



THE ABI UPDATE

ISSUE 1 FRIDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER 2026

MESSAGE FROM INTERIM PRINCIPAL - MR HEARNDEN

Welcome to The Year of IlIsley

What a fantastic start we have made to the new academic year.

I want to begin by saying well done to our students. Walking around school this week, I have been incredibly impressed by the way students have returned: focused, purposeful and ready to learn. There is a real sense that we have started this year with renewed energy and determination.

A particular congratulations goes to our Year 7 and Year 12 students. You have made an excellent start to your new chapters at Archbishop IlIsley, and I have been delighted to see the confidence, enthusiasm and maturity you have already shown. Remember: you are not simply joining our school, you are becoming part of its story, and what a story it is.

2026 marks 100 years since the death of Archbishop Edward IlIsley, the man whose name our school proudly carries. This is therefore a very special year for our community. But celebrating our history is not enough. We must use our history to inspire our future. The Year of IlIsley is about ambition. It is about pride. It is about remembering where we have come from while being determined about where we are going. Most importantly, it is about our young people. We are unapologetic about having high standards. We expect the very best from our students in their behaviour, attendance, punctuality, uniform, effort, attitude and academic achievement. I appreciate that some of these expectations may take time to get used to, particularly where expectations have been different in the past. Change can be challenging. But we will not relent.

We are determined to improve Archbishop IlIsley for our students.

High expectations are not about making life difficult. They are about telling every young person: "We believe you can achieve more." This year, every one of us has a role to play in raising standards and creating a school of which our whole community can be proud.

Today we came together to celebrate Mass, and I would like to thank Fr Toby and Deacon Casey for leading such a beautiful celebration. Our Catholic faith remains at the heart of who we are and what we do. It reminds us that education is about more than examination results. We want our young people to leave Archbishop IlIsley with knowledge, confidence, character, compassion and the courage to make a difference. Make this your year. I also encourage every student to look at our extra-curricular timetable and get involved. Try something new. Join a club. Represent the school. Play sport. Make music. Perform. Compete. Lead. Volunteer. Don't just come to school, get involved in school. Some of the experiences that shape us most happen outside the classroom. Finally, a huge thank you to our Year 11 parents and carers who attended our Information Evening. The turnout was brilliant. Your support and partnership will be hugely important as we work together to ensure that every Year 11 student achieves their very best.

"...just and firm of purpose."

CATHOLIC LIFE • SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

MATTHEW 18:21-359

Then came Peter unto him and said: Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith to him: I say not to thee, till seven times; but till seventy times seven times. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a king, who would take an account of his servants. And when he had begun to take

the account, one was brought to him, that owed him ten thousand talents. And as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

But that servant falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And the lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt.

But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow servants that owed him an hundred pence: and laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest.

And his fellow servant falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he paid the debt.

Now his fellow servants seeing what was done, were very much grieved, and they came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him; and said to him: Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me: Shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee?

And his lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt.

So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.



What does this mean for us today?

In this week's Gospel, Peter asks Jesus how many times he should forgive someone who has hurt or offended him. Jesus responds, "not seven times, but seventy times seven." Jesus is not giving Peter a number to count; He is teaching us that forgiveness should not have a limit.

Through the parable of the unforgiving servant, Jesus reminds us that we all make mistakes and we all need forgiveness. If we have experienced God's mercy, we are called to show mercy to others.

We all experience times when someone disappoints us, says something unkind or hurts us. Forgiveness does not mean pretending that something did not happen or accepting behaviour that is wrong. We can forgive while still holding people accountable and seeking help when we need it. Instead, forgiveness asks us to choose compassion over resentment and reconciliation over revenge.

At Archbishop Ilesley, we believe that every person has dignity because every person is made in the image and likeness of God. This Gospel challenges us to remember that someone's mistake does not take away their dignity. We should not humiliate, exclude or define someone by something they have done wrong. Instead, we should have the courage to show compassion and give others the opportunity to learn, change and make better choices. This week, let us ask ourselves: Is there someone I need to forgive? Is there someone I need to show more patience towards? Have I treated others with the dignity they deserve?

Let us strive to be just and firm of purpose, while also being people of mercy, compassion and forgiveness.

...**"I say not to thee, till seven times:
but till seventy times seven times."**

At Archbishop Ilsley, we want every student to have the best possible opportunity to learn, achieve and feel part of our school community. Regular attendance is an important part of this. Every Child. Every Day. Every Lesson.

