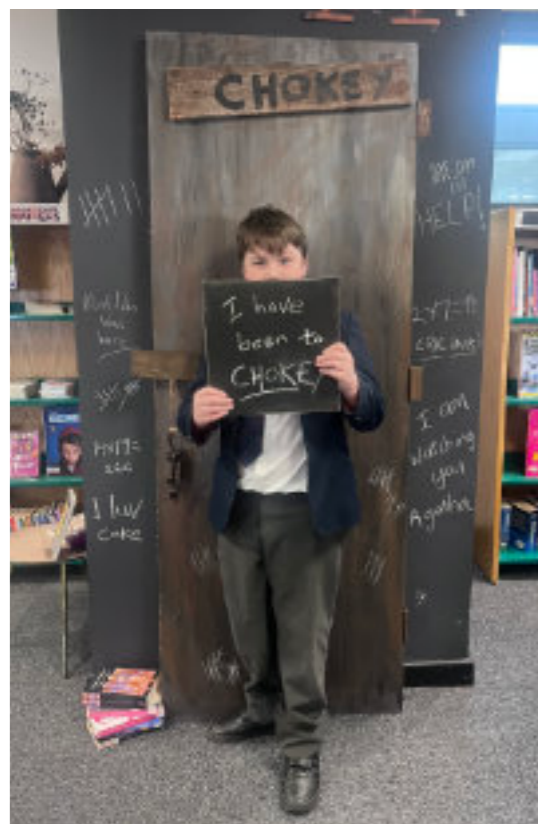


We're always delighted by the effort our students make and the enthusiasm they bring, fully embracing every moment and helping make the day so memorable.

From colourful costumes inspired by beloved literary characters to unexpected choices, everyone truly embraced the spirit of the day. Costumes spanned the pages of time itself, from the prim and proper world of Victorian English literature, all the way to the bold, bright and brilliant realms of modern manga. We even managed to spot not one, but four Where's Wallys - clearly not hiding very well - alongside classic fairy tale figures, Little Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks. More unconventional appearances included the Joker, Coraline, Arthur Morgan and Midge Ure.

It was fantastic to see such enthusiasm and originality on display, with staff and students alike fully immersing themselves in the joy of storytelling proving that, for one day at least, the only thing more powerful than a good book is a great costume!





It's the Chokey for Eden... no arguments, no appeals, just straight in...mind the nails!



Mrs Drage's purple power proves she's gone full Violet - someone keep an eye out in case she starts swelling into a giant blueberry and needs rolling out of the library!

ROALD DAHL

A Truly Glorumptious Day

Our school library was brimming with imagination and excitement as we celebrated Roald Dahl Day as part of our annual Literary Festival. The event brought Dahl's much-loved stories to life, creating a truly magical experience for both students and staff.

Staff fully embraced the spirit of the day, arriving in costume as some of Dahl's most iconic characters. The corridors were alive with the Grand High Witch, the brilliant Matilda and the ever-kind Miss Honey, alongside the mischievous Veruca Salt, the gentle giant BFG with his towering presence, the clever and adventurous Violet Beauregarde and the formidable Mrs Pratchett. Adding a playful twist, Miss Spider spun her way through the halls and even the enigmatic Willy Wonka made an appearance, though, sadly, without any chocolate to share!

The school library became the heart of the celebrations, hosting a variety of creative activities during lunchtime. A special Matilda Library corner encouraged students to explore books and immerse themselves in the joy of reading, just like Matilda herself.

A Matilda-esque craft station invited students to decorate their own book bags, pencil cases and



Year 9's were in dream-jar heaven! They conjured up some truly magical, twinkling jars, each one brimming with imagination, wonder, and a sprinkle of their own mischievous creativity.

Our students delighted in making their own dream jars, inspired by *The BFG*, filling them with glitter, shells, flowers and tiny treasures before adorning them with ribbons, gold leaf and washi-tape.

The Roald Dahl Day was a resounding success, sparking creativity and spreading smiles. It was a wonderful celebration of storytelling and imagination and will be remembered for years to come.



