

Issue No 09  
30<sup>th</sup> January  
2026



**2 February**

Wyre and Fylde  
Dance Competition

**3 February**

CyberFest Tuesday

**6 February**

School Musical Tech  
Rehearsal - all day

Year 9 – DTP & MEN  
& ACWY  
vaccinations

**9 - 12 February**

Children's Mental  
Health week

**10 & 11 February**

School Musical  
6:30 for 7:00pm

**Thursday 12  
February**

New York Trip

School Musical  
5:30 for 6:00pm

Schools closes for  
half term

**23 February**

Year 8 & 9 NYO at  
Tower Ballroom

**24 - 27 February**

NEA GCSE Food  
Exams

**24 February**

Year 9 Prosper  
Careers Event  
Marine Hall,  
Fleetwood

**27 February**

Year 7 Author Visit



# Millfield MESSENGER

Belvedere Road, Thornton Cleveleys, FY5 5DG

Telephone 01253 865929

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you to all parents who supported their child at our Year 11 Progress Evening. For the first time in our Parent Voice feedback, 100% of parents said they would recommend Millfield to other parents. This is an incredible endorsement of our school. As we move closer to the summer examinations, please be assured that our staff are here to offer support, guidance, and reassurance to both you and your child; always reach out to us if you are worried or concerned.



Receiving the email from the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson, was an incredibly proud moment for the team. The correspondence confirmed that Millfield is among the very best schools nationally, reflecting the dedication of our students, the expertise of our staff, and the strong partnership we share with families. While we celebrate this exceptional recognition, the team remains focused on continuous improvement and delivering an ambitious, inclusive, high-quality education for every child.

We were delighted to welcome Lancashire County Council's YOLO theatre-in-education performance for our Year 9 students. The session delivered a powerful and thought-provoking message around passenger responsibility, seatbelt safety, peer pressure, and the real-life consequences of a fatal road collision. Students engaged maturely and respectfully, taking away important lessons that will stay with them far beyond the classroom.

Our performing arts students have also been working incredibly hard. The cast of High School Musical took part in an engaging acting through song workshop led by local performer and recent Troy Bolton, Lewis Garside. Through practical, industry-focused activities, students developed their vocal expression, characterisation, and performance skills. The professionalism and enthusiasm shown by the cast was fantastic to see.

We are also incredibly proud to share that we were presented with the Lancashire Learning for Life Gold Award plaque. We are the first school in Lancashire to achieve this prestigious recognition. Jen McDonald from Lancashire County Council was extremely impressed with our submission, and this achievement reflects the strength of our provision and the values we promote every day.

Looking ahead, we are excited to celebrate World Book Day 2026 by once again sharing the joy of reading across school. This also extends into our community, and we will be hiding children's books around the local area for children of all ages to find and enjoy. Book donations are gratefully received by 12th February. Thank you in advance for supporting this wonderful initiative.

You can keep up to date with all our news and events by following us on X  
[@millfieldhighsc](https://twitter.com/millfieldhighsc).

Warm regards

Mrs N. Regan - Headteacher

LIMITED SPACES AVAILABLE

# Adventure of a Lifetime

Millfield's school trip to Africa 2027

# KENYA

Discovering the wonders of Kenya, one step at a time.

## Volunteering Roles



3 Star Hotel Stay



Three meals a day



Activities Included



Tours & Transport



Tour Guide



Sight Seeing

**£2,465**  
\*fundraising and sponsorship will help reduce this cost.

**8 NIGHTS**

Travel 24th July 2027  
Deposits paid: 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Call African Adventures For More Info:  
023 8178 0957

Email For More Info:  
info@africanadventures.co.uk  
s.taylor@millfield.lancs.sch.uk

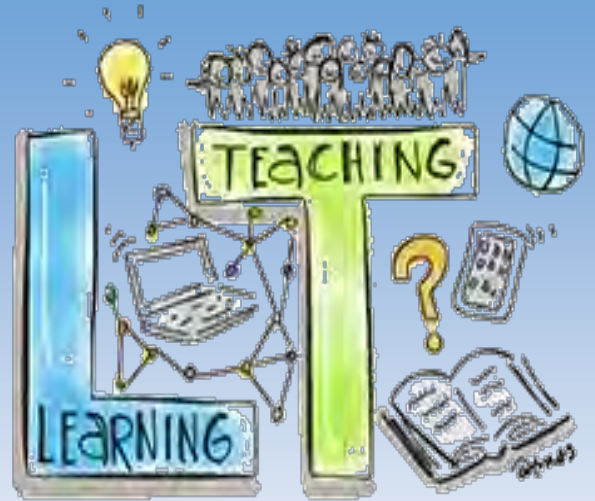
African Adventures is a unique travel company, partnered with 34 schools in developing areas of Ghana, Kenya and Zanzibar, and organise life-changing trips for people who want to help bring our work to life.

We pride ourselves on our ethical, sustainable volunteering model that puts our partner schools at the heart of everything we do. They tell us what help they want, and we recruit volunteers from the UK and beyond to make it happen. Whether it's building a new classroom or installing new sanitation facilities, we put their needs first.