Being in school is important, but so is being on time. Arriving late to school or lessons means missing valuable learning and starting the day on the back foot. We want our students to develop the positive habits of being present, punctual and ready to learn.

Our 5 Foundations of Attendance:

This year we are introducing our 5 Foundations of Effective Attendance Practice.

Our approach is about:

- Understanding the reasons behind attendance difficulties
- Working with families to remove barriers
- Providing the right support at the right time.

Keep Your Snap Streak Alive!

Our Attendance Snap Streak competition is now underway!

Achieve 15 consecutive days of attendance and you will be entered into our prize draw!

Let's make good attendance a habit, celebrate success and keep those streaks going.

ARCHBISHOP ILSLEY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

ATTEND TODAY, ACHIEVE TOMORROW.

KEEP YOUR ATTENDANCE SNAP STREAK!

15 DAYS THAT'S THE TARGET!

Attend every day, on time, for **15 CONSECUTIVE DAYS** to keep your streak alive!

EVERY DAY COUNTS
Be here.
Be ready.
Be successful.

15 DAY STREAK = YOU'RE IN!
Achieve 15 consecutive days of attendance.

PRIZES TO BE WON!
All pupils who achieve 15 days will be entered into a PRIZE DRAW!

YOUR FUTURE. YOUR GOALS. YOUR CHOICE. DON'T BREAK THE STREAK!

✓ BE READY | ⬇ BE SAFE | ❤ BE KIND

BE HERE. BE ON TIME. BE READY TO LEARN.

EVERY CHILD. EVERY DAY. EVERY LESSON.



ARCHBISHOP
ILESLEY
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE EVERY DAY COUNTS

Your support. Their future. Our community.



BE READY



BE SAFE



BE KIND



Good attendance helps your child *achieve, belong* and *thrive*.
Together we can make every school day count.

THE 5 FOUNDATIONS OF GREAT ATTENDANCE

Practical tips for parents



1. FEEL LIKE YOU BELONG

Children attend when they feel safe, valued and connected.

- ♥ Spend 10 minutes each day asking about school.
- ♥ Focus on positives: "Who made you smile today?" "What went well today?"
- ♥ Encourage your child to join clubs, sports, music, trips and activities.
- ♥ Celebrate effort, not just grades.
- ♥ Make school a positive topic at home.
- ♥ Avoid saying "It doesn't matter if you miss one day." Instead say "Every day matters because every lesson counts."



2. BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Good communication prevents small worries becoming big attendance issues.

- ✓ Tell school early if something isn't right.
- ✓ Encourage your child to speak to: Tutor, Head of Year, Pastoral Lead, a trusted teacher.
- ✓ Reply to school messages promptly.
- ✓ Attend meetings even if things feel difficult.
- ✓ Work with school rather than against school.

**WE CAN'T HELP
IF WE DON'T KNOW
THERE'S A PROBLEM.**



3. HIGH EXPECTATIONS & GOOD ROUTINES

Attendance starts long before 8:40am.

EVENING

- ✓ Bag packed
- ✓ Uniform ready
- ✓ PE kit packed
- ✓ Devices charging downstairs
- ✓ Early bedtime

MORNING

- ✓ Alarm first time
- ✓ Breakfast
- ✓ Leave home with time to spare
- ✓ Aim to arrive 10 minutes early



4. REMOVE BARRIERS EARLY

Don't wait until attendance falls below 90%.

If your child is struggling with:

- anxiety
- friendships
- bullying
- transport
- bereavement
- family changes
- mental health

**SPEAK TO SCHOOL
IMMEDIATELY.**

Small problems are much easier to solve than long-term absence.



5. CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Children respond well to praise.

Celebrate:

- ★ One full week
- ★ Improved attendance
- ★ Better punctuality
- ★ Getting up independently
- ★ Being ready on time

Rewards don't have to cost money!

Ideas:

- Choose Friday's takeaway
- Movie night
- Extra screen time
- Baking together
- Family walk
- Pick dinner
- Trip to the park



TOP 10 ATTENDANCE TIPS

- 1 School every day unless your child is genuinely too ill.
- 2 Arrive before the bell every morning.
- 3 Book medical appointments after school where possible.
- 4 Avoid holidays during term time.
- 5 Keep bedtime routines consistent – even at weekends.
- 6 Lay uniform out the night before.
- 7 Talk positively about school.
- 8 Tell us about worries early.
- 9 Praise good attendance every week.
- 10 Remember every lesson counts.