Miss Howlett's gone full Matilda... straight into The Chokey! Let's hope she remembers her powers before the walls start closing in!





JOURNALISM DAY

Chase The Story With Chris Bishop

In today's world, journalism is more than just reporting, it's a key part of literacy. With so much information flying around on so many platforms, journalists have to act like detectives, sorting through mountains of facts to find what's true. Strong language skills are crucial, because clear communication helps audiences actually understand what's going on. This isn't just about keeping people informed; it's about shaping opinions and helping society stay informed.

As a student, you might think of the news as "just news," but it's really a literacy workout in disguise. Journalists read closely, write clearly, and tell stories in ways that grab attention, kind of like your favourite Instagram or TikTok posts, but with fewer dancing cats! From breaking headlines to sports recaps, journalism works behind the scenes, guiding us through a world full of trending hashtags, viral videos, and endless memes, one well-crafted story at a time.

One of the liveliest days of the Literary Festival is always *Chase the Story Day*, where students step into the shoes of a journalist and hunt down a news story! For the last five years, we've been lucky to have real-life reporter Chris Bishop guide the students through the whole process - from gathering the initial information to writing the finished article. After sharing a bit about his career, a buzz spread through the makeshift newsroom - the library - a rumour had it that Smithdon was going fully AI, with avatars and screens replacing teachers! Panic, curiosity and a dash of disbelief rippled through the students. Would AI really be taking over classrooms? Handing out homework?

The Year 9 reporters and writers were handed the thrilling challenge of uncovering the truth. They interviewed staff and students across all year groups, collected quotes, and pieced together facts and opinions to craft their own headline-worthy story. The day was packed with excitement and a bit of stress, giving everyone a taste of the unpredictable, fast-paced world of journalism. Chris shared tips on verifying information, structuring a story and beating the ticking clock of a looming deadline, while groups of budding reporters politely stormed classrooms- no one was safe from questions about their AI replacements!

Miss Fairweather delivered a talk on graphic design, showing students that making an article stand out isn't just about what you write, it's also about how it looks. Composition, font and colour can make a huge difference, and knowing your audience is key. Teenagers growing up with AI might notice details older generations miss, so the style, tone and little visual cues need to match who you're writing for. She also explained how tools like publisher templates and design boxes can bring all the elements together professionally. By the end, students could see that a great layout is just as important as strong writing, especially in a world where AI might be generating content alongside them.

The highlight of the day was a press conference with Mrs Gibbins, where students got to fire off their questions. They brought professionalism and impressive organisation, making the session engaging and insightful. Mrs Gibbins handled everything with poise and expertise, and praised the students on just how well they performed.

After a full day of digging for information, it was finally time to write the article and the deadline loomed like a glitching AI - unforgiving and imminent. The room buzzed with excitement, stress, and sheer determination. Everyone worked together, choosing which photos to include and adding their words and quotes onto a shared document, while Jessica and Izzy focused on designing the page. By 3pm the team were tired and a little bit frazzled but very proud of their efforts!



Through Harry's lens: where AI meets breaking news!

LISA THOMPSON

A Literary Adventure

Year 7 and 8 students were thrilled to welcome author Lisa Thompson to our school as part of our literary festival. The visit offered an unforgettable experience, giving students an inside look at how stories are created and what it's like to be a full-time writer.

Lisa shared her journey, from discovering her love of reading and dreaming of becoming an author at just nine years old, to becoming a bestselling writer of inspiring books such as *The Goldfish Boy*, *The Light Jar*, *The Day I Was Erased*, *The Boy Who Fooled the World*, *The Graveyard Riddle*, *The Rollercoaster Boy*, and *The Treasure Hunters*, all of which have captured the imaginations of young readers across the world.

Students were fascinated to hear how Lisa develops her ideas, creates memorable characters and overcomes challenges in her writing. She explained how each of her novels explores a unique theme and revealed how films such as *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Groundhog Day* have inspired her stories. The interactive session included a volunteer activity where students took on the roles of writer, editor and illustrator to explore the publishing process firsthand.

