




# THE ABI UPDATE

ISSUE 9 FRIDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2026

## MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER - MR CLINTON

Amongst the many strengths of Archbishop Ilsey, enrichment and personal development is one aspect that is unrivalled compared to many local schools. Today, the Modern Foreign Language Department hosted their annual 'Languages Day'. As well as having the honour of being a judge for some incredible cakes in the 'Bake Off' competition, I also had the pleasure of sitting in a fantastic assembly delivered by Laura Kirk-Francis from Mingalaba, our very impressive external speaker, about languages in sport. Year 9, who were impeccably behaved through the 45-minute presentation, could see how languages could lead to a world of possibilities including being a translator, football agent, player liaison office, advertising and marketing. This complemented a lovely pupil led assembly on Wednesday with piano playing and singing from two talented pupils. My thanks must go to Ms Walton and Chesterman for organising this. Pictures of the event will feature in our next issue.

Year 9 had their parents' evening on Thursday. For the first time in a while, it was hosted online via School Cloud. We would love to hear your feedback and whether you prefer the convenience of your own home or would prefer in-person discussions. You can give your feedback via email or if you would prefer, you can come and meet me and our new SENCO, Ms Tonry, at a time to suit you on 4th February in the library.

Enjoy your weekend – 9 days to go until half term.

May we remind parents and carers that the school is closed on Friday 13th February, for staff training.

### KEY DATES:

- Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> Feb - Yr 12/13 Parents' Evening
- Friday 13<sup>th</sup> Feb - INSET DAY; school is closed for pupils and students
- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> Feb - Friday 20<sup>th</sup> Feb - HALF TERM school is closed for pupils and students
- Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb - DT Mini Factory tour
- Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February - DT UCB Food Technology trip
- Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb - Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March - Yr 11 Mock Exams
- Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February - Year 12 London trip

**BORN  
for  
THIS**  
the Way of the Cross

Is your child performing in our live performance of Born for This on Wednesday 25th March at the Symphony Hall? Have you bought your tickets yet?

See inside this Update for more information or purchase tickets here:  
<https://bmusic.co.uk/events/born-for-this>

**“...let your light shine.”**

## CATHOLIC LIFE

### SCRIPTURE REFLECTION: MATTHEW 4:12-23

Hearing that John had been arrested, Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled:

‘Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali! Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan, Galilee of the nations! The people that lived in darkness has seen a great light; on those who dwell in the land and shadow of death a light has dawned.’



From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.’

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast in the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.’ And they left their nets at once and followed him. Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. At once, leaving the boat and their father, they followed him. He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people.

#### How is this relevant today?

Here we hear of the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. After John the Baptist is arrested, Jesus does not withdraw or wait for safer circumstances. Instead, He goes to Galilee—a region considered ordinary, even insignificant by many—and there He begins to proclaim the Good News. Matthew tells us that this fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah: “The people who lived in darkness have seen a great light.”

This message remains deeply relevant for us today. Jesus begins His mission not among the powerful or elite, but among everyday people—fishermen going about their daily work. Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John were not scholars or leaders; they were ordinary men with responsibilities, families, and routines. Yet Jesus calls them personally: “Follow me.” Without delay, they respond. Here we are reminded that God calls each person where they are. We do not need to be perfect or extraordinary to be loved and chosen by God. In classrooms, playgrounds, homes, and friendships, Christ is present and active, inviting us to grow in faith, kindness, and courage.

Jesus’ first message is simple but powerful: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.” Repentance here is not about fear, but about turning our hearts toward God—learning to see differently, to choose love over selfishness, and to place God at the centre of our lives. This is the foundation of Catholic education: forming not only minds, but hearts. In our school community, learning and faith go hand in hand with compassion, service, and care for one another. Together, as parents, carers and educators, we are partners in helping our children recognise the “great light” of Christ in their lives. By nurturing faith at home and at school, we help them hear Christ’s call and respond with trust—just as the first disciples did.

**“...Follow me and I will make you fishers of men...”**

# BORN *for* THIS

*Commemorating 30 Years of the Way of the Cross*



Pupils from six Catholic secondary schools in Birmingham and Solihull are working with CJM Music to put on a truly unforgettable live performance on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

Easter 2026 marks the 30th anniversary of the first ever live production of Born for This. Born for This is a moving and powerful depiction of the Stations of the Cross in words, music, and drama. As with many projects of this scale, Born for This is a work that has evolved over several years. After reading Jude Martin's powerful, poetic reflections on the Stations of the Cross in January 1994, Jo Boyce agreed to write songs to accompany them.