# BEYOND THE SCREEN: THE 2026 CLASSROOM SHIFT

As we move through the 2025/26 academic year, the "vibe" in our hallways is changing. While 2024 was the year of AI experimentation, 2026 is becoming the year of "Human-Centric Learning." Schools across the country, including those here in Lancashire, are navigating a fascinating balance between high-tech tools and high-contact teaching.



## 1. The "Oracy" Revolution

One of the biggest trends this year isn't a new app, but a return to the power of the spoken word. With "Oracy" now a central pillar of the curriculum. There is a growing emphasis at Millfield on teaching students how to articulate their thoughts, debate respectfully, and present ideas clearly. Research shows that pupils who can "talk their way through" a problem are more resilient and perform better in written exams.

## 2. AI: From "Novelty" to "Workmate"

The panic over AI "cheating" has largely been replaced by practical use. The Department for Education's 2026 pilot of AI tutoring tools for disadvantaged pupils is currently making headlines. In the classrooms here at Millfield, teachers are increasingly using AI as an assistant to help maximise teaching and learning.

## 3. The Rise of Metacognition

"Thinking about thinking" is no longer just for university philosophy departments. Schools are now explicitly teaching metacognition. Students here at Millfield are being taught to recognise their own learning blocks. Instead of saying "I can't do this," students are being coached to ask, "Which strategy did I use last time that worked?" This shift toward "self-regulated learning" is proving to be a game-changer for student confidence.

## 4. "Belonging" over "Attendance"

The national focus on attendance has evolved. While the government has tightened rules on persistent absence, schools are finding that the best way to get students back into the classroom is by focusing on belonging. By prioritising mental health and creating "small wins" for students who find school challenging we remain one of the best attended schools nationally.

## What to Watch in 2026:

**Mobile Phone Policies:** Most schools have now fully implemented "away for the day" phone policies to reduce digital distractions and bullying.

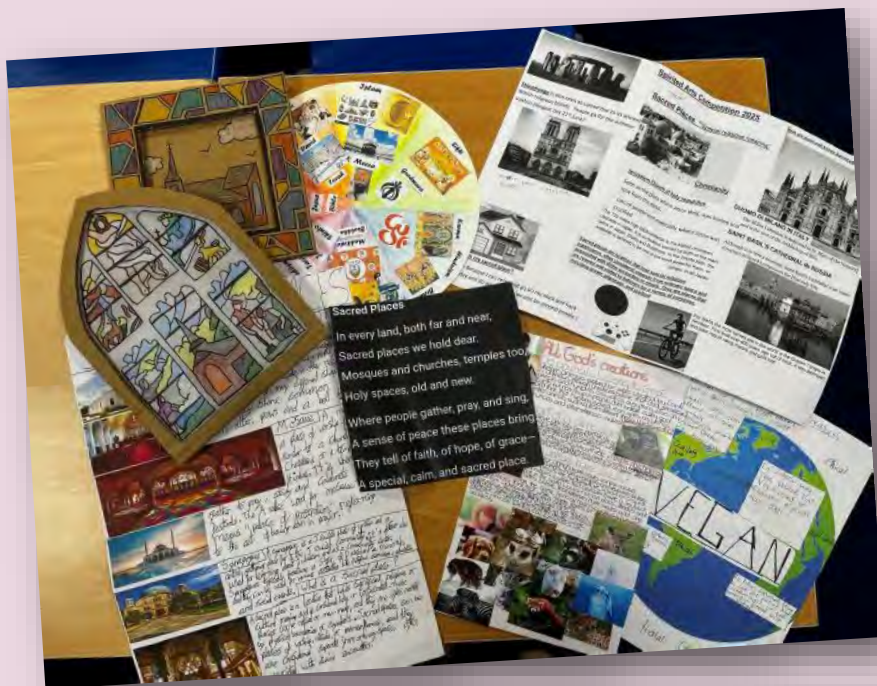
**Green Careers:** With the new STEM & Careers focused curriculum, students are being prepared for a job market that doesn't even exist yet.

**"The goal for 2026 isn't just to catch up on lost learning, but to build a new kind of student: one who is digitally literate, verbally confident, and emotionally resilient."**

# CONGRATULATIONS



GO TO OUR STUDENTS IN HISTORY WHO WERE ASKED TO CREATE A MILLFIELD MAGNA CARTA, AND TO AGE IT TO LOOK LIKE AN OLD PARCHMENT.

