



DEER PARK

newsletter

FRIDAY 31ST JANUARY 2025

ISSUE 9

HEADTEACHERS HELLO



DEAR PARENTS,

THE STUDENTS HAVE BEEN BUSY AND BRILLIANT AS USUAL. DANCE LIVE! WAS A PARTICULAR HIGHLIGHT LAST WEEK - I ABSOLUTELY LOVED IT! MY THANKS TO ALL OF YOU THAT CAME TO SUPPORT AND OF COURSE TO THE STUDENTS AND STAFF INVOLVED. THEIR CREATIVITY AND DARING NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME.

THIS WEEK ALSO MARKS CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK AND WE WILL BE INCORPORATING VARIOUS ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES INTO OUR CURRICULUM TO RAISE AWARENESS AND PROVIDE SUPPORT AROUND THIS VITAL TOPIC.

BEST WISHES,

MR JONES

MEET MRS WILLIAMS



Hello, I joined Deer Park in September and I teach English and RE. I have taught both subjects for a number of years, at GCSE Level. I am originally from South Africa, so I love the sunshine. I also love reading and baking and also run the Poetry Club on Mondays at Deer Park. In my spare time I write short stories and swim to stay active, as well as go on lots of dog walks.

DANCE LIVE!



Huge congratulations to everyone that participated and helped support this years Dance Live! event. Watch out for our Dance Live! special in the next edition of the newsletter.



YEAR 7

Thank you for your continued support with the year group; I am very pleased with how they have come back after the Christmas break and got 'stuck into' this term. January can be a tough month following the festivities and it is important that we get back to 'normality' in all forms of life, including school. I am delighted to share that lessons have been calm and focused and that the ongoing commitment to extracurricular has been excellent. Both the boys and girls football teams are unbeaten so far and I have been hearing wonderful things about our Dance Live students!

In assemblies thus far, I have reiterated the importance of attendance, punctuality, uniform and a positive attitude to learning as the key basic ingredients needed in order to be successful. I have to say that on the whole these aspects are all in a very good place across the cohort and I am understandably very keen for this to continue!

Good attendance is obviously a key area needed for student success and I am working very hard to ensure that our 'stats' are where they should be. Whilst I understand that students will be absent from time-to-time due to illness etc., please can you support us by only keeping your child at home if it is essential. These good habits of resilience and perseverance are really important for the students as they move through the school.

Kind regards,

Mr Parnell

YEAR 8

I can now write to you to express how thrilled I am with Team 2028's latest set of reporting data. They continue to smash everything in their path, and are showing why they are the best cohort at Deer Park! All students should be incredibly proud of what they have achieved so far in Year 8, and I cannot wait to see how much more they all flourish in the second part of the academic year! I am sure that all of their teachers are all excited to discuss this with them in lessons moving forward, and at our upcoming parents evening next month.

I would also appreciate your support with attendance to school. Consistent attendance not only supports academic progress but also helps to develop essential habits of punctuality, responsibility, and time management. These habits are crucial for success in later life, both in further education and future careers. As a school, we kindly ask for your continued support in ensuring your child attends school regularly, as it plays a key role in shaping their future success.

Kind wishes,

Mrs Wilson



YEAR 9

With January drawing to a close, I feel it is timely to reflect on how difficult this time of year can be. Many of you will be familiar with 'Blue Monday', which this year fell on January 20th, and is tagged as the 'most depressing' day of the year, characterised by sadness, a lack of motivation and low energy levels following the festive period.

Although the concept of Blue Monday lacks scientific validity, it serves as a timely reminder of what we can do to promote our own mental health.

I mentioned in assembly about the importance of focusing on our own wellbeing at this time of year, and would encourage Year 9 to consider how much time they spend outside in the fresh air, how much time they spend on their phone, and what time they go to sleep. All of these factors have a clear impact on mental health, and in turn have an impact on their attendance and how engaged they are in lessons at school.

Finally, well done to all of you continuing to get involved in the life of the school. The sports teams continue to impress (specific shout out to the badminton team who demolished Swanmore), and those of you who take part in the focus groups looking to improve aspects of school. Huge congratulations to Isabella D and Mia C, who achieved their Inclusion Badge as part of the Anti Bullying Ambassadors group.

Keep up the great work Year 9, and enjoy the extra 3 minutes of daylight you will get each day in February.

Thanks,
Mr Gregory

YEAR 10

It's been another action-packed fortnight for the Year 10s, with trips to the theatre, rehearsals for Dance Live and even some mock exams for some of the cohort.

We took a brief break from talking about colleges in last week's assembly, with Starling bank coming into the hall to discuss scams and how these can be avoided.

Students were reminded to be extra vigilant when asked for anything via an app, especially from unknown sources, so please reiterