



BOURNEMOUTH SCHOOL

Headteacher's Half-termly Newsletter

Introduction

At the beginning of term, we welcomed one of our largest ever Year 12 cohorts. The total number of students on roll now exceeds 1320, which at times makes some of our corridors seem exceptionally narrow!

September is always an exceptionally busy month, not only due to the entrance tests, a number of parents' information evenings, helping students with their applications for medicine/dentistry/veterinary science and to Oxford and Cambridge, but also due to the need to welcome our new Year 7 and 12 students and establish expectations and routines. We trialled a different format for the Years 11 and 13 parents' information evening this half term, with a focus on developing resilience in the face of public examinations and offering parents a choice of workshops to attend. Parental feedback was very positive, and we intend to use a similar approach for future events.

In the last half term, we have completed the Windows 11 rollout, with further IT upgrades planned for the coming months. Work is currently underway to replace all of the fire doors across the site (the project will be completed by September 2026). New photocopiers/printers are being installed over the next week, and we hope by Christmas to have commissioned the replacement of all fluorescent lighting with energy efficient LED alternatives. We are also planning for the refurbishments of toilets, laboratories and technology workshops next summer.

As you will know, Richard Cook passed away peacefully on Wednesday 8 October, surrounded by his family. Richard made an outstanding contribution to Bournemouth School, since joining us in 2002; he only retired due to his failing health in August of this year. He was a teacher of religious studies, ethics and philosophy, a head of department, a head of house and a head of sixth form. As a sixth form leader he helped secure an Ofsted "outstanding" grade in 2024. Throughout his time at the school, he worked tirelessly and selflessly to support students and colleagues alike, always giving freely of his time to support extra-curricular trips and visits. Richard's funeral was held at Bournemouth Crematorium yesterday. Our thoughts are with his family and many friends – he will be greatly missed.

The next half term begins with an INSET day, building upon the training delivered to our teaching staff earlier in the term. There is already in place a full calendar of activities for the period up to Christmas, including our Sixth Form Open Evening on Wednesday 19 November, Year 11 mock examinations in early December, and Christmas lunches and a concert in the last week of term. In the next half term, we will also be finalising the arrangements for celebrating the School's 125th anniversary; we have a concert and whole school photograph already in the diary, with some further ideas in the pipeline.

Calendar reminders

Please remember that we have an INSET day on Monday 3 November. The next half term for students begins at 8.30 am on Tuesday 4 November.

As you may be aware, the School celebrates its 125th Anniversary in January 2026. The School's governors wish to mark the event by giving our students an extra day's holiday. The term will therefore end for students at 3.20 pm on Thursday 18 December. The new term will start, as planned, on Monday 5 January.

The Beginning and End of the School Day

Parents are reminded that whilst students may access the Upper Terrace and Le Bistro from 7.30 am each day, there is no access for students to the rest of the school site until 8.10 am. Students are discouraged from “loitering” (often on their ‘phones) on the pavement in front of the school before entering the site.

The school site closes for students at 4.30 pm (Mon-Thu) and at 4 pm on Friday unless the student is under the direct supervision of a member of staff.

Students in Years 7 to 11 staying in school after 3.30, other than by arrangement with a member of staff (or in detention) should be either in the library or at Success Club:

Library opening times:

Monday 4.30pm

Tuesday 4.30pm

Wednesday closed

Thursday 4.30pm Warhammer Club runs after school in the library

Friday 4pm

Success Club in Room 53:

Monday to Thursday 4:30pm

Friday closed

Bicycles

We are delighted that so many students wish to cycle to and from school. We have recently increased the facilities for bicycle storage during the school day; there are now additional bicycle parking places adjacent to the green gates to *Le Bistro*, and students are welcome to secure their bicycles to the hoops provided.

We would like to remind students that bicycles should not be attached to the school’s gates or anywhere other than the designated bicycle parking locations; bicycles left in other areas will be removed to ensure emergency exit routes are kept clear.

We would also remind students that it is their responsibility to ensure their bicycles are secured whilst parked; they are left entirely at students’ own risk.