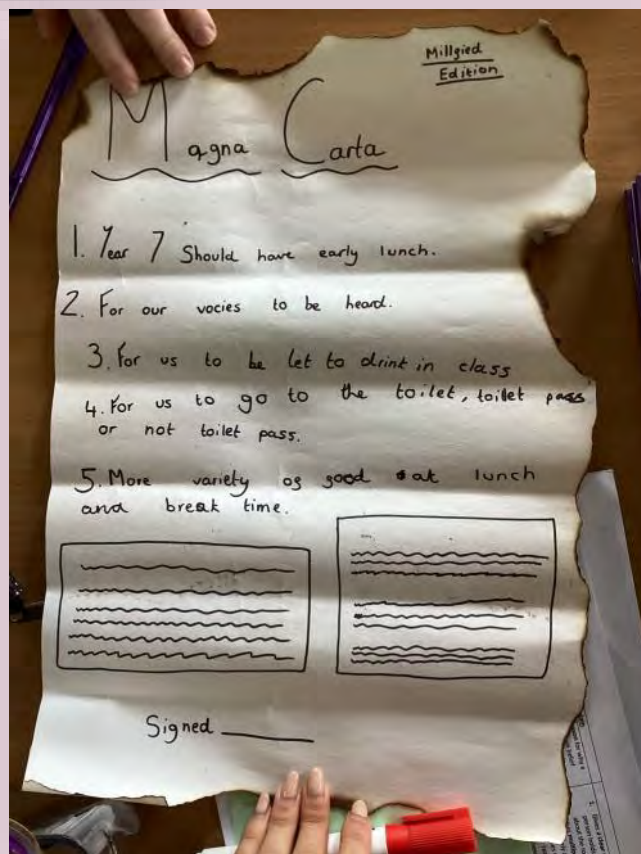


The **Magna Carta**, meaning “Great Charter” in Latin, is one of the most important documents in English history. It was signed in **1215** by **King John of England** after many of his barons rebelled against his unfair rule. The king had been raising heavy taxes, losing wars, and abusing his power, which made the nobles angry. They forced him to agree to rules that limited what he could do.

The Magna Carta stated that **everyone, including the king, must obey the law**. This was a new and powerful idea at the time. It also protected certain rights, such as the right to a **fair trial**, protection from **unlawful imprisonment**, and limits on taxation without agreement. Although it mainly helped the barons at first, its principles later influenced rights for all people.

King John did not keep his promises and the charter was reissued several times after his death. Over time, it became a symbol of **freedom and justice**. The Magna Carta influenced later documents such as the **English Bill of Rights** and even the **United States Constitution**.

Today, it is seen as the foundation of modern **democracy and human rights** around the world.



# EQUALITY

Noun:  
the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities

## LGBT+ History Month: Celebrating Diversity, Equality and Progress

Every February, schools across the UK mark LGBT+ History Month, a time to celebrate the achievements of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, recognise their contributions to society, and reflect on the importance of equality and inclusion.

At Millfield, LGBT+ History Month has been the theme in assemblies this week, where students have been learning about why the month exists and why representation matters. Assemblies have highlighted inspiring figures from history, culture, science and sport, showing how LGBT+ people have helped shape the world we live in today. These assemblies also encourage everyone to think about kindness, respect and standing up against discrimination.

LGBT+ History Month is not just about the past - it is also about the present and the future. It reminds us that everyone deserves to feel safe, valued and accepted for who they are. By learning, talking and listening, our school community can continue to build an environment where diversity is celebrated, and everyone belongs.

### Protected Characteristics

Year 8 students have been learning about the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010 in their RSE lessons. Understanding these protections helps students recognise why fairness and equal treatment are essential in school and beyond.



In Year 7 Spanish, students are learning the verb "tener" using indefinite articles.



Our Year 8 students working hard on their periodic table assessment.



# LOOKING AFTER OUR MINDS: SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS



At Millfield, we believe that looking after our mental health is just as important as our physical health. We want all our students to feel supported and know where to turn if they're struggling, and we also recognise the vital role parents play in this.

For our young people, there are several fantastic resources available. Kooth <https://www.kooth.com/> offers free, safe, and anonymous online mental wellbeing support. You can chat with qualified counsellors, read articles written by young people, and access self-help tools – all from your phone, tablet, or computer.

YoungMinds <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/> is another excellent website packed with information and support for young people's mental health. They have sections on feelings, mental health conditions, and how to get help. Their Parents Helpline (0808 802 5544) is also a valuable resource for parents who are concerned about their child's mental wellbeing.

For parents, understanding and supporting your child's mental health can sometimes feel challenging. Websites like Mind <https://www.mind.org.uk/> offer information and support for adults, including how to support young people. Remember, you're not alone, and seeking advice is a sign of strength.

## DROP IN SESSIONS

with our Primary Mental Health Workers Team

- Aimed at Parents, Children and Young people and professionals seeking advice around Mental health
- Including information around signposting and best services that meet your Mental Health needs

**THORNTON YMCA**  
FY5 3SX  
&  
**POULTON LIBRARY**  
FY6 7DH

**2:00-4:30PM**

Thornton YMCA	Poulton Library
2nd October	2nd April
6th November	7th May
4th December	4th June
5th February	2nd July
5th March	6th August

Within school, please don't hesitate to reach out to your child's form tutor, the pastoral team, or Mr. Grayston, if you have any concerns. We are here to listen and offer support. The NHS SHINE service in school also provides a counselling service for students struggling with their wellbeing.

Let's work together to create a school community where everyone feels empowered to look after their mental health and well-being.