DID YOU KNOW?



95%+ attendance gives children the very best chance of success.



90% attendance means missing almost 4 weeks of school every year.



Missing just 2 days every month quickly leads to persistent absence.

**EVERY LESSON MISSED IS
LEARNING THAT CANNOT BE
FULLY REPLACED.**

IF YOUR CHILD DOESN'T WANT TO COME TO SCHOOL...



Instead of saying:
"Do you want to stay home today?"



Try:
"Tell me what's worrying you."



Try:
"Let's solve the problem together."



Try:
"I'll let school know so they can help."

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

CHALLENGE	PRACTICAL PARENT STRATEGY
Difficult mornings	Create a "school launch pad" by the front door with shoes, blazer, bag and PE kit ready the night before.
Anxiety	Agree a "drop and go" routine rather than prolonged goodbyes. Consistency builds confidence.
Frequent minor illnesses	Follow NHS guidance – many coughs, colds and sore throats do not require children to stay at home if they are well enough.
Low motivation	Help your child set a weekly attendance goal and celebrate progress rather than perfection.
Late nights	Introduce a technology curfew (e.g. all phones and gaming devices off and charging downstairs by 9.00pm).
Feeling disconnected	Encourage your child to attend at least one extra-curricular club to strengthen friendships and belonging.
Reluctance after absence	Encourage a return the very next day and let school know so we can provide a warm welcome and support.

OUR ATTENDANCE PROMISE

Together we will:

- ✓ Build strong relationships.
- ✓ Listen without judgement.
- ✓ Remove barriers to attendance.
- ✓ Celebrate every improvement.
- ✓ Help every child achieve their full potential through excellent attendance.



*With Christ at the centre, we live,
love and learn together.*



BE READY | BE SAFE | BE KIND | EVERY DAY COUNTS

YOU ASKED, WE ANSWERED: WHY DO UNIFORM AND APPEARANCE STANDARDS MATTER?

We know that some of our updated uniform expectations have prompted questions. That is completely understandable - so, rather than simply saying, "because it's the rule", we thought we would explain the thinking behind them.

1. What has a nose stud got to do with my education?

You're right- a nose stud isn't going to affect whether you can answer a maths question! But school is about more than individual choices. We have a responsibility to create an environment where students are focused, ready to learn and where expectations are clear and consistent. Uniform is one part of that. It means that when you come through the school gates, you are entering a community with shared standards and expectations. It also removes competition around fashion, brands and appearance. There is a practical issue too: jewellery can create a safety risk during PE, practical lessons and other activities.

So, is this really about nose studs? No. It is about standards, consistency, safety and being ready to learn.

2. Why can't I just wear trainers?

Because trainers are not part of our school uniform. We understand that trainers can be comfortable, fashionable and sometimes look very similar to school shoes. But if we start with, "just this one exception", we quickly end up with lots of different interpretations of what is acceptable. Our expectation is simple: school shoes for school; trainers for sport and leisure. We want students to look smart and professional when they arrive at school. Just as importantly, we want the expectation to be the same for everyone. So, can trainers look smart? Yes. Are they our school shoes? No.

3. Why can't I just wear black trousers, not grey?

Because grey trousers are the uniform. We appreciate that black trousers may look almost identical and that, to some people, the difference might seem insignificant. But a uniform only works when the expectations are clear and consistently applied. If one student wears black because it is "nearly the same", another wears a different style because it is "still smart", and another chooses a different colour because they prefer it, we no longer have a uniform.

The point is not that grey is somehow better than black. The point is that we have agreed what our uniform is — and we expect everyone to follow the same standard. That is also about fairness. We cannot reasonably expect students to follow rules if those rules are applied differently from person to person.

4. Why does my hair need to be a natural colour?

Because your hair is part of your appearance — and our uniform expectations include maintaining a natural, professional appearance. We know that hair colour is a way for young people to express their personality and individuality. There are plenty of opportunities to do that outside of school.

In school, however, we ask students to put the emphasis on who they are, what they achieve and how they treat others, rather than on changing their appearance.

Again, this isn't about saying that coloured hair is "bad" or that students shouldn't express themselves. It is about having a clear boundary between personal choice outside school and the shared expectations of being part of our school community. Natural hair colour means the expectation is straightforward and fair to everyone. It also means staff are not having to decide whether one shade of blue, red or purple is acceptable while another isn't.