Trips and Visits

Throughout each academic year, parents will raise the issue of the apparent lack of trips and visits offered by the School. Parents will often refer back to their own school days, the experiences of their older children, or draw comparisons with other local schools. Whilst it is true that we believe that our primary purpose is to secure the very best outcomes for all learners, we do acknowledge that trips and visits have a number of benefits, including bringing a subject alive, putting a subject into an experiential context, reinforcing classroom learning, boosting motivation and improving behaviour, improving self-confidence and broadening horizons. The School’s leadership actively encourage colleagues to propose taking students out of school, but there are a number of factors that contribute to fewer trips and visits being offered than in times past, including securing the funding for such activities.

When schools can and can’t ask for money

At Bournemouth School we are careful to ensure that the relevant DfE guidance is followed. This may be accessed by following this link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5af99c8ae5274a25e78bbe30/Charging_for_school_activities.pdf

The guidance makes clear that schools must provide free education for all pupils during normal school hours. This means parents don't have to pay for lessons, classroom equipment, or anything needed for the national curriculum, religious education, or examination preparation. We are also not able to charge for applying for a place, or for examination entries if we have prepared the pupil for that exam.

We are allowed to charge for certain activities called "optional extras." These are things that happen **outside normal school hours** or are not part of the required curriculum. Examples include:

- after-school clubs or holiday activities
- some day trips or residential visits (for board and lodging only)
- transport to non-curriculum events
- materials for projects if you'd like your child to bring the item home (for example, a DT or art project).

Any charge must only cover the actual cost of the activity — we can't make a profit or ask some parents to pay more to cover others. The annual ski trip would be a good example of an "optional extra".

We can ask for a **voluntary donation** to help fund activities, including trips **during school hours**. These are *completely voluntary*:

- No child will be excluded or treated differently if parents don't contribute.
- We must make it clear that payment is optional.
- If insufficient donations are received, the activity may be cancelled.

Good examples of this type of activity are the recently advertised Year 9 Poetry Live and Year 10 Science Live trips. In these cases, we will have provisionally reserved tickets and transport before promoting the event. Once the deadline for parents to respond has passed, we will review the level of contributions received and make a judgement about whether or not the trip is viable. We have allocated a small proportion of our budget to subsidise trips and enable them to run. At this point we may be forced to cancel the planned activity.

We publish a charging and remissions policy explaining what we charge for and who may get help with costs.

Why don't we offer more trips and visits during normal school hours?

As a school we believe that trips and visits have a number of benefits including bringing a subject alive, putting a subject into an experiential context, reinforcing classroom learning, boosting motivation and improving behaviour, improving self-confidence and broadening horizons. However, there are a number of factors why schools today (not just our school) offer fewer trips and visits.

All schools are under significant financial pressure. With fewer funds available for "extra" activities, and insufficient parental voluntary contributions, trips can become one of the first things to be reduced or cancelled.

The cost of coach hire, fuel, residential accommodation, staffing and insurance have all increased, especially since the pandemic. Any trip requiring transport (even just into Bournemouth) can cost many hundreds of pounds, this makes it harder for us to plan, budget and subsidise activities to ensure all pupils can attend.

Many parents are struggling with the cost of living, and are less able to contribute to voluntary payments for trips. We have to be able to guarantee that **all pupils** can participate (regardless of ability to pay), limiting the range and number of trips that we can offer.

Trips often require significant staff time (planning, supervision, risk assessment, safeguarding, parental consent). The school's core purpose is to ensure that all students achieve outstanding outcomes through exceptionally teaching and learning. We therefore undertake a cost-benefit analysis when presented with any trip proposal to consider how well the activity contributes to the school's core purpose being achieved.

Why can't the School run a residential trip during a normal school week?

Under the DfE guidance, if a residential trip takes place mainly during the normal school week, a school cannot insist that parents pay for their child to take part.

We appreciate that the guidance prioritises fairness and inclusion, ensuring all pupils can access education regardless of family income. However, this protection makes it increasingly difficult for any school to offer term-time residential trips, even when the educational benefits are valued.