**Please have a look at the drop-in sessions. These are to support families who are seeking advice around mental health and take place at Thornton YMCA and Poulton Library.**

### Create a 'good mood' playlist

Try using music to help boost your mood. Listening to music releases endorphins in the brain which can help put us in a positive mood!



Lancashire  
Parent Carer Forum

Lancashire Parent Carer Forum

# Dec 25 - Jun 26 Webinars



## Empowering SEND families from Lancashire

[News & Events | Lancashirepcf](#)

This link will take you to the calendar of upcoming events (below Engagement). Select the date and Webinar you are interested in and follow the instructions.

E.g. Short Breaks webinar on 10th February

< February 10



Multiple Dates

Let's Talk - Short Breaks  
Feb 10, 2026, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM  
Webinar

A representative from Short Breaks will join us to outline what they offer and the benefits

RSVP

Feb

10<sup>th</sup> - 10am  
11<sup>th</sup> - 2pm  
12<sup>th</sup> - 7pm

**Short Breaks**  
Lisa Taylor LCC

Mar

9<sup>th</sup> - 7pm  
11<sup>th</sup> - 10am  
13<sup>th</sup> - 2pm

**Local Offer**  
Local Offer

Apr

14<sup>th</sup> - 2pm  
15<sup>th</sup> - 10am  
16<sup>th</sup> - 7pm

**Support at School**  
OAP & Reasonable  
Adjustments

May

11<sup>th</sup> - 2pm  
13<sup>th</sup> - 7pm  
15<sup>th</sup> - 10am

**Community Activities**  
Inclusion Development  
Officer & DCSO

[www.lancashireparentcarerforum.org.uk](http://www.lancashireparentcarerforum.org.uk)



@ Millfield



UP UP AND AWAY!

STEM learning has been buzzing with excitement recently as students have been getting hands-on with a range of creative and investigative activities. This week, students had great fun designing and making their own aeroplanes before testing how different shapes and designs affected flight distance. They compared wing size, shape, and balance, learning first-hand how small changes can make a big difference — just like real engineers and scientists do.

These activities are a fantastic way for students to develop problem-solving skills, teamwork, and resilience, as they test ideas, analyse results, and improve their designs. The enthusiasm and curiosity shown by our students has been wonderful to see.

Next week, we will be turning our attention to plants and their structure, exploring how different parts of a plant are adapted for their roles. Students will investigate roots, stems, and leaves, linking structure to function and gaining a deeper understanding of how plants survive and grow.

The following week, we will be diving into circuits and fruit clocks, where students will explore basic electrical circuits and discover how chemical energy in fruit can be used to generate electricity. This exciting investigation combines science, technology, and engineering in a memorable and engaging way.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) plays a vital role in helping students understand the world around them and prepares them with essential skills for the future. Through practical investigations and real-world challenges, we aim to inspire curiosity, creativity, and confidence in our young scientists and engineers.

We look forward to sharing more of our STEM learning adventures in the coming weeks!

Mrs A McRoberts, Head of STEM

## REVISION TECHNIQUES

### Build up writing speed.

- Writing in an exam is different to writing in class where you are (usually) under less pressure.
- Practice building up your writing speed by speed writing.
- Find a short question from a past exam question or make one up yourself.
- Set the alarm on your watch/phone for 5 minutes. See how much you can write in 5 minutes. You will be surprised (in a good way).
- This is not an activity that can be done in front of the TV. You need somewhere quiet so you get used to the exam environment and to really focus on your writing.
- You will quickly build up an internal clock so you will know instinctively what 5 minutes writing feels like.