During a lively Q&A session, students asked

thoughtful questions about Lisa's writing habits, favourite books, tips for aspiring authors, sources of inspiration and even whether she considers herself famous!

Lisa also held a book signing, giving students the chance to meet her in person and take home signed copies of her books, especially exciting for fans of *The Goldfish Boy* and *The Light Jar*.

In addition, a small writing workshop allowed selected Year 7 and 8 students to practise creative writing techniques, focusing on sentence starters and character development. The students were eager to share their work, with Jacob's story earning the biggest laughs of the session!

Overall, Lisa Thompson's visit was a memorable celebration of reading and writing, inspiring students to explore literature with creativity, curiosity and a renewed passion for storytelling. It was an experience that will hopefully stay with them for a long time. The school library has all of her books, and they are now being taken out regularly, proving that inspiration can spark curiosity and ignite a lifelong passion for reading.

Debate Over AI Grips School!



Mrs Gibbins and the Year 9 reporting team discussing the AI story.

After a rumour reached our newsroom about Smithdon becoming an AI-led school, our group of Year 9 student reporters led an engaging debate on the use of AI, exploring how it could shape the future of education.

As part of our investigation, we conducted interviews with both staff and our peers, gathering a range of opinions from across the school community. Meanwhile, the writing team worked in the library to write and edit this report, developing their journalism skills.

During the day the journalist team hosted a press conference with Smithdon's Head teacher Mrs Gibbins, where we posed thoughtful questions about the potential impact of AI on the school environment and the future of not only teaching, but also our future careers. The discussion offered valuable insights into both the opportunities and challenges that AI may bring.

What is AI and how is it used in schools?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a type of technology that allows computers and machines to copy some human abilities, like learning, understanding, solving problems, making decisions, being creative and working on their own. By looking at lots of information and finding patterns, AI can do tasks that normally need human thinking. This means AI can help in many areas, like schools, healthcare, jobs and creative projects and it keeps improving as technology develops.

John McCarthy – coined the term “artificial intelligence” and helped establish it as a field of study.

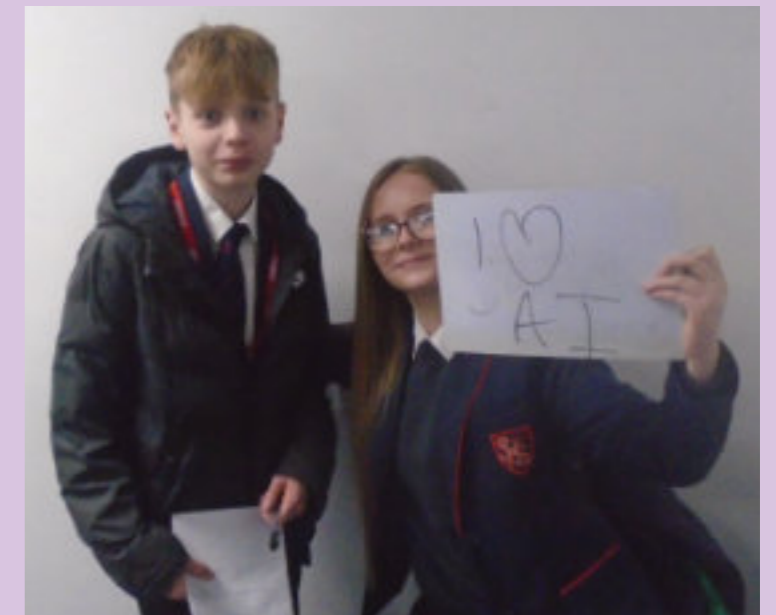
Alan Turing – created the Turing Test, a method for evaluating a machine's ability to exhibit intelligent behaviour.

Marvin Minsky – co-founded the MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory and was a key figure in early AI research.

Allen Newell – co-developed the Logic Theorist, one of the first AI computer programs.

Herbert A. Simon – worked alongside Newell on the Logic Theorist and contributed significantly to early AI theory.

Claude Shannon – laid the foundations of information theory and explored early concepts related to artificial intelligence.