Around the same time, Jude Martin came across some beautiful impressions of the Stations of the Cross by the artist Peter Clare (these are part of a larger cycle of paintings called The Journey). Peter too, impressed by the music and the words, agreed to have his work included as part of the Born for This project. These creative strands have come together to produce one of the most moving re-tellings of Christ's Passion.

This moving and powerful depiction of the Stations of the Cross involving music and drama, has been performed in many prestigious venues up and down the country. On Wednesday 25th March almost 2000 people will watch it live at Symphony Hall; Symphony Hall is one of the finest concert halls in the world, the sound of a choir and cast of over 300 will be extraordinary.

Pupils from Archbishop Ilsley Catholic School are very blessed to be one of the six participating schools. The performance will be one the cast and the audience will never forget. With the pupils, families and friends of six schools and beyond keen to witness this unique event, we anticipate tickets will be in very high demand. Ticket sales have been launched!

Book tickets before they sell out! Want to know more?

Check out the incredible Symphony Hall ... <https://bmusic.co.uk/your-visit/symphony-hall>  
Find out more about history of the performance ... <https://www.cjmmusic.com/bornforthis/>

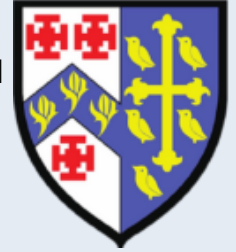
**BORN**  
*for*  
**THIS**  
the Way of the Cross

**PURCHASE TICKETS VIA BORN FOR THIS: [HTTPS://BMUSIC.CO.UK/EVENTS/BORN-FOR-THIS](https://bmusic.co.uk/events/born-for-this)**



## BEHAVIOUR AND STANDARDS - MRS BURNHAM

PASTORAL



Our recent Uniform Drive has been a big success, and we would like to thank parents and pupils for their continued support. The vast majority of pupils are arriving at school ready to learn and adhering to our uniform expectations, which has had a positive impact on standards across the school.

We are, however, still seeing some pupils attending school in trainers, which do not meet our uniform policy. We ask for continued support from parents to ensure footwear is compliant so that expectations remain clear and consistent for all.

We are also reminding pupils of the importance of respecting our local community. Pupils are expected to travel directly home after school, behave respectfully in local shops, and represent the school positively at all times. Our relationship with the local community is important, and pupils' conduct outside the school gates matters.

Finally, we continue to reinforce our core values of respect and tolerance. Our school community is diverse, and this is one of our greatest strengths. Pupils are reminded that we may not all be the same, but everyone deserves to feel safe, valued, and respected. Thank you for your ongoing support in maintaining high standards.

## BEHAVIOUR AND STANDARDS - MR FOLEY

### Online Safety & Digital Footprint – A Reminder for All Families

We have recently been made aware that a small number of pupils have shared videos of other pupils online in order to make fun of them. We want to take this opportunity to remind all families that recording or sharing images of others without their consent is against the law and can constitute offences such as harassment or malicious communications. Even when pupils see this as “just a joke”, the impact on those involved can be significant. Many social media platforms also have strict age limits designed to keep children safe:

- TikTok – 13+
- Instagram – 13+
- Snapchat – 13+
- WhatsApp – 13+

We ask parents to be vigilant and ensure these age restrictions are followed.

In school, our expectations are clear. If a pupil uses their phone during the school day, it will be confiscated for up to five days. Further sanctions will be applied if there is evidence that a device has been used to record or photograph others without permission. In serious cases, we also refer incidents to PC Nicky, our Safer Schools Police Officer, who recently delivered an online-safety assembly to reinforce this message with all pupils.

The government is currently exploring tighter limits on smartphones and social media access for young people as part of national efforts to reduce online harm. While schools play an important role, parents and carers have a crucial duty to protect their child online, monitor their digital activity and talk openly about safe, respectful behaviour. Every young person is building a digital footprint that can stay with them for life, influencing future education, employment and wellbeing. Thank you for your continued support in keeping our pupils safe online.





As we move further into the spring term, I am once again struck by the incredible momentum our Year 7 pupils are building. It has been a busy and productive fortnight, and I am delighted to share some of the highlights with you.

