



## Margaret Chapman, Executive Head Teacher

I hope that it is not too late in January to wish you a very Happy New Year - Blyddwyn Neuydd Dda! It has been a crisp and chilly start to this year but I am delighted to see that students are all very prepared and engaged with the term ahead. The termly introductory assembly was focused not on making resolutions, for which there was so much media coverage in the run up to the New Year, but on what every young person can do for themselves to feel proud - positively reinforcing the skills and talents that all possess.

Our young people are wonderful ambassadors of our school community and it has been a great pleasure to meet with so many over the past few months to review what we are doing well and areas of focus for improvement. Every Second Counts - our weekly meetings with both Mr Kershaw and myself ensure that we know how to target improvements and share the great positives about teaching, varied learning activities, extra curricular opportunities, pastoral care and so much more. We continue our weekly meetings during form time and will provide a summary as the year progresses.

Sporting successes continue and we congratulate all who have taken part. In football, under 14s played tremendously well in the County Cup, narrowly missing out on penalties, following 1-1 after extra time to Kings Langley. Our U13s were successful in the County quarterfinal match away to Ashlyns.

In Netball: Year 10B won their district league fixture against Beaumont winning 22-8 (Picture above)

Year 11A won their district league fixture against Sir John Lawes.

Year 8A got through to the next round of the district cup progressing to the final beating Sir John Lawes.

In Futsal, all our teams did superbly in the district tournament this week:

U16s placed 4th overall, winning 2 games and drawing 3, however keeping a clean sheet in every game.

U12s won their district tournament winning 3 out of 4 games and also keeping a clean sheet throughout. They will also be progressing through the county finals in March.

U14s placed 2nd in their district tournament, only losing out in the final. They will also be progressing through to the final of the county cup in March.

We welcomed once again the Education Child Protection team who delivered a workshop presentation to all of our students on Wednesday. The areas of focus were topics of concern and worry that had been specifically raised and identified by students from our most recent Sexual Harassment and Online Safety Survey. The content delivered included:

Bullying – including cyber-bullying

Sexual abuse – including sexual violence and harassment, sending nudes and semi-nudes

Grooming / Gang violence

Abusive relationships

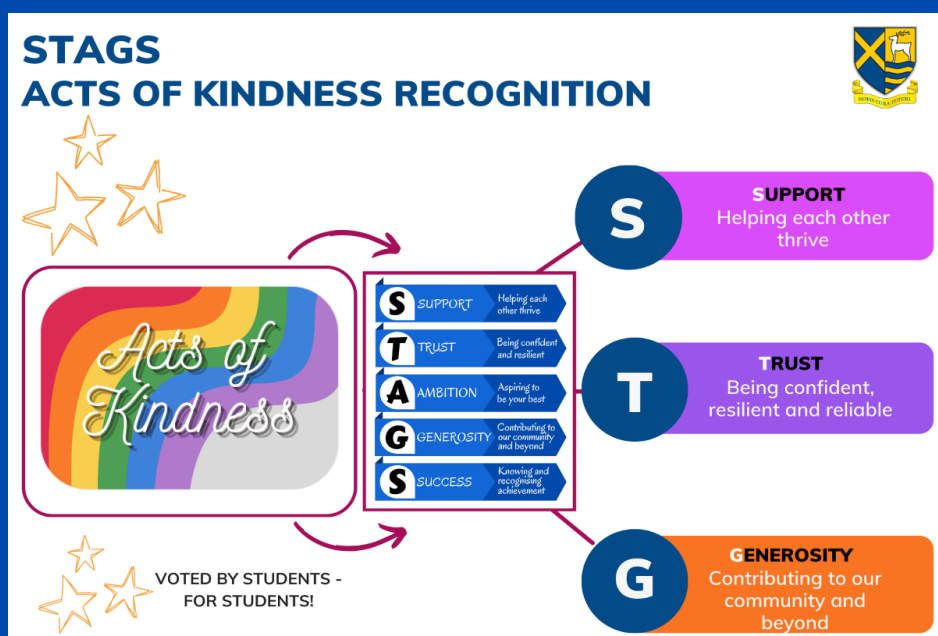
The sessions explored the importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults, how people sometimes behave differently online and provided help for all to understand what are appropriate boundaries in friendships with peers and others which will empower them to keep themselves and others free from harm.

Yesterday, we welcomed external employers to the school to lead Mock Interviews for all Year 11 students. This is such a powerful opportunity for all to undertake a real life interview with 'real' people (as commented by one Year 11 student), raise awareness of interview skills and techniques, help in the preparation of CVs and letters of application and focus on the importance of the soft employability skills and experiences. We were so proud of the engagement and interest of all students.

It has been a great pleasure to meet with so many Year 9 students as they consider their first curriculum choices in their academic career and start to consider future options beyond life at school. Today, we will be holding our subject fair at lunch which is an opportunity to talk to others already taking specific subject choices at GCSE. Please do continue to talk at home about option choices - all have the opportunity to take a broad and balanced curriculum which will steer them very well into the foundation of the next steps of their academic journey.