As we cannot insist on payment for activities that take place mainly during school hours, we must rely on voluntary contributions from parents. We can only charge for board and lodging, and even then, we must waive these charges for families in receipt of certain benefits. This ensures inclusion but also creates additional financial pressure as we may have to subsidise some places from our already stretched budget.

Alongside these funding issues, the rising costs of transport, accommodation, and insurance — plus the significant administrative and safeguarding demands involved in planning residentials — make them increasingly hard to manage.

We are not alone in discontinuing term-time residential trips, despite recognising their educational and social value.

Why don't we offer more residential trips, other than just the ski trip, at weekends or over the holidays?

Teaching today involves much higher administrative, accountability, and planning demands than in the past. Many teachers already work well beyond contracted hours during term time — often 50–60 hours a week. Giving up weekends or holidays for trips means losing vital rest and family time, which contributes to stress and burnout.

Leading a residential trip carries significant legal, safeguarding, and health and safety responsibilities. Teachers are accountable for pupils 24 hours a day, often in unfamiliar settings. The potential stress of managing emergencies, accidents, or behaviour issues can deter staff — especially given the rise in litigation and scrutiny.

Whilst we continue to value such residential trips, no school can reasonably expect staff to volunteer their services beyond their contractual obligations. We are always extremely grateful when colleagues do give so freely of their time to offer the ski trip (and the trip to Berlin last year).

A Review of the 2024-25 Academic Year

We are filled with pride as we reflect on the successes, growth, and collective achievements of the Bournemouth School community last year. From academic milestones and extracurricular excellence to facility upgrades and student leadership, this has been a year defined by resilience, ambition, and community spirit. Across all year groups, students have demonstrated not only academic rigour but also a keen desire to engage meaningfully with the world around them – through sport, service, and shared experience.

This report attempts to offer a comprehensive summary of key events, achievements, and developments over the last academic year, capturing the vibrancy of school life and the strong foundations we continue to build together.

Academic Progress and Assessment Across Year Groups

The heart of any school is, of course, learning. Throughout the year, our students have shown academic determination and adaptability in the face of new challenges.

For Years 7 to 9, the emphasis has been on cultivating academic habits, promoting curiosity, and embedding learning skills. End-of-year assessments allowed students to reflect on their progress, and new reporting systems helped highlight positive attitudes to learning. Year 7 earned over 29,000 achievement points and showed strong participation in academic and extracurricular events alike. Year 8 built on their positive momentum while preparing for the transition to their GCSE subjects.

Year 10 and Year 12 students also faced important academic checkpoints. Year 10 completed their first round of GCSE-style mock examinations under formal conditions, gaining valuable insight into exam pressure and time management. Meanwhile, Year 12 completed mock A-Level papers, alongside preparing their UCAS applications and beginning work on their Non-Examination Assessments (NEAs), laying the groundwork for Year 13 success.

Year 11 and Year 13 students prepared intensively for public examinations. With structured support from staff, multiple rounds of mock assessments, and individualised feedback, students refined their revision strategies and built confidence. It was particularly encouraging to see how well Year 11 pupils managed their transition from mock exams to final GCSE assessments, culminating in a well-deserved celebration at their Prom, held in partnership with Bournemouth School for Girls.

The A-level and GCSE results achieved once again evidenced that students at Bournemouth School receive an excellent quality of education. A high proportion of students continue to follow subjects which make up the English Baccalaureate at key stage 4, whilst in the sixth-form the study programmes are ambitious and tailored to students' needs. This August we were delighted to celebrate with our students and their parents the best results ever achieved:

A Level Results 2025

Headlines

- Fifteen students attained 3 or 4 A* grades, with 39 students achieving at least 3 A*/A grades (from a cohort of 164).
- The proportion of entries resulting in the award of an A*-C grade increased by more than 5% compared to last year to 88%.
- The average points score per entry increased to 40.0 (the equivalent of a B grade).
- Students studying mathematics performed exceptionally well, with 49% and 57% of entries being graded A* or A in mathematics and further mathematics respectively.
- Four students secured a place at Cambridge, three secured a place at Oxford, and one student is now studying at Princeton.

- Six students left us to study medicine and seven students are embarking upon degree apprenticeships.

A-Level Key Performance Indicators (2025)

- APS was 40.0 (37.0 in 2023; 39.6 in 2024)
- The proportion of students achieving 3 A levels at grades AAB or high with 2 facilitating subjects was 28%% (23% in 2023; 35% in 2024)
- The percentage achieving an approved L3 maths qualification was 85.5

GCSE Results 2025

Headlines

- Most students completed 11 GCSEs, with two thirds of entries being graded 9 to 7
- 45% of all entries were graded 9-8
- Three-quarters of the cohort achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades 7-9
- 38% achieved 10 or more GCSEs at grades 7-9
- Two students achieved a “clean sweep” – each was awarded 11 grade 9s!

GCSE Key Performance Indicators (2025)

- A8 was 74.1 (70.8 in 2023; 73.3 in 2024)
- P8 in 2024 was 0.72 (0.56 in 2023)
- The proportion of students achieving a strong pass in English and mathematics was 96% (94% in 2023; 96% in 2024)
- 91% of the cohort were entered for the English Baccalaureate (80% in 2023; 83% in 2024), with 81% (65% in 2023; 74% in 2024) achieving a strong pass (EBacc APS of 6.65 in 2023; 6.98 in 2024; 7.16 in 2025)
- In 2025, the small cohort of disadvantaged students out-performed their peers, with A8 of 75.8, an average EBacc score of 7.39, and 91.7% achieving a strong pass in the EBacc
- 2025 subject area attainment scores (figures for disadvantaged students in brackets)
 - English 14.34 (15)
 - Mathematics 14.9 (15.5)
 - EBacc 22.91 (23.17)
 - Open 22 (22.17)

Enrichment and Beyond the Classroom

Bournemouth School continues to believe that learning extends far beyond the classroom. This year has seen a wealth of enrichment activities, trips, competitions, and workshops aimed at fostering intellectual curiosity, independence, and cultural awareness.

Work experience was a major highlight for Year 10 and 12 students, most of whom secured placements across a range of industries. Feedback from employers consistently praised our students' maturity, work ethic, and enthusiasm. These experiences helped students understand the working world and consider future career paths. This was supported by a wide range of workshops and guest speaker sessions throughout the year, including events focused on medicine, law, engineering, finance, and university life.

The Year 12 Business Breakfast and the inaugural Conversation Evening offered students the chance to network with alumni and professionals while developing vital interpersonal skills. Alumni played a significant role in mentoring current students and sharing real-world advice, reinforcing the value of the Bournemouth School community.

Further enrichment included workshops on LinkedIn and career development, networking sessions with professionals, and a special visit from former School Captain Arief McKenna, whose talk on gap years and architectural study inspired many sixth formers.

Cultural Trips and Activities

Students in multiple year groups benefitted from educational visits across the UK and abroad. One of the most significant was the Berlin trip, which saw 48 Year 9 students exploring historical and cultural landmarks, including the Berlin Wall, DDR Museum, and Sachsenhausen Memorial. Students not only deepened their understanding of European history but also had the chance to practise their German.

Closer to home, trips included:

- A sociology and politics visit to the Houses of Parliament and Imperial War Museum
- A UCAS Discovery Day for Sixth Formers
- Theatre visits to "An Inspector Calls" in Southampton
- Art excursions to the Royal Academy
- A ski trip to Cerler in the Spanish Pyrenees

These experiences, while enriching the curriculum, also helped students develop broader social and emotional skills through collaboration, independence, and real-world exposure.

Sporting Success and House Achievements

It has been another standout year for sport at Bournemouth School, culminating in our Year 9 and 10 boys winning the National Cross-Country Championships in Leeds – the first time any Dorset school has achieved this honour. This monumental success capped off a year of strong performance across athletics, cricket, rugby, football, and tennis.