The bigger picture

We are not introducing or reinforcing these expectations to make life difficult for students or parents. We have high expectations because we believe our students are capable of meeting them. Uniform is one small part of a much bigger message: Be Ready. Be Safe. Be Respectful and Kind. Clear expectations help us create a school where students can concentrate on what really matters- learning, achievement, character and preparing for their future. And sometimes, the answer to "Why?" is simply: Because being part of a community means accepting some expectations that are bigger than our individual preferences.

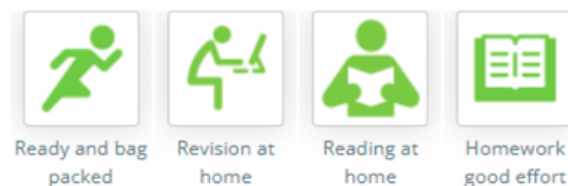
STANDARDS FOR LEARNING

Since students returned this term, tutor groups have been learning about our Ilsley Spirit Etiquette Curriculum during tutor time. This sets out our expectations across seven key areas of school life — from how we start the day and behave in classrooms, to how we move around school, treat one another, and represent Ilsley in the wider community. Each expectation explains not just what we ask of students, but why it matters, so that our high standards are understood rather than simply enforced.

We would ask parents and carers to support us by talking through the Ilsley Spirit Etiquette with your child at home, reinforcing the same expectations we hold at school. The full document is attached with this newsletter and is also available on our website.

Parents, carers and students should also have received their ClassCharts login details this term. ClassCharts is where you can keep track of behaviour points, homework, and detentions, and parents/ carers are also able to give their own Parent and Carer Awards to recognise their child's achievements at home — including Ready and bag packed, Revision at home, Reading at home, and Homework good effort. If you have not received your login details, or are having any issues, please contact your child's tutor in the first instance, who can resend your details or point you to further support.

Parent and Carer Awards



Faith and Belonging

This week our theme was Dignity. In assembly, we reflected on the example of St Teresa of Calcutta and explored what makes each one of us a unique, distinct, never-to-be-repeated human being with innate dignity — each of us called to our own mission.

Our Catholic Social Teaching focus for this half term is "You matter, full stop," centred on the dignity of every person.

We were also delighted to hold our Welcome Mass for Year 7 and Year 12 at Holy Souls Church this week. It was wonderful to welcome our newest students to their first parish mass, and our thanks go to Fr Toby for helping explain the Mass to those students for whom this may have been a new experience.



A very warm welcome to all our students, parents and carers at the start of another academic year. I am delighted to introduce myself as Mrs Grant, Assistant Headteacher and SENCo at Archbishop Ilsley Catholic School.

I am very much looking forward to working with our students, families and staff to ensure that every young person feels known, valued, supported and able to flourish during their time at Ilsley. I am particularly keen to work closely with parents and carers, helping you to navigate your child's journey through secondary school and ensuring that we work together when additional support is needed.

Supporting every learner: At Archbishop Ilsley, we believe that the best possible support for every child, including those with additional needs, starts with excellent universal provision. This is often referred to as Wave 1 provision. It means that every student should experience high-quality teaching every day, regardless of whether they have SEND, additional needs or any other barrier to learning. Our teachers are committed to knowing every learner and understanding their strengths, needs and individual starting points. They use adaptive teaching to make sure that students can access the curriculum while maintaining high expectations for what they can achieve.

Adaptive teaching might include:

1. Breaking learning into manageable steps and checking understanding regularly.
2. Explicitly teaching vocabulary and key knowledge, particularly where students may have gaps in prior learning.
3. Modelling and demonstrating what successful work looks like before students work independently.
4. Using scaffolds and prompts to support students when they need them.
5. Careful questioning and checking for understanding so that teachers can identify misconceptions and respond immediately.
6. Providing visual supports, worked examples and practical resources where these help students understand new concepts.
7. Adapting the pace, explanation or level of support in response to what students demonstrate they know and understand.
8. Providing appropriate opportunities for repetition, retrieval and practice so that important knowledge becomes secure.
9. Gradually removing scaffolds as students develop confidence and independence.

Importantly, adaptive teaching is not about lowering expectations or giving students less challenging work. It is about removing barriers so that every learner can access ambitious, age-appropriate learning - Every student, every lesson.