AI as a Support Tool

Smithdon's IT Technician Mr Kerr believes AI will not replace teachers but can help reduce workloads and speed up tasks. “AI will help process things faster and make my job as a technician easier and quicker, you would need very specific inputs to do certain things and a lot of resourced to function properly, it will eventually be smarter and help healthcare and data entry jobs” he said. AI can assist with lesson planning, marking, and tracking students' learning progress, allowing teachers to personalise lessons more efficiently.

A recent survey showed that 43% of teachers rate their confidence in using AI at just 3/10, with over 60% asking for support applying AI to planning and administrative tasks. Many teachers have also spent more time supporting pupils' mental health, with 58% reporting increased hours dedicated to social care issues which highlights the potential for AI to help free up time for these essential responsibilities.

Human Interaction Remains Key

Students and staff alike expressed concern about a fully AI-run school environment. One Year 9 student said it would be "scary if there weren't any human adults in the school" and added that they wouldn't want robots or screens running the day-to-day. Although this generation has grown up in a digital age, many students voiced serious worries about the implications of AI on their education, safety, and well-being. Ethan, for example, feared that vital aspects of life and learning could be lost, asking, "What is stopping us from fighting this?" Jamie echoed these concerns, noting that without human teachers, his education could decline and the lack of adults to intervene during tense situations might make the school a more dangerous place. Sam in Year 9 offered a blunt solution, suggesting, "Just unplug it."

Teachers shared these apprehensions, emphasising the irreplaceable role of human interaction in education. Mrs Robinson stated, "AI cannot replace a human relationship or interaction. Only a human can teach another human how to do certain things." Similarly, Mr Ward warned that while AI might alleviate some

of the administrative burdens on teachers, it raises significant safeguarding concerns due to its inability to understand or respond with human emotion. Mr Corder highlighted additional challenges, noting potential issues with behaviour management and the disappearance of some jobs, though he remained optimistic that creative industries are likely to remain largely unaffected. Mrs Wheeler added that teaching involves far more than delivering lessons, explaining that while AI might make certain tasks easier, it could also make the job market more competitive.

Overall, both students and staff raised concerns about the physical safety, mental health, emotional well-being and quality of education that could be impacted by a fully AI-driven school. These reflections underline the importance of human oversight in education, highlighting that technology can support - but never fully replace - the empathy, guidance and relationships that teachers provide.



Many students made their feelings towards AI very clear!

During the day, we held a press conference with Smithdon's Head teacher Mrs Gibbins in which questions were answered thoughtfully. "We encourage the use of AI to help manage workload for teachers." However, she emphasised that teaching is ultimately a personal profession. "Teaching is about getting to know your students, which AI cannot do. It takes a human to guide an AI bot - without humans, AI would be lost. How could it ever replace us? As an English teacher, I don't need AI to write letters or articles, my main use for it is checking information. But when it comes to human interactions, I have concerns. At the moment, AI is not very effective in this area, although it is constantly evolving and improving. Teaching is about the relationships you build with students and truly getting to know them - something AI is simply not capable of. That said, AI can play a supportive role in safeguarding by alerting us to potential issues and making us more aware of certain situations. In my lifetime, I would hope that AI never completely takes over schools, although I do anticipate its use will continue to increase. I also have concerns about exams moving entirely online, as AI's