### Academic Excellence & Creativity

I am incredibly proud of how Year 7 approached their recent assessment cycle. The pupils have really impressed me with their attitude and drive to succeed; it has been wonderful to have so many pupils come up to me personally to share their results and celebrate their progress. Beyond the assessments, I've had the pleasure of visiting several lessons this week. In Design Technology, I saw some fantastic interactive nursery rhyme storybooks being brought to life. In Computing, pupils have been busy programming their own games in Scratch, showcasing the technical talent we have in this year group.

### Reflection and Guidance

Our recent assemblies have focused on important themes of community and respect. We held a moving Holocaust Memorial assembly, as well as a session dedicated to the responsible use of social media. With this in mind, my bible verse for this newsletter is from Ephesians 4:29 (ESV): "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." It is vital that our pupils understand that speaking kindly isn't just for the playground—it must extend to the digital world as well. We want our pupils to use their voices (and their devices) to build others up.

### Focus for the Fortnight: Attendance and Reading

While the drive on uniform has been excellent since my last message, and I do thank you for your support with this, our focus until half term now shifts to attendance and punctuality.

I am pleased to report that Year 7 attendance is steadily improving. This progress is only possible with your support at home, ensuring pupils are in school and ready to learn every day. Additionally, over the next month, we are placing a heavy focus on reading. I would love to hear more about the books our pupils are currently diving into. Please encourage your child to talk to you about their current read and perhaps offer them a recommendation of your own!

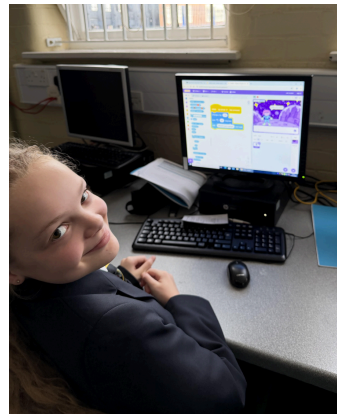
### Dates for your Diary

Please take note of these upcoming opportunities to connect:

- **Meet the Head of Year Event:** I will be holding a session just before half term. The date is to be confirmed, so please keep an eye on your emails next week for the official invite.
- **Year 7 Parents' Evening:** Tuesday, 12th March. Please ensure you are ready to attend and have your bookings settled in advance.

### Community News

Finally, I want to continue celebrating the "lights" that shine outside of our school gates. If your child is involved in any clubs, competitions, or community events, please let me know so we can celebrate their achievements as a school family. To stay fully updated on progress and notices, please continue to check the school app and website regularly. God bless and may everyone's light continue to shine brightly.



## YEAR 8 - MRS WAFI

## HEAD OF YEAR UPDATES

Regular attendance is one of the most important factors in a pupil's success at secondary school. Every school day provides vital learning opportunities, and when pupils are absent they miss carefully planned lessons that cannot always be fully replicated. Over time, poor attendance can lead to gaps in knowledge, reduced confidence, and increased stress as pupils struggle to keep up with their peers. Research consistently shows a strong link between good attendance and higher achievement, as well as better social development and wellbeing. The Bible reminds us of the value of commitment and effort: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters" (Colossians 3:23).



Punctuality is just as important as attendance. Arriving late to lessons disrupts the learning not only of the late pupil, but of the entire class. Teachers must pause teaching to address the late arrival, which interrupts learning and reduces valuable lesson time for everyone. Learning to arrive on time helps pupils develop responsibility, respect for others, and strong habits that will support them throughout their education and into adult life.

Attending school in the correct uniform also plays an important role in shaping positive attitudes to learning. Dressing smartly encourages students to take pride in themselves, their work, and their school. When pupils wear their uniform correctly, it promotes a sense of belonging, sets clear expectations, and supports a calm and focused learning environment where everyone is ready to learn.

By working together to support high standards of attendance, punctuality, and uniform, we can help pupils develop the self-discipline, respect, and commitment they need to thrive both in school and beyond.

## YEAR 9 - MRS LYNCH

Firstly, a huge congratulations to the Envision group on winning the final at Birmingham City Football Ground. It was a brilliant final with exceptionally strong competition throughout. The pupils were outstanding in the way they embraced this opportunity, using it to build their confidence and engage in a project that encouraged them to think beyond themselves and consider the wider school community. Their commitment, teamwork, and maturity truly shone through. A special thank you to Mr Morris for providing our pupils with such a valuable experience and helping them develop skills that will benefit them well beyond this project.



This week, we have seen our pupils take part in an assembly, an experience that is incredibly valuable in building their confidence. Standing up in front of their year group to perform and share their work is no small achievement, and the pupils should be very proud of themselves. Opportunities like this help to prepare them for future projects where presenting, speaking, and sharing ideas will be essential skills.

It was lovely to see so many of you at parents' evening this week. Thank you all for your continued support. We hope you found the evening valuable and enjoyed seeing how well your children are doing, as well as having the opportunity to discuss any additional help or support where needed. Options season is fast approaching, and we will be beginning the process before half term. During this time, pupils will take part in a series of assemblies designed to introduce new subjects and provide clear guidance on the options available to them. These sessions will support pupils in understanding what each subject involves, the skills required, and how their choices may link to future pathways. Our aim is to make the process as straightforward and supportive as possible, helping pupils to feel confident in choosing subjects that suit their strengths, interests, and aspirations – and, importantly, subjects they will enjoy.

Further information will be shared with students and parents as we move through the process.

As Pope Leo said, "The choices we make today help shape the person we become tomorrow." Every decision we make, big or small, plays a part in our journey. The choices we face now give us the opportunity to discover our strengths, follow our interests, and challenge ourselves to grow. By taking time to reflect, seek guidance, and choose paths that motivate and inspire us, we are not only preparing for the future but actively shaping it.

Last week, Mr Morris and I had the pleasure of visiting a large number of Year 10 classes during our learning walks. It was encouraging to see the vast majority of pupils on task, engaged in their learning, and working hard to achieve positive outcomes. Their focus and effort were clear, and we are proud of the commitment many pupils are showing at this important stage of their studies.



Alongside academic success, we firmly believe in the importance of educating the heart as well as the mind. Over recent weeks, assemblies and form time have provided valuable opportunities for reflection and personal development. Students have had presentations on marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day, as well as celebrating the International Day of Peaceful Coexistence. These presentations have encouraged respect, tolerance, and the importance of learning from history.

In addition, pupils have celebrated the House Saint, St Catherine of Siena, with a focus on the virtue of temperance. This has helped reinforce the importance of self-control and making positive choices, both in and out of school. Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to working closely with you as Year 10 pupils continue to develop academically and personally throughout the year.

## YEAR 11 - MR FRANCIOSO

As we move further into this crucial stage of the Year 11 journey, I would like to take a moment to recognise the continued effort, resilience and maturity that so many of our pupils are showing on a daily basis. Since the New Year, there has been a renewed sense of purpose across the year group. Many pupils have returned with clear intentions to build on their mock results, address areas for improvement and take greater ownership of their learning. This mindset is exactly what will make the difference in the months ahead, and it has been encouraging to see strong engagement in lessons and revision sessions.



Mock examinations have provided valuable feedback, not as a final judgement, but as a guide. They have highlighted strengths to be proud of and gaps that now need focused attention. Pupils who are acting on this feedback, revisiting content and asking for support are already beginning to make tangible progress. With further mock assessments ahead after February half term, it is vital that pupils continue to revise little and often, rather than leaving preparation until the last moment. We have also been inundated with reference requests from colleges, sixth forms and employers, which is fantastic to see and reflects the ambition of the year group as they look ahead to the next stage of their education. However, this should also serve as an important reminder to pupils that strong references are built on daily habits, being in school, working hard in lessons, showing respect to staff and peers, and demonstrating a positive attitude at all times. These qualities matter just as much as exam results.

As always, attendance and punctuality remain key priorities. Every lesson matters, and consistent attendance has a direct impact on confidence, understanding and outcomes. We appreciate your continued support in ensuring pupils arrive on time, fully equipped and ready to learn each day. Homework and independent study are also essential in reinforcing classroom learning and building effective revision habits. I would also like to commend Year 11 on their general conduct around the school. The way pupils are presenting themselves, in lessons, around the site and when representing the school reflects growing maturity and a clear sense of responsibility as they approach the final stage of their school career.

Looking ahead, the coming weeks will require focus, balance and determination. There will be moments that feel challenging, but these are the moments where resilience matters most. Progress is rarely instant, it is built through consistency, routine and a willingness to keep going, even when things feel difficult. Thank you, as always, for your continued support. By working together pupils, families and staff, we can ensure that Year 11 remain confident, motivated and well prepared for what lies ahead.



## Year 11 Tea and Toast Sessions

This week, our Year 11 pupils have been enjoying 'Tea and Toast' sessions during tutor time – a relaxed and welcoming opportunity to start thinking about life in Sixth Form. Over a cup of tea and some toast, pupils have been able to visit the Sixth Form area, get a feel for the environment and meet members of the Sixth Form Team.