For this provision to have the greatest impact, it is imperative that students are in lessons, every lesson. Being present means that students can access the high-quality teaching, explanations, modelling, practice, feedback and support that their teachers provide.

For students with additional needs in particular, consistent attendance is an important part of ensuring that gaps do not develop and that they can build on their learning from lesson to lesson.

...“Supporting every learner to belong, achieve and flourish.”



Welcoming our new Year 7 students:

One of our key priorities at the start of this academic year is getting to know our new Year 7 students. Moving from primary to secondary school is a significant transition, and we want every student to feel that they belong at Archbishop Ilsley.

We are working closely with students, families, tutors, Heads of Year and teachers to identify any barriers early and make sure that students receive the support they need to settle into secondary school successfully.

For students with additional needs, this may include ensuring that staff understand their individual strengths and needs, sharing appropriate strategies and reasonable adjustments, and helping students to develop the confidence and independence they need to navigate a much larger and busier school environment.

HOW CAN PARENTS AND CARERS HELP?

Parents and carers play a really important role in helping young people to have a successful start to the school year. You can support your child by:

- Establishing a consistent morning and bedtime routine, particularly after the long summer break.
- Encouraging your child to organise their equipment, uniform and bag the night before so that mornings are calm and predictable.
- Checking that they have the equipment they need for each school day.
- Talking positively about school and encouraging your child to share any worries or successes with you.
- Encouraging regular attendance and punctuality so that they do not miss valuable learning.
- Helping them to develop independence rather than doing everything for them. Small responsibilities at home can build confidence and organisation.
- Reading regularly and talking about what they have read, where appropriate.
- Encouraging them to complete homework and revisit learning, particularly if they find remembering information difficult.
- For children who benefit from structure and predictability, using simple routines, visual reminders or checklists can make preparing for school easier.
- Communicating with us if something is affecting your child's ability to learn or attend school. Early communication allows us to work together and identify appropriate support.

Most importantly, please remind your child that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness. We want our students to become confident, resilient and increasingly independent learners who know that there are adults around them who care about their success.

I am very much looking forward to getting to know our students and families and working alongside you throughout the year. Together, we want every student to be successful.

...“Supporting every learner to belong, achieve and flourish.”

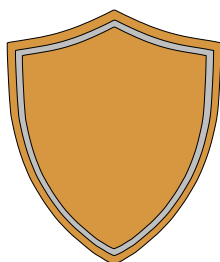


The Ilsley Journey Begins! What a fantastic start to Year 7!

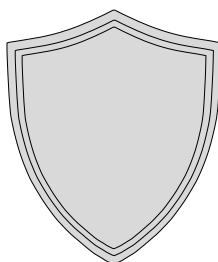
The first couple of weeks of secondary school can feel like a big step. New classrooms, new teachers, new routines and, of course, lots of new faces. For some students, meeting new teachers and peers can be daunting, but I have been incredibly pleased with the way our Year 7 students have risen to the challenge.

We have spent time getting familiar with the school site and learning our routines, while also completing our reading tests. These first few weeks are all about helping students settle, build confidence and begin to understand what it means to be an Ilsley student.

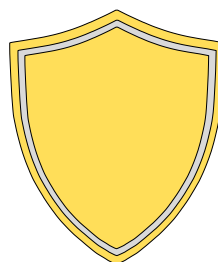
The Ilsley Standard - This year we have introduced our new Ilsley Standard Award. The aim is simple: to recognise and celebrate students who consistently do the right things. There will be four badges to collect:



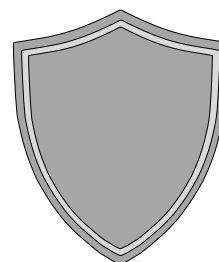
Bronze



Silver



Gold



Platinum

Students will earn badges by demonstrating the standards and habits that we know lead to success. We want to celebrate those students who are consistently punctual, prepared, hardworking and ready to learn.

I will be sending a separate letter shortly with more information about how the Ilsley Standard Award works, so please look out for it!

How you can support your child - As we move forward, your support at home is incredibly important. Please continue to reinforce the basics with your child:

- Smart, correct uniform
- The correct equipment for every lesson
- Excellent punctuality
- Regular attendance
- A positive attitude towards learning

These may seem like small things, but they make a huge difference. At Archbishop Ilsley, we believe that getting the basics right consistently creates the foundations for success.