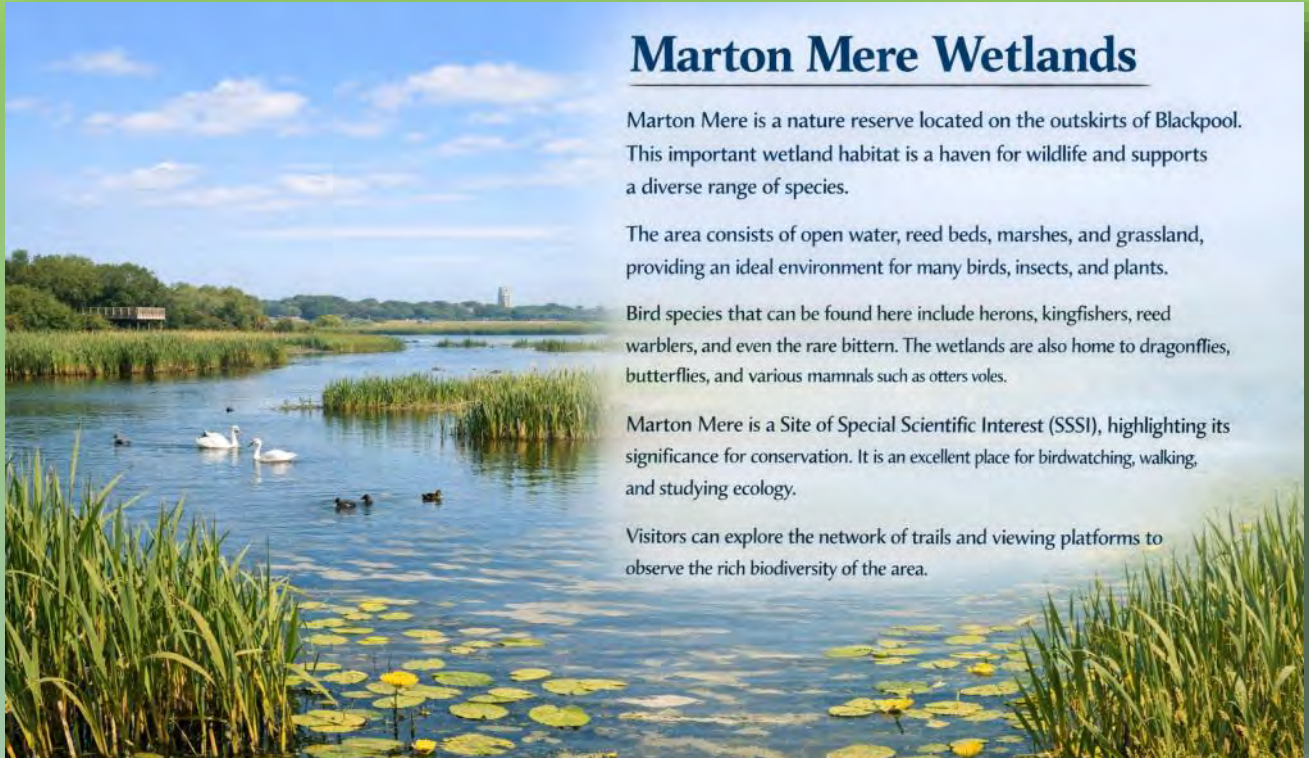
Sports coaches use the phrase: "Failing to prepare is preparing to fail."



# eco club



places to visit



## Marton Mere Wetlands

Marton Mere is a nature reserve located on the outskirts of Blackpool. This important wetland habitat is a haven for wildlife and supports a diverse range of species.

The area consists of open water, reed beds, marshes, and grassland, providing an ideal environment for many birds, insects, and plants.

Bird species that can be found here include herons, kingfishers, reed warblers, and even the rare bittern. The wetlands are also home to dragonflies, butterflies, and various mammals such as otters and voles.

Marton Mere is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), highlighting its significance for conservation. It is an excellent place for birdwatching, walking, and studying ecology.

Visitors can explore the network of trails and viewing platforms to observe the rich biodiversity of the area.

## WETLANDS, HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY

World Wetlands Day  
2 February 2026

### LIFE THRIVES IN WETLANDS.

- Wetlands are rich reservoirs of biodiversity – with 40% of the world’s plant and animal species depending on them.
- Traditional knowledge includes ecological monitoring through signs in flora and fauna, rotational harvesting and taboos that protect certain species or areas. These culturally rooted practices have helped maintain ecological balance and resilience, ensuring that wetlands continue to thrive for both people and wildlife.
- Wetland dependent species such as fish, waterbirds and turtles are in serious decline, with 25% threatened with extinction. Since 1970, 81% of inland wetland species populations and 36% of coastal and marine species have declined.
- A pivotal moment for global ecosystem restoration and conservation was the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in December 2022. The agreement contained four goals and 23 targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 across terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine ecosystems, focusing on areas important for biodiversity and ecosystem services, including wetlands.
- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework aligns with the strategic goals of the Convention on Wetlands and provides ambitious targets for restoration and conservation of inland water, coastal and marine ecosystems, which apply to wetlands, including: restore at least 30% of all degraded ecosystems; conserve at least 30% of land, waters and seas in protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures; and restore, maintain and enhance nature’s contributions to people.



### REGIONAL FLYWAY INITIATIVE

The Regional Flyway Initiative (RFI) in East Asia was launched in 2021 to mobilize \$3 billion in innovative and blended financing over ten years to protect, restore and manage a network of priority wetland ecosystems along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

The East Asian-Australasian migratory waterbird flyway supports 50 million migratory waterbirds from over 250 different populations. However, its wetlands are threatened and 36 of the migratory waterbird species are now globally threatened.

The RFI was created in partnership between the Asian Development Bank, the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, and Birdlife International. The initiative is grounded in science and followed a rigorous site selection process that has identified the 147 highest priority sites for migratory birds within participating countries. Having identified these sites, the RFI has consulted with participating governments to further refine the list of sites so a minimum of 50 early projects can be developed. For further information, see <https://eaaflyway.net/regional-flyway-initiative/>.

**“VALUING, CONSERVING, RESTORING AND FINANCING WETLANDS IS NO LONGER OPTIONAL – IT IS ESSENTIAL TO SECURING THE FOUNDATIONS OF LIFE ON EARTH.”**

World Wetlands Day  
2 February 2026



Wetlands and traditional knowledge:  
Celebrating cultural heritage



WorldWetlandsDay.org - #CelebratingWetlands - #WetlandsandCulturalHeritage

# We Celebrate Success!

Has your child done something out of school that merits celebrating? Won a competition? Taken part in a show? Performed an act of kindness that deserves a mention? Helped in their community?