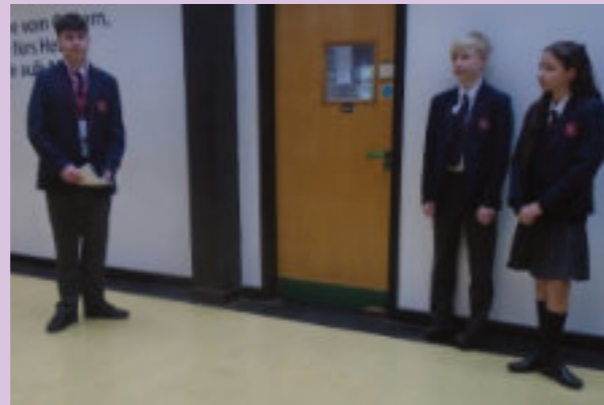
ability to learn writing styles could introduce new opportunities for cheating. While my understanding of AI's environmental impact is limited, I am aware that the massive supercomputers storing vast amounts of online information - often located in deserts and large data centres - do contribute to global warming and other environmental challenges. This highlights that while AI has potential benefits in education, there are still significant ethical practical and ecological considerations to address. The future use of AI is inevitable and it could lead to a reduction in certain jobs, as there are areas where AI can perform tasks in place of a person. With unemployment already an ongoing concern, this has the potential to worsen the situation. On the positive side, AI can speed up processes, increase efficiency and help move us forward as a civilisation. Ultimately, how we use AI will depend on human imagination and creativity, which can guide it in the right direction. Like any technology, AI comes with both benefits and drawbacks, and it is important to balance the positives with the potential negatives."

Safety and AI Limitations

"How would AI help against a school shooter?" - a question asked by Year 9 Chloe which highlights the serious concerns surrounding AI's ability to respond to real-life emergencies. While AI can be programmed to detect risks, monitor behaviour, and send alerts, it cannot experience fear, empathy, or moral judgement. These human qualities are often essential in high-pressure situations, such as fires, violent incidents, or natural disasters, where quick thinking, instinct and emotional awareness can save lives. It cannot replace the presence of trained adults who can make decisions, comfort students and take immediate action. In critical moments, human judgement and emotional understanding remain vital, reinforcing the idea that AI should act as a tool to assist, rather than replace, people in ensuring school safety.



Year 9 reporters scoured the school and asked insightful questions, gathered information and played a key role in leading the investigation.



Conclusion

Overall, students expressed concerns about their physical safety, mental health, emotional well-being, the quality of their education and their future careers. These concerns highlight the complex impact that AI could have on schools, extending beyond academic performance to the broader social and emotional environment. While AI may offer efficiency, reduce teacher workloads and assist with admin tasks, it cannot replicate the human qualities essential for teaching - empathy, emotional guidance and relationship-building. Teachers like Mrs Robinson and Mr Ward emphasised that certain aspects of learning and safeguarding rely on human presence and that without it, both students' well-being and behaviour management could be compromised.

Furthermore, the introduction of AI raises questions about the future of work and student preparedness. While some sectors, such as the creative industries, may remain relatively unaffected, others could face disruption, creating increased competition and uncertainty for students entering the job

market. Voices from the students themselves, like Jamie, Ethan and Sam, reflect both fear and frustration, fear for their safety and education, and frustration at the apparent lack of control over these technological changes. Their concerns remind us that any implementation of AI in schools must be carefully balanced, prioritising human oversight and ethical safeguards alongside technological benefits.

In conclusion, the investigation underscores that while AI can play a supportive role in education, it cannot replace the critical human elements of teaching, mentoring and protecting students. Schools must ensure that the drive for efficiency does not come at the cost of students' safety, emotional health, or educational quality and that students' voices remain central to decisions about the future of learning.

Even though the news that AI was taking over schools turned out to be false, it sparked important discussions and made us think carefully about how AI is shaping the way we learn and interact with technology today.



Ms Wright was interviewed by Pam and Phoebe about her perspective on the use of AI in schools.



In this exciting and inspiring event, Sarah Roberts shared stories from the work she's done around the world to protect wildlife. Students learned how they could get involved and discovered fascinating facts about some of the wildest jobs out there from her book, *Wild Apprentice*.

During the festival, a range of engaging events took place to celebrate reading and creativity. One highlight was the annual 500-word story competition, with this year's entries inspired by the works of Roald Dahl, encouraging students to channel their imaginative and distinctive styles resulting in plenty of imaginative twists, unexpected endings and the occasional suspiciously chocolate-themed plot.

Another popular activity was the 'Masked Reader,' organised by Miss Howlett, where form groups watched and listened to a disguised member of staff read an extract from a book each morning for a week, attempting to guess their identity. Voices were analysed, guesses were debated and wild accusations were made - though not always correctly!