I am extremely proud of the way Year 7 have started their journey. There is already a real sense of community beginning to develop, and I am excited to see how much they will grow over the coming weeks and months.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support. Together, we can make sure that every member of Year 7 knows that they matter, they belong and they can succeed.



Welcome back to a brand new school year! It has been wonderful to see our Year 8 students return for what promises to be an exciting and successful year ahead.

As we complete our first week back, I would like to congratulate all of our students on the excellent start they have made. They have settled into the routines of the new school year extremely well and have adapted positively to the changes that come with moving into Year 8. As I have visited lessons throughout the week, it has been fantastic to see students enthusiastic to learn, engaging with their new subjects, and getting to know their new teachers. I hope they are enjoying their new timetables and embracing the opportunities that lie ahead.

This year, some form groups have welcomed new form tutors, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to Mr Pearce, Mr Shepard, Mr Richardson, and Mrs Watson as they join the Year 8 team. We are also delighted to welcome our new Deputy Head of Year, Miss Copage, who many families may know as the daughter of our fantastic Mrs Copage from last year.

One of my key aims this year is to encourage every student to get fully involved in the wide range of extracurricular opportunities available across the school. These activities help students develop new skills, build confidence, and create lasting friendships. Personally, I am looking forward to helping with the boys' football team on Mondays and being involved in our school musical. I hope to see many Year 8 students taking part in these exciting opportunities throughout the year.

In terms of standards, Year 8 must continue to be the outstanding year group that we know it can be. Last year, our students were superb and set a fantastic example through their behaviour, attitude, and commitment to learning. We must continue to uphold these high standards and strive for excellence in everything we do.

Attendance is one area where we can improve. I have been a little disappointed that our year group's attendance is currently below our target of 95%. Regular attendance is vital to success in school, and I would encourage all students to make every effort to attend every day. That said, I would like to congratulate the three form groups who have achieved 100% attendance so far this year. What a fantastic achievement!

On a very positive note, students have already earned an excellent number of positive points during the first week. These can now be tracked through our new Class Charts system. Parents, please ensure you have downloaded the app so that you can monitor how your child is getting on in school. This is particularly important as detentions are now issued for the same day and are completed after school.

As a year group, we also continue to promote the joy of reading. Our wonderful librarian is launching a new reading programme and is keen for students to become involved. Reading remains one of the most powerful ways to improve vocabulary, knowledge, confidence, and academic success. If your child would like to take part, please email the school and let me know.

In our assembly this week, I spoke about our Year 8 focus for the year: GRIT.

G - Greatness R - Resilience I - Integrity T - Try

We are all blessed with gifts from God, and I want every student to develop these qualities so that they can use their talents to positively impact those around them. By showing greatness in our actions, resilience when challenges arise, integrity in our choices, and always giving our best effort, we can make this a truly exceptional year.

I would like to finish by thanking all parents and carers for your continued support. For a young person to be truly successful, it requires a strong partnership between home and school, with the student at the centre of everything we do. Together, we can help every child achieve their full potential. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Galatians 6:9

Thank you once again for your ongoing support.

HEAD OF YEAR UPDATES



It has been a real pleasure welcoming our Year 10 students back to school this week. I am delighted to introduce myself as their new Head of Year. I am very much looking forward to supporting Year 10 in making the very most of this important stage of their education.

The first week back has been a positive one. Students have settled into their new routines, reconnected with their learning, and begun to understand the expectations that will help them to succeed. As a year group, we have started to focus on what it means to be wise and courageous learners: students who take responsibility for their learning and have the resilience to challenge themselves.

With GCSEs now on the horizon, every lesson matters. I have spoken to students this week about the importance of high attendance and punctuality. Being in school every day and arriving on time to every lesson gives students the best possible opportunity to make progress. Missing lessons, or regularly arriving late, can quickly result in gaps in knowledge which become increasingly difficult to address as GCSE courses progress.

Strong GCSE results are not achieved overnight; they are built through consistent hard work, good habits, and a willingness to spend time studying at home. My aim is for every student to believe that they can achieve highly and to have the courage to put in the work required to reach their potential.

The Ilsley Standard: This year we have introduced our new Ilsley Standard Award. The aim is simple: to recognise and celebrate pupils who consistently do the right things.

There will be four badges to collect and wear with pride: Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum

Students will earn badges by demonstrating the standards and habits that we know lead to success. We want to celebrate those students who are consistently punctual, prepared, hardworking and ready to learn.