If you feel your child has achieved or done something to celebrate, please email their Head of House and let us know! Include a picture if you can and you may feature in our next edition of 'We Celebrate Success!'

Rhinos - S.Wier@millfield.lancs.sch.uk

Sharks - A.Simpson@millfield.lancs.sch.uk

Hawks - C.McOmish@millfield.lancs.sch.uk

Bears - E.Covill@millfield.lancs.sch.uk



Year 9 students at our school recently took part in a First Aid training course facilitated by **I Can Save a Life**, as part of their Personal Development at Millfield. The session equipped students with essential, age-appropriate skills to recognise emergencies, respond confidently, and provide basic first aid. Through hands-on activities and expert guidance, students learned how their actions can make a real difference in keeping themselves and others safe. We are proud of their enthusiasm and commitment to learning these valuable life skills.



## HOT CHOCOLATE WITH THE HEAD

<b>Eleanor – Rose Dunnett</b>	<b>9 S6 CGR</b>
<b>Emily Henson</b>	<b>9 S6 CGR</b>
<b>Cordelia Hiney</b>	<b>9 H6 TYE</b>
<b>Isabelle Morton</b>	<b>9 H5 LJO</b>
<b>Mallory Rowe</b>	<b>9 R6 EAV</b>
<b>Lexie Kate Wilson</b>	<b>9 R5 GHI</b>

All of the above students have been nominated by Miss Cambridge for their excellent work in Dance

# MOCK INTERVIEW DAY

On Wednesday 14th January, we held our Mock Interview Day for our Year 10 students.

Representatives from HSBC, Atlas BFW Management, Victrex, the NHS, the DWP, Blackpool & the Fylde College and Blackpool Sixth Form College spent the day interviewing our students.

The feedback from the interviewers was extremely positive, with many commenting that the students were a real credit to our school. All students who took part should be very proud of themselves. Interviewers highlighted how polite the students were and were particularly impressed by the wide range of interests they discussed.

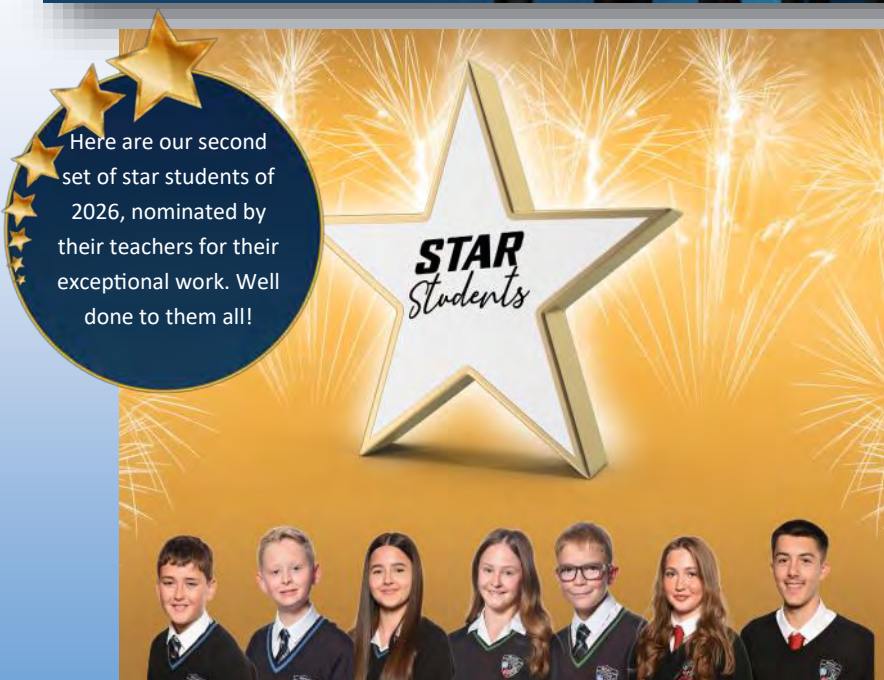
**Well done to everyone involved! We held a celebration assembly following Mock Interview Day, where our Star Students received a reward.**

*Well done!*



Congratulations to the following students:

*Finn Bowater*  
*Hollie Jayne-Hannam*  
*Lily Leeming*  
*Ruby Dodgson*  
*Poppy Sugden*  
*Alyssa Davies*  
*Mia Davies*  
*Darcey Hart*  
*Annabelle Wightman*  
*Leo Rossi*  
*Carl Loboda*  
*Daisy Brooks-Brennan*




## A selection of our Year 10 students during Mock Interview Day



Today we were presented with our Lancashire Learning for Life Gold Award plaque. We are incredibly proud to be the first school in Lancashire to achieve this award. Jen McDonald from Lancashire County Council was very impressed with our submission. A fantastic achievement!