The sessions have also provided valuable time to discuss post-16 options, explore different subject choices, and hear first-hand what courses are really like from our Year 13 students. These informal conversations have helped Year 11s ask questions, gain honest insights, and build confidence as they begin to plan their next steps.

Pre-admission interviews will begin in the final two weeks of half term for those pupils who have already applied to Sixth Form; they will continue after half term also. There is still time to apply, however, as applications do not close until Friday 13th February. In addition, Year 11 students will take part in assemblies which will give guidance on how they should prepare for a successful interview. This support will be highly beneficial not only for those applying to Sixth Form, but also for pupils applying to other post-16 pathways. A big thank you to the Sixth Form Team and Year 13 students for making these sessions so informative and welcoming.



## Maintaining Effort as We Approach Exam Season and half term assessments

As we move closer to the start of external examinations, it is vital that our Year 13 students maintain a high level of effort and focus in these final weeks. With exams just around the corner, every lesson matters. Students are expected to make full use of lesson time, study periods, and time spent in school to revise, consolidate learning, and address any gaps in knowledge.

Students should be following structured revision timetables and applying the revision strategies they have learned in school. Teachers are available to offer guidance and support, and students are strongly encouraged to seek help early if they are unsure or need further clarification.

We also value the importance of strong communication between school and home. Year 12 and 13 Parents' Evening will take place on Thursday 12th February, and we would very much like to see all students attend with their parents and carers. Building this partnership is vital in ensuring that students are fully supported during this crucial period. Year 13 reports will be sent home on Friday 6th February, providing an important opportunity to review progress and discuss next steps.

For our Year 12 students, the next two weeks will include half-termly PAR assessments, designed to assess learning and progress made this half term. These assessments highlight the importance of developing effective study and revision habits early, ensuring students are well prepared for the demands of Year 13.

By staying focused, organised, and proactive, both Year 12 and Year 13 students can make the most of this time and continue to build towards successful outcomes.

## Holocaust Memorial Day Reflection – Years 12 and 13

This year, our Year 12 and 13 students marked Holocaust Memorial Day on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January, with a time of reflection focused on the 2026 theme, 'Bridging Generations.' The theme invites us to consider how the responsibility of remembrance does not end with Holocaust survivors, but lives on through their children, grandchildren, and all of us.

Students reflected on the importance of learning from the past in order to shape a better future. This felt particularly significant in light of the steep rise in antisemitic and anti-Muslim incidents in the UK since 7th October 2023. These incidents reflect conflict playing out within our communities, and the reflection emphasised how vital it is that we stand united against hatred, prejudice, and division.

Holocaust Memorial Day seeks to bring people together from all backgrounds: to learn more about history, to empathise with people facing persecution today, and to take action for a more compassionate future. Bridging Generations is a clear call to action – encouraging us to listen, to learn, and to carry these lessons forward. By doing so, we build a bridge between memory and action, and between history and hope. The reflection concluded with a prayer focusing on the value of respect:

Lord, help me to value and appreciate all people,  
recognising what we have in common and respecting what makes each of us unique.  
Guide me to be kind, patient, and fair, listening to others and treating them as I wish to be treated.  
Help me to see your face in everyone I meet.  
Amen.

## Maintaining High Standards in Sixth Form

High standards are central to the success of our Sixth Form, and we have high expectations of all our students. As the most senior members of the school community, Sixth Form students are role models for our Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils, both in their conduct and in their approach to learning. The habits developed now are vital not only for A Level success, but also for future study, training, and employment.

Attendance is a key priority. Students who truly want to be successful in their A Level studies should be aiming for attendance above 97%. Missed lessons mean missed content, and catching up independently can never fully replace learning that takes place in the classroom. Students are therefore expected to attend school every day and arrive promptly to all lessons.

Punctuality and daily routines are equally important. All Sixth Form students must beep in using the Inventory system and sign in at the Common Room by 8.40am each morning. Attendance at tutor time and to assemblies is compulsory. Our bespoke tutor time programme is carefully designed to support academic progress, personal development, and preparation for post-18 pathways.

Students are also reminded of key non-negotiables that help maintain a safe, professional environment. Lanyards must be worn at all times, and mobile phones should only be used in designated Sixth Form areas.

By meeting these expectations consistently, Sixth Form students demonstrate maturity, responsibility, and commitment – qualities that benefit not only their own success, but the wider school community as a whole. Thank you for your support in ensuring that our high standards are met.