Next week, students will have Taster sessions to review GCSE subject content and provide further help in decision making.

This week, the Anti-Bullying and Wellbeing Form Captains and Sixth Form Leaders began publicising the recognition award amongst all students based on Acts of Kindness. More news to follow on this in due course.



We received a letter from Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for Education congratulating all students, staff and parents on high levels of attendance at STAGS, the content of which we were asked to share with you. Your engagement with school life is hugely important and this is echoed in every year group with attendance at parents' evenings upwards of 94% in each year group and 96% for Year 13 earlier this week.

### Why Attendance Matters

We would like to congratulate you, your staff and pupils on the progress you have made in improving levels of attendance at your school over the last academic year.

Your school's daily attendance data up to 24th November show that levels of pupil absence last term were a big improvement on equivalent rates in autumn 2022. Our data also shows that as a result of this improvement your school had attendance rates above the pre-pandemic secondary average for schools in England.

The evidence is clear that being in school is vitally important for children's attainment, mental wellbeing, safety and long-term development. Getting attendance rates up really matters - when pupils' attendance improves, the likelihood of attaining well at the end of school sharply increases. More than half (54%) of pupils who were persistently absent in Year 10 and then rarely absent in Year 11 passed at least 5 GCSEs including English and maths, compared to 36% of pupils who were persistently absent in both years. Returning attendance to pre-pandemic levels is one of my top priorities.

Thank you for your continued effort and hard work to ensure your pupils attend school regularly. I recognise the challenges many schools have faced in improving attendance following the pandemic and that progress of the kind you have made reflects an enormous amount of hard work and dedication from you and your staff as well as the support of your wider school community. I also recognise that there is more to do, and further to go – so the hard work isn't over.

I want to continue to support schools in meeting this incredibly important challenge. As one part of that, this week the Government has launched a national attendance communications campaign, aimed at parents and carers. We are reminding families that moments matter, attendance counts. This is because we recognise that some parents no longer view attending every single day to be as essential as they previously did. I encourage you to participate in the campaign to help us amplify messages to families, including by sharing your school's success and what you have learned with other schools.

On another matter, our Student Healthcare Officer has asked for the following message to be shared:

Head lice and nits are a common issue, especially among young children and their families. Head lice are spread most commonly by close person-to-person contact. Once detected, treatment should begin immediately and all household members should be checked and treated to stop further spread. The [nhs.uk head lice and nits advice page](https://www.nhs.uk/head-lice-and-nits-advice-page) provides information on how to detect head lice and advice on how to manage the condition.

Finally, I wanted to share with you (on the next page) a wonderful article written by Sabrina in Year 12 who enjoyed a superb experience during the Christmas break.

With all good wishes,





Over the Christmas holidays, I was fortunate enough to travel to India for just over two weeks to learn more about and provide support for vulnerable communities. The program was run by the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a charity network set up by my religious leader, with the aim to improve the quality of life of those in lower-income countries around the world, and to implement a system of self-reliance in them to create independence for communities.

From the UK and Europe, I was the only participant so it was initially quite a daunting experience, but I almost immediately felt at home when I arrived. The other participants were extremely warm and welcoming, and had come from all over the world; from western countries such as the US, Canada and Australia, to Eastern countries including Kazakhstan and India; even spanning to Third-World countries like Syria and Afghanistan, I was humbled to meet participants from all walks of life, bound together with a common goal; to help people.

We spent 11 days in Hyderabad, a region in the South of India, where we dedicated our time to our service site. This service site was a backwards school; this school is a place where parents who belong to the lowest caste in India can send their children with the hopes that they can travel abroad and have the freedom to achieve their goals and desires in life. My group worked with children from Year 6 and taught them the value of sanitisation; through repainting their sink area, buying soap, teaching the children how to effectively wash their hands and painting murals on the wall depicting somebody washing their hands/rules for cleanliness, we were able to somewhat ameliorate the lives of the students there, and provide a new and improved sink area, to their excitement!

We then travelled to Gujarat, where we looked at projects and heard from CEOs from the various strands of the AKDN; the Trust for Culture, Agency for Habitat and the Rural Support Programme CEOs spoke to us about how they've been working with residents in Gujarat, predominantly those living in more rural areas, to support them in their livelihoods. We visited the Qutub Shahi Tombs in Hyderabad, a restoration project fully funded and supported by the Trust for Culture group and the Agency for Habitat team took us to see the durable housing they were building to prevent home wreckage from natural events/disasters, which was fascinating to gain an understanding of. Finally, we visited a women's Self Help group, consisting of women who had come together to create their own business in order to earn their own money, and some even becoming the breadwinners in their families. It was so rewarding to see just how far the lives of Gujarati women have come, and how this charity network has trained these women to become self-sufficient.