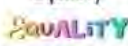
## KS4 January to February Half Term House Competitions



Department	Competition	Year Group	Details	Staff Contact	Date
Head of House	UNO House Showdown	All 	Get ready to shuffle, match, and shout "UNO!" in our ultimate House competition! Represent your House, outplay your opponents, and earn points in this fast-paced card battle. Who will be crowned the UNO Champion of the school?	Heads of Houses and House Leaders	Monday 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2026 in Miss Weir's room at lunchtime.
Maths	Solving equations	KS4	Solve the equations given out in your maths lesson	Mrs McOmish	These need to be completed by Friday 13th February.
Science	Quiz Time	KS4	A multiple-choice quiz based across the 3 sciences that they have covered in that time.	Miss Latham	These need to be completed by Friday 13th February.
English	Booklet Challenge	KS4	Who will come at the top of the leaderboard?	Miss Southern	These need to be completed by Friday 13th February.
PE	Football Competitions	All	Get involved in a 5 a side team to help support your House.	Mr Doxey and Sport Leaders	Details will be given by Mr Doxey on Monday morning slides and in the Sports hall.

## KS3 January to February Half Term House Competitions



Department	Competition	Year Group	Details	Staff Contact	Date
Head of House	UNO House Showdown	All 	Get ready to shuffle, match, and shout "UNO!" in our ultimate House competition! Represent your House, outplay your opponents, and earn points in this fast-paced card battle. Who will be crowned the UNO Champion of the school?	Heads of Houses and House Leaders	Monday 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2026 in Miss Weir's room at lunchtime.
MFL 	Postal del Futuro (Postcard from the Future)	KS3	It's the year 2050, and you're on holiday in a Spanish-speaking country — maybe Spain, Mexico, Argentina, or anywhere you like! <b>Create a postcard</b> showing what life is like there in the future. Include a picture and a message in Spanish.	Mr Hardy	Submit this by the 6 <sup>th</sup> February 2026.
PE	Football Competitions	All	Get involved in a 5 a side team to help support your House.	Mr Doxey and Sport Leaders	Details will be given by Mr Doxey on Monday morning slides & in the Sports hall.
Equality 	Year 7 Treasure Hunt	Yr7	Collect an entry form from your form teacher and fill in the answers which can be found on display boards around the building.	Mrs Fawcett	Submitted by 6 <sup>th</sup> February.

## House Leaderboard



3919

House Points



4074

House Points



3872

House Points



3809

House Points

We are nearing the end of our first half term of the year - there's not much in it - every point counts!

# RECOMMENDED READS

## “Escape Room”

### Week A's Library Book of the Week is 'Escape Room' by Christopher Edge.

Ami arrives at The Escape thinking it's just a game with puzzles and challenges before the time runs out. The host locks Ami and teammates inside the first room. What's happening? They must find the answer.



The latest mind-blowing novel from award-winning author Christopher Edge, *Escape Room* is a thrilling adventure that challenges readers to think about what they've done to save the world today.

When twelve-year-old Ami arrives at The Escape, she thinks it's just a game - the ultimate escape room with puzzles and challenges to beat before time runs out. Meeting her teammates,

Adjoa, Ibrahim, Oscar and Min, Ami learns from the Host that they have been chosen to save the world and they must work together to find the Answer. But as he locks them inside the first room, they quickly realise this is no ordinary game.

From a cavernous library of dust to an ancient Mayan tomb, a deserted shopping mall stalked by extinct animals to the command module of a spaceship heading to Mars, the perils of The Escape seem endless. Can Ami and her friends find the Answer before it's too late? With cover illustration by David Dean.

**This book is suitable for age 9 to 12 years.**

The National Year of Reading 2026 is the biggest campaign in a generation designed to help more people (re)discover the joy of reading and make it part of their everyday lives.

Reading expands our world and sharpens our minds, yet fewer people are making time to read. A Department for Education initiative, in collaboration with [the National Literacy Trust](#), the campaign aims to tackle the profound decline in reading enjoyment in the UK and reconnect people of all ages with reading as a relevant and immediately rewarding activity. The campaign asks the nation to Go All In on their passions and interests for 2026 and discover how reading can unlock the things they already love – be that music, football, baking, family-time, sci-fi, or ... anything.

## “A Little in Love”

### Week B's Library Book of the Week is 'A Little in Love' by Susan Fletcher.

As a young child Eponine never knew kindness, except once from her family's kitchen slave, Cosette. When at sixteen the girls' paths cross again and their circumstances are reversed, Eponine must decide what that friendship is worth, even though they've both fallen for the same boy. In the end, Eponine will sacrifice everything to keep true love alive.

Eponine tells the heart wrenching story of her own life of suffering and cruelty in this emotional roller coaster taken from Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. Brought up in poverty, from the youngest age possible Eponine has been sent out to steal and to lie and to cheat. But somehow, deep inside her, she knows there are better ways of living a life and higher human values to hold onto. Eponine's encounters with Cosette and Marius unlock the best emotions in her. Can she change despite the great cost to herself? A spell-binding story about one girl's search for inner peace.