Our students also had the opportunity to take part in the 'Date with a Book' activity, giving them the chance to discover new reads (with far fewer awkward silences than a real date). Meanwhile, some classes were lucky enough to watch authors live during World Book Day week via Scholastic Live, gaining inspiration straight from the experts themselves.

The festival may be over, but the stories and inspiration will linger - here's to even more creativity at next year's festival!



Love stories, poems and creative writing? Come and join our Writing Club every Wednesday lunchtime in the library! We use the Young Writers competitions as inspiration, giving students the chance to develop their writing skills, share ideas and support each other's creativity.

Students' stories and poems are entered into competitions, with the exciting opportunity to be published in a Young Writers anthology book. Whether you're an experienced writer or just starting out, everyone is welcome!

Here is a fantastic example by Hayden in Year 11 whose poem was entered in the "empowered" book in 2025.

We were all very impressed by Hayden's poem which is written in a narrative, lyrical style, using quatrains with an AABB rhyme scheme that gives it a rhythmic, almost ballad-like quality.

The Silent Knight

A knight in armour, strong and true
With dreams of love, a heart he knew,
He swore to serve, to fight, to stay,
Until the dawn of a fateful day.

A lady fair, with eyes like night,
Had captured him in love's soft light,
But fickle fate, a cruel jest,
Placed doubt upon her gentle chest.

For when the prince with crown and grace,
Appeared before her sweet embrace,
The Knight's heart shattered, torn apart,
As she chose him over his brave heart.

With sword in hand, he left that place,
His tears unseen, a cold disgrace,
The woman's love was but a dream,
Now lost within the prince's gleam.

The knight rides on through endless pain,
The whispers of her name remain,
For in his heart, he'll always be,
The man she loved, before the prince could see.

The prince and the Queen danced in light,
While shadows held the silent knight,
A guardian sworn, his heart unseen,
A nameless ghost where love had been.

SCIENCE WEEK

From Moss to Magnets: Science in Action



Students at Smithdon took science beyond the classroom this term, leading an exciting programme of hands-on activities to celebrate British Science Week.

A group of our enthusiastic Year 9 students visited local primary schools, including Fritcham, Snettisham, Ingoldisthorpe, Dersingham and Hunstanton. They delivered interactive workshops designed to spark curiosity and foster a love of science among younger pupils.

Accompanied by our Science teacher Miss Soper, the students organised a variety of engaging experiments. Activities included a "moss safari," where pupils used microscopes to explore tiny organisms and a mini light show demonstrating how lenses and coloured ray boxes work. Other sessions explored magnetism through compass-making, static electricity using spinning straws and electrical conductivity by building circuits and even drawing graphite pathways to light an LED.

Meanwhile, back at Smithdon, the whole school embraced this year's British Science Week theme, "Curiosity: What's Your Question?"

Throughout the week, students participated in a range of activities, including a poster competition, research into life and work in Antarctica and close-up investigations using



microscopes to examine everyday materials such as cobwebs and pet hair.

A group of our Year 8 students also represented the school at the West Norfolk Academies Trust STEM "Race to the Line" challenge, hosted at Springwood High School. The event challenged participants to design, build and race their own CO₂-powered model cars, combining engineering skills with teamwork and innovation.

Smithdon High School has proudly supported British Science Week for over a decade, using it as an opportunity to explore science beyond the curriculum and highlight the wide range of careers it can lead to. As Mrs Pike noted, the week continues to be "a fantastic way to inspire curiosity and show students where science can take them."





Driving the Future

Students Design Autonomous Vehicles

It was full throttle at Smithdon as 60 of our Year 10 students swapped pens for programming during the Smallpiece Trust Autonomous Vehicle Challenge.

Working in small teams, students designed, built and coded their own self-driving vehicles using LEGO Spike kits and iPads. Their cars had to navigate tracks, avoid obstacles and respond to different scenarios, although a few vehicles clearly believed the 'scenic route' was part of the brief! But it wasn't just about engineering. Each team also pitched their design, combining technical skill with teamwork and marketing flair.