Although a lot of our journey was focused on supporting communities, we did also have some fun outside of these projects! From climbing to hiking to zip wiring, we were exhausted, but our best night was when we spent New Year's Eve at a Girls' Hostel, where we danced the night away. As the clock struck midnight, we were amidst a dream; loud music beating with our hearts, fast-paced Indian dancing and hugging strangers whilst wishing each other a Happy New Year. No words can describe that feeling.

Whilst this was not my traditional Christmas; spending time away from family and friends, no Auld Lang Syne on New Year's Eve, I am so grateful I got to create new memories and traditions, and I look forward to continuing to give back to my local communities now that I'm back. I hope this has inspired you to do the same!

*Sabrina Devji*



# Diary Dates

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## **Monday 22 January**

Year 8 HPV Immunisations

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## **Friday 26 January**

Year 11 Futures Day

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## **Wednesday 31 January**

PTA Meeting, 7-8pm, LRC

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## **Thursday 1 February**

Year 11 Parents' Evening, 4-7.30pm,  
Online

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## **Friday 2 February**

Year 9 reports to Parents

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## **Monday 5 Feb - Monday 4 March**

Years 11 & 13 Classroom Mocks

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## **Thursday 8 February**

Year 9 Parents' Evening, 4-7.30pm, Online

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## **Friday 9 February**

Year 10 Reports to Parents

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## **Wednesday 14 February**

School closes for students at 12.20pm

Form Tutor Parents' Afternoon, 12.30-4pm

Year 9 Options Deadline

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## **Thursday 15 - Friday 16 February**

School is closed to Students

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## **Monday 19 - Friday 23 February**

Half Term

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## **Monday 26 February**

SEND Parent Group Meeting, 7-8.30pm,  
LRC

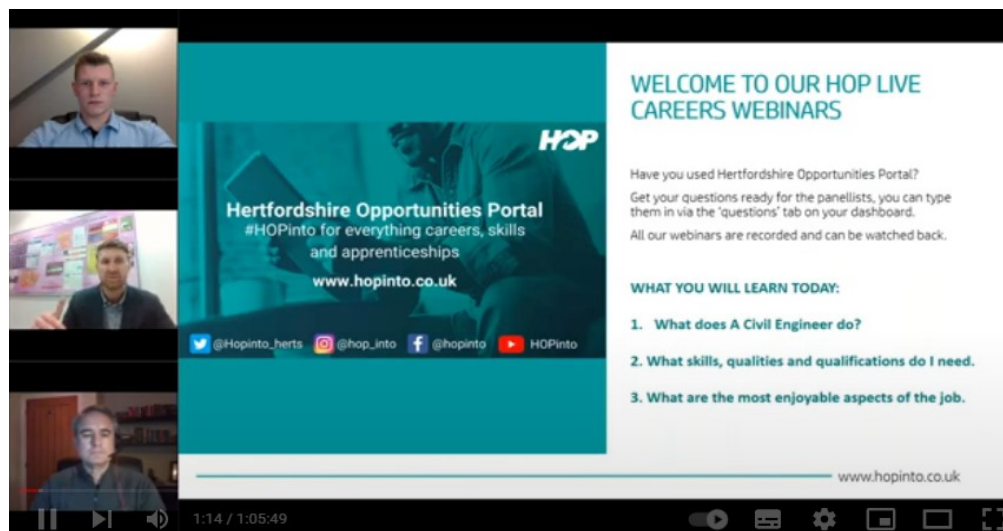


# Careers

## Civil Engineering Careers

[Civil engineers](#) undertake research and design, direct construction and manage the operation and maintenance of civil and mining engineering structures.

You can watch the HOP Careers In Engineering webinar [here](#).



Explore the wider HOP Careers Directory [here](#).





# Notices

## ST ALBANS & DACORUM SCHOOL JOBS FAIR



Key Worker  
Pre-school Early Start  
Nursery Worker  
Nurse Wrap-around Care  
**EARLY YEARS JOBS**  
Day-care Nursery  
Early Years Teacher  
Practitioner  
Room Leader

ECT  
Nursery Subject  
SEND Teacher  
Class Teacher Secondary  
**TEACHING JOBS**  
Head of Department  
Head of Year  
Primary Subject  
Key Stage Lead Lead

HLTA  
Teaching Assistant  
Cover Facilities  
Supervisor Premises  
Science Technician  
**PROFESSIONAL AND  
SUPPORT JOBS**  
LSA Midday Supervisor HR  
Administration Pastoral  
Food Technician Exam  
IT Technician Invigilator  
Clerk to  
Governors

CFO Deputy Head  
MAT Director COO  
INCO Principal  
Governor Executive Head  
**LEADERSHIP JOBS**  
Assistant School Business  
Head Manager  
Headteacher  
CEO Trustee  
SENCO

Thursday 15th February 2024  
17:00-19:00

St Albans Girls' School  
Sandridgebury Lane, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 6DB

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