**A Note from the Author, Susan Fletcher** 'A Little in Love is my first novel aiming to appeal to both adults and young adults. But Eponine's story contains many themes I've always been interested in as an adult fiction writer – identity, survival, solitude, the natural world, different forms of love and the brevity of life – all told by a feisty protagonist. To write of these themes – and of Eponine herself – for a wider readership was a sheer delight.'

**This book is suitable for young adults.**





MILLFIELD PERFORMING ARTS

*Presents*

Disney

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL JR.

MON 9 – THURS 12 FEBRUARY | MAIN HALL

GABRIELLA CAST 9TH MATINEE, 11TH EVENING  
TROY CAST 10TH EVENING, 12TH MATINEE

**TICKETS AVAILABLE NOW!**

@MILLFIELDHIGHSC

MILLFIELD SCIENCE & PERFORMING ARTS COLLEGE  
BELVEDERE ROAD, THORNTON CLEVELEYS, LANCASHIRE, FY55DG

SCAN QR CODE FOR TICKETS



*Be Exceptional*

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about GROUP CHATS

56

64

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Occurring through messaging apps, on social media and in online games, group chats are among the most popular ways that young people engage with their peers online. Involving, by definition, three or more individuals, these groups allow users to send messages, images and videos to everyone in one place. While they are useful for helping friends, people with shared interests or members of a club to communicate and coordinate activities, they can also leave young people feeling excluded and bullied – as well as providing opportunities for inappropriate content to be shared and viewed.

### BULLYING

Unkind comments or images which are purposely aimed at an individual can be shared freely in a group chat – allowing and often encouraging others to join in the bullying behaviour. If this content is shared in a group of their peers (especially a larger group), it serves to amplify the hurt, embarrassment, anxiety and isolation that the victim feels.

### SHARING GROUP CONTENT

It's important to remember that – while the content of the chat is private between those in the group – individual users can easily share a message, photo or video with others outside of the group or screenshot what's been posted. The risk of something your child intended as private becoming public (and potentially going viral) is higher if there are people they don't know well in the group.

### EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

This common issue with group chats can happen in several ways: starting a new group, for instance, but deliberately excluding a certain child. Likewise, the chat may take place on an app which one child doesn't have access to, meaning they can't be involved. A child can also feel isolated when a group chat is used to discuss or share images from an event that everyone else but them attended.

### UNKNOWN MEMBERS

Within larger group chats, it's more likely your child will be communicating with people they don't really know. These strangers may be friends of the host, but not necessarily friendly toward your child. It's wise for young people not to share personal details and stay aware that they have no control over the messages and images they share after they've put them online.

### INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some discussions in group chats may include inappropriate words, swearing and unsuitable images or videos. These could be viewed by your child if they are part of that group, whether they actively engage in it or not. Some chat apps have a disappearing message function, so your child may be unable to report something they've seen because it can only be viewed once or for a short time.

### NOTIFICATIONS AND FOMO

A drawback of large group chats is the sheer number of notifications. Every time someone in the group messages, your child's device will be 'pinged' with an alert; potentially, this could mean hundreds of notifications a day. Not only is this highly distracting, but young people's fear of missing out on the latest conversation results in increased screen time as they try to keep up with the chat.

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### CONSIDER OTHERS' FEELINGS

Group chats are often an arena for young people to gain social status. This could cause them to do or say things on impulse, which could upset others in the group. Encourage your child to consider how other people might feel if they engaged in this behaviour. If your child does upset a member of their group chat, support them to reach out, show empathy and apologise for their mistake.

### GIVE SUPPORT, NOT JUDGEMENT

Remind your child that they can confide in you if they feel bullied or excluded in a group chat, instead of responding to the person who's upset them. Validate their hurt feelings and help to put them back in control by discussing how they'd like to handle the situation. On a related note, you could also empower your child to speak up if they're in a chat where others are being picked on.

### BLOCK, REPORT AND LEAVE

If your child is in a chat where inappropriate content is being shared, advise them to block the users sending the material, report them to the host app or platform and exit the group. If any of this content could be putting a minor at risk, contact the police. Emphasise to your child that it's OK for them to simply leave any group chat that they don't feel comfortable being a part of.

### PRACTISE SAFE SHARING

In any online communication, it's vital for young people to be aware of what they're sharing and who might potentially see it. Discuss the importance of not revealing identifiable details like their address, their school or photos that they wouldn't like to be seen widely. Remind them that once something is shared in a group, they lose control of where it may end up and how it might be used.

### AVOID INVITING STRANGERS

Sadly, many individuals online hide their true identity to gain a child's trust – for example, to gather information on them, to exchange inappropriate content or to coax them into doing things they aren't comfortable with. Ensure your child understands why they shouldn't add people they don't know to a group chat – and, especially, to never accept a group chat invitation from a stranger.

### SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Having a phone or tablet bombarded with notifications from a group chat can be a massive irritation and distraction – especially if it's happening late in the evening. Explain to your child that they can still be part of the group chat, but that it would be healthier for them to turn off or mute the notifications and catch up with the conversation at a time which better suits them.

## Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



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Sources: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2018/feb/28/online-safety-consultant-researcher>, <https://www.nos.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/>



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