Miss Fairweather, who leads Careers and ICT, said, "Students were split into teams and selected their own roles, competing to design, build and code a working autonomous vehicle. It had to be programmed to navigate, avoid obstacles and respond to scenarios which is no small task." She added, "Not only that, but they also had to pitch their designs, focusing on teamwork, marketing and understanding real-world engineering problems."

Highlighting the impact of the day, "Rather than just learning theory, students can see how Maths, Science and Computing work together to solve complex, real problems. The benefits are wide-ranging," she continued. "They develop teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking and communication skills. It also builds confidence and resilience, because students have to test ideas, learn from mistakes and adapt their designs."

The event proved such a success that the Trust will return in May with a wind turbine challenge, giving the rest of Year 10 the chance to test their engineering talents.

As Miss Fairweather put it "Events like this spark interest in STEM and help students see the exciting career pathways available to them."

Full speed ahead indeed!



Golden Ticket Celebration

Rewarding Excellence and Effort

Our Year 7-10 Golden Ticket Reward Celebration was a fantastic way to recognise the outstanding effort, attitude, and achievements of our students. Selected students were invited to a special morning of fun as a reward for consistently demonstrating our school values. The celebration began with a delicious breakfast of pastries and drinks, giving everyone the chance to relax, chat, and enjoy some well-earned treats with friends.

After breakfast, the fun continued with a range of games that sparked plenty of laughter and friendly competition. A highlight of the morning was the opportunity to unwind and enjoy some time playing on the Switch, which was a big hit with everyone involved. The Golden Ticket celebration not only offered a fun morning, but also acknowledged the hard work, positive behaviour, and commitment shown by our students throughout the term. We are incredibly proud of all those who earned an invitation and look forward to celebrating even more successes in the future.

Well done to all our Golden Ticket winners – you truly earned it!



PERFORMING ARTS TRIPS

At the end of last year, we were thrilled to take our Year 7 and Year 8 students on two unforgettable trips: a pantomime and a circus performance. We love giving our students these opportunities, not only to enjoy world-class performances but also to step away from the classroom and experience something new and exciting. Trips like these spark creativity, inspire curiosity, and create lasting memories, allowing students to come together, share in the magic of live theatre, and explore the arts in ways that enrich their learning beyond the curriculum.

Smithdon High School students ended the Autumn term on a magical note with a trip to the pantomime, celebrating their successes in sparkling style. In a now-annual tradition, 81 Year 7 students visited the Princess Theatre to enjoy a dazzling production of Aladdin, where their “wishes were granted” on stage.

“At Smithdon, we believe cultural enrichment is vitally important, and we make sure students have plenty of opportunities to engage with the arts throughout their time here,” said Head of Drama Mrs Proctor, who organised the trip.

This year’s production starred Sam Littlewood as Aladdin and Josh Rettie as Widow Twankey. Some performers also had links to Smithdon, including dancers from the Rollason Stage School who have cast past and present students from the school.

Mrs Proctor, joined by Head of Year 7 Ms Moat, Year 7 Pastoral Manager Mrs Collins, and Drama Teacher Miss Brown, said: “The pantomime is a fantastic way to end the school term on a festive note while giving our students new experiences and learning opportunities.” She added, “As staff and students, we love it so much that when 2026 comes... ‘We’ll have to visit again then, won’t we?’”



High-flyers and synchronised swimmers took centre stage as our students celebrated the end of term with a circus-themed outing. Our Year 8 cohort visited the historic Hippodrome in Great Yarmouth to experience a spectacular circus performance. The show featured a diverse lineup of international artistes, including aerialists and acrobats, as well as the famous synchronised swimming display, Water Spectacle, Giant Fountains and comedy from Jack Jay and Ben Langley.

Although this was the inaugural trip, Smithdon has a proud history of exposing students to the performing arts “Trips like this are part of our performing arts programme, giving students the chance to see a show every year they are at Smithdon,” said Assistant Headteacher Ms Moat, who accompanied the students along with our Pastoral Manager Mrs Collins. “From the local pantomime in Year 7, to theatre trips in Norwich and West End shows in London for Years 9 to 11, we aim to offer a variety of enriching experiences.” She added: “It’s important for students to come together as a year group to enjoy exciting trips and experience things they wouldn’t normally see.”

Fundraising

Egg-citing Fun for a Cause!



Emily was thrilled with her giant Easter egg- so big, in fact, that she may need a team of helpers to finish it!

Emily, a student in Year 8, was the lucky winner of this year’s Easter Egg raffle. Tickets were on sale throughout the day, building excitement across the school and the draw took place at lunchtime on 19 March.

The raffle was a great success, with many students and staff taking part. Most importantly, £215 from the ticket sales will be donated to the RNLI, helping to support their vital lifesaving work at sea.

Red Noses, Big Hearts!

On 20 March, we held a non-uniform day in support of Red Nose Day and are thrilled to announce that we raised £297 for this incredible charity. A huge thank you to everyone who donated and helped make a difference - your generosity will go a long way in supporting the important work Red Nose Day does to help those in need.

SPORTS

Celebrating skill, teamwork and success

Badminton

Huge congratulations to our KS3 and KS4 badminton teams for their fantastic performance at the regional finals held at Cambridge University. Competing against some of the strongest schools in the region, the standard of play was exceptionally high, making every match a real challenge.

Our players showed outstanding determination, teamwork and resilience throughout the tournament. They rose to the occasion brilliantly, staying competitive in every fixture and securing some impressive and well-earned victories along the way.

Beyond the results, the teams demonstrated excellent sportsmanship and represented the school with pride and professionalism. Their commitment and effort both on and off the court were truly commendable.

A brilliant achievement all round - well done to everyone involved!



Serve, Smash, Soar - Year 9 ruled the court!



One last smash, one final soar - Year 11 leave their mark!



WNAT Kin-Ball Action

It was fantastic for Smithdon to proudly host the WNAT Kin-Ball Tournament, bringing together students for an exciting day of sport, teamwork and competition.

Throughout the tournament, everyone played amazingly. It was brilliant to watch teams working together, communicating clearly and developing tactics to score points. The energy, determination and sportsmanship on display truly captured the spirit of Kin-Ball, with every match showcasing collaboration and resilience.

A huge well done to all of the students who took part, you represented your schools brilliantly and should be very proud of your efforts. Thank you to Springwood High School, Marshland High School and Terrington St Clement High School for visiting and helping to make the event such a success. Your enthusiasm and teamwork made it a truly memorable tournament. We look forward to hosting again in the future!



That moment you realise the ball has chosen you!

CRAFT CLUB

Looking for something creative to do at lunchtime? Come along to Craft Club!

Where: Mrs Dibble's Room

When: Every Monday lunchtime

With: Mrs Smith

Next term, we will be trying knitting and crocheting.

Everyone is welcome! The club offers a relaxed, friendly atmosphere - feel free to bring a friend and join in.



Attendance Matters

If you're in Year 11, this is your moment. Your GCSE exams are approaching and showing up every day to school can make all the difference. Missing a lesson might feel small, but it can mean missing explanations, practice, or tips that make tricky topics click. Being present keeps you in the routine, builds confidence and helps you feel prepared for both lessons and exams. Revision sessions are especially important - they're designed to help you tackle difficult topics, learn exam techniques and ask questions in a supportive environment. Turning up to these sessions could be the difference between feeling unsure and walking into your exam feeling prepared.

But it's not just about Year 11. Students in the other year groups should also aim for strong attendance. Attending lessons consistently now helps you form good habits that will make Year 11 and future exams, much easier to manage. Building a habit of showing up, engaging and asking questions sets you up for success when it really matters.

Whether you're revising for exams or learning new topics, good attendance is one of the simplest ways to give yourself the best chance. Make each day count - your future self will thank you!

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

Year 7: Mr Mcquade

Year 8: Mrs Wheeler

Year 9: Mrs Pike

Year 10: Mrs Robinson

Year 11: Mr Corder

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

Facebook: Smithdon High School

**We wish you all a very happy
Easter! We look forward to
welcoming you back on 13 April.**