Finally, I would like to thank you as parents and carers for your continued support in ensuring that students arrive at school in the correct uniform. It has also been particularly pleasing to see how smart so many of our Year 10 students have looked this week. High standards of uniform help to create a sense of pride, belonging and consistency across our school community.

Every student needs to be wearing a blazer with either a skirt or straight legged trousers (grey for boys, navy for girls). Trainers are not allowed. Nose piercings, glue on nails and eyelashes must be removed. Please continue to support us by checking that your child is fully equipped and correctly dressed for school each day.

I am excited about the year ahead and look forward to seeing Year 10 grow in confidence, character, and achievement. Together, we can ensure that they make the most of every opportunity and lay strong foundations for their future GCSE success.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

- Monday 14th September - Year 11 Period 6 begins
- Thursday 24th September - Open Evening 6.00pm - 8.00pm. Headteacher talks at 6.15pm and 7.00pm Earlier finish at 12.35pm for students
- Friday 25th September - Later start of 9.45am for students
- Monday 28th September - Year 7 and 10 photos
- Thursday 22nd October - Sixth Form Open Evening
- Friday 23rd October - INSET Day. School is closed to all students

YEAR 9 - MRS WAFI

It has been a fantastic start to the new academic year, and we are delighted to welcome our Year 9 students back to school. They have returned looking smart, confident, and ready to learn, wearing their full school uniform with pride. We know that presenting ourselves well helps to create a positive attitude towards learning. When students arrive dressed smartly and prepared for the day ahead, they are more likely to approach their lessons with focus, confidence, and a sense of purpose. We would like to thank all parents and carers for their continued support in ensuring that students come to school each day looking smart and fully equipped for learning.



This year, we have introduced morning line-ups as part of our daily routine. This has already proved to be a very effective way for form tutors to check uniform standards, provide key information, and help students settle into a positive mindset before lessons begin. A strong start to the day often leads to a successful day of learning, and we have been pleased with how well students have embraced this new routine.

As we move through the year, one of our key priorities is to improve attendance. Regular attendance is essential for academic success, personal development, and building positive relationships within the school community. Every lesson counts and students who attend school consistently are far more likely to achieve their full potential. We look forward to working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that every child has the best possible opportunity to succeed academically and personally. Together, we can help our students develop the habits, resilience, and determination needed to thrive both in school and beyond.

As a school community, we are reminded of the importance of striving for excellence in all that we do: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." — Colossians 3:23. We are excited about the year ahead and look forward to celebrating the achievements and successes of our Year 9 students.

YEAR 11 - MS RUCK

A huge welcome back to Year 11 — the year that counts! I am delighted to introduce myself as your new Head of Year. Having been a tutor within the year group since Year 7, I feel incredibly privileged to be taking the students through their final GCSE year. I am very much looking forward to working alongside Miss Chesterman, our Assistant Head of Year and Mr Bruton KS4 Standards for Learning Lead, to support and challenge every student to achieve their very best.



A huge thank you to all parents and carers who have supported us in ensuring that students have returned to school on time and in the correct uniform. A reminder that videos can be found on our website for any clarification on expectations. This partnership between home and school is incredibly important, particularly as we move into such an important year.

Key Dates and Information

- Year 11 GCSE Information Evening: Thursday 10th September
- Period 6 begins: Monday 14 September. Monday–Thursday, 3:25–4:10pm. These sessions are compulsory and form part of the normal school day for Year 11.
- Some students will also be invited to attend our 6 O'Clock Club. Further details will follow.
- Careers interviews have already begun.
- Prom is Wednesday 7th July 2027

We also have plans for a GCSE Revision Weekend at PGL – watch this space!

This year will undoubtedly be challenging, but we are committed to giving Year 11 as many opportunities as possible to succeed. In return, we expect students to take responsibility, work hard, attend consistently and punctually and make the most of every opportunity. Now is the time to be thinking about establishing good study habits at home, as well as in school. It has been a fantastic start to Year 11, and I am excited about what we can achieve together.

HEAD OF YEAR UPDATES

Welcome back!

It has been a real pleasure to see our Sixth Form students return for the new academic year. We are delighted to welcome back those Year 11 students who have chosen to remain with us and begin the next stage of their studies in Year 12. Our Year 13 students have also embarked on their final year of Sixth Form, and it is hard to believe how quickly the time has passed.