The annual House Events and Sports Day, held at King's Park, was once again a major success. With superb weather, enthusiastic participation, and even a surprise fly-past from the Red Arrows, the day celebrated both competition and community spirit. Moore House made history with their first ever win, while students across all years showed exceptional effort and sportsmanship.

Across the academic year, house competitions in music, debate, quizzes, sport, and fundraising created vibrant inter-house rivalries. Turner House maintained their strong position atop the house leader board, while Darwin House excelled in numerous sporting and academic contests. Each house saw individual achievements from students - be it in cross country, piano diplomas, rugby tournaments, or chess championships. House captains and senior prefects played a crucial role in motivating students and organising events, adding leadership depth to the house system.

Student Leadership and Sixth Form Initiatives

The sixth form has once again been a hub of energy, leadership, and innovation. A new senior prefect team was appointed in February, led by Luca as School Captain. This year's team included deputy school captains and house leadership representatives who have taken active roles in mentoring younger students and leading events.

The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) saw students presenting their research in areas ranging from moon colonisation to aviation design - showcasing not only academic ambition but also the confidence to present and defend ideas to peers and staff.

Individual students were also recognised for outstanding achievements:

- C Fullard was selected for the U18 Odyssey World Select School Rugby Festival in Abu Dhabi.
- F Schell qualified for the English Chess Championships and attended a prestigious maths summer school.
- R Sims was accepted into the Senior Physics Challenge programme at Cambridge.
- O Whitfield prepared to represent in the English Powerlifting Championship.

The Computing and Engineering Societies continued to thrive, taking on projects like server construction and electric motor building. Student-led societies remain a cornerstone of sixth form life, providing enrichment opportunities while building confidence, collaboration, and curiosity.

Safeguarding, Well-being and Pastoral Care

The well-being and safeguarding of our students remains our highest priority. This year, several important initiatives were introduced or expanded to support student health, safety, and development.

We hosted the "Wasps' Nest" theatre production in partnership with Vita Nova, a moving performance exploring the themes of County Lines, addiction, and knife crime. Year 8 students, supported by police and STARS (Sexual Trauma and Recovery Services), also participated in team-building and sexual harassment awareness workshops.

The school also introduced and tested new lockdown procedures, in preparation for upcoming legislation under "Martyn's Law". These measures aim to ensure student safety while minimising disruption and anxiety.

The school continues to support Operation Encompass, a national initiative supporting children affected by domestic abuse. Staff have received updated safeguarding training and the school's safeguarding pages remain available to parents seeking support during holiday periods.

Facilities and Financial Planning

Alongside these academic and pastoral achievements, we are proud of the continued improvements to our school's physical environment.

This year saw the completion of several major refurbishments:

- Renovation of the lecture theatre and student toilets
- Installation of three new IT suites
- Upgrades to external lighting and CCTV
- Completion of a new outdoor canopy, reducing congestion at lunch and break times

This summer's projects included new carpeting, road resurfacing, improved signage, and further toilet refurbishments. Looking ahead, a successful bid to the Department for Education's Condition Improvement Fund has secured funding to replace all fire doors across the school site. Planning is also underway for future upgrades to laboratories and lighting systems, ensuring Bournemouth School remains equipped for long-term sustainability and high-quality learning.

We are especially pleased to report that the school remains in a strong financial position, thanks to careful planning. This has allowed us to continue investing in our infrastructure without compromising the quality of teaching and learning.

Looking Forward: A Milestone on the Horizon

As we turn our attention to the next academic year, we are especially excited to begin preparations for a landmark event: Bournemouth School's 125th Anniversary in January 2026. A dedicated webpage has been launched to collect memories and photographs from alumni and current families. We encourage all members of our school community – past and present – to contribute and help us celebrate the school's legacy and future.

Closing Thoughts

The continued support of parents and governors is vital to our shared mission: to educate, guide, and inspire the young people in our care. This has been a year of great progress – academic, personal, and cultural – and we are immensely proud of the way our students have embraced opportunity and responsibility alike.

Have a lovely half term!

Dr Dorian P Lewis

Headmaster

24/10/2025