We would also like to extend a warm welcome to the parents and carers of our new Year 12 students. We look forward to working in partnership with you throughout this exciting journey. At the heart of our Sixth Form is our Vision for all. In the coming months, you will hear us talk about our Sixth Form 6 and our use of VESPAR; the Sixth Form Mindset. Together, these form a cohesive pastoral and academic programme that is firmly grounded in our Catholic values. This approach combines high academic aspirations with the development of a positive, growth-oriented mindset, inspired by the virtues of our Sixth Form patron saint, St Teresa of Calcutta. It is designed not only to help students achieve their academic potential but also to nurture their character, resilience and commitment to serving others. Through this, we aim to prepare our students to embrace their future with confidence and to let their light shine through their achievements, while living with purpose, compassion and integrity, reflecting the love and teachings of Christ in all that they do.

This half term, our focus is on Vision. As our students begin a new chapter, we are encouraging them to identify clear goals for the future and to show the courage needed to pursue them, even when faced with obstacles. St Teresa encountered many difficulties throughout her mission, including criticism and opposition, yet she remained steadfast in her faith and commitment to serving others. In assemblies this week, students have reflected on one of St Teresa's inspiring quotes: "Life is a challenge; we must take it." As the year unfolds, we are excited to see our students seize the wide range of opportunities available to them and approach the challenges ahead with confidence, determination and resilience.

It has been wonderful to see our students quickly re-establishing positive routines, whether in the Study Room, the classroom or through their independent study. Their focus and dedication have made a very positive start to the year.

Today, we celebrated a beautiful Year 12 Welcome Mass alongside our Year 13 students and new Year 7 cohort. It was wonderful to welcome parents and carers to join us in marking this special occasion and to come together as a faith community at the start of the new academic year.

The Sixth Form's early Macmillan cake sale proved to be a great success, with staff, students and parents generously supporting the event. Funds raised through cupcake sales after Mass will go towards the invaluable work of Macmillan Cancer Support.



Expectations for Excellence

Establishing positive habits from the outset is key to a successful and fulfilling year. The routines developed now will support students not only in achieving their goals this year but also in building the independence and resilience needed for future success. With this in mind, we would like to highlight a number of important expectations:

- **Attendance and Punctuality** – Excellent attendance and arriving on time at the start of the day and to all lessons, are crucial. Missing even small amounts of learning can have a significant impact on progress, and punctuality reflects a professional attitude that will serve students well in the future. We expect students to aim for at least 97% attendance or above; this is good attendance and students will be eligible for rewards that are linked to attendance. We do understand that at times, students may be required to attend medical appointments. Where possible all appointments should be scheduled outside of school hours. All Sixth Form students are expected to be in school by 8.40am at the latest. Students' attendance and punctuality is monitored weekly. Absence should be with the Sixth Form team
- **Dress Code** – We are so proud of how smart our students look. However, adhering to the Sixth Form 'business' dress code is about more than appearance; it encourages a sense of community, responsibility and professionalism. We expect all students to take pride in representing our Sixth Form. On a Friday, students can participate in 'dress down' Friday for the cost of £1. This is optional.
- **Homework and Independent Study** – Completing homework on time and working independently outside of lessons is essential. A Levels and Level 3 subjects require a great deal of consolidation, and students should be reviewing, extending, and deepening their learning beyond the classroom. Research shows that the most successful students (i.e. those that make the most progress and get the highest grades) are doing at least 15 hours of independent study in Year 12 and between 20 and 25 hours of independent study per week by the end of Year 13. Students have access to two study rooms and the school Library during their school day.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere thanks to all parents, carers and guardians for your ongoing support. Your involvement and encouragement make a significant difference to the success and wellbeing of our students. We look forward to continuing our partnership with you as we help our young people flourish, achieve their ambitions and make the most of their Sixth Form experience.

Sixth Form Open Evening – Thursday 22 October

We are delighted to invite our Year 11 students, parents and carers to our Sixth Form Open Evening on Thursday 22 October. We are very much looking forward to welcoming you and showcasing everything that makes our fantastic Sixth Form such a special place to continue your education. The evening will be an opportunity to explore our wide range of courses, meet our dedicated Sixth Form team and subject teachers, and find out more about the opportunities, support and experiences available to our students. Our Sixth Form is a place where students are encouraged to embrace their future, develop their talents and grow in confidence as they prepare for the next stage of their journey.

We look forward to seeing you on Thursday 22 October and sharing all that our Sixth Form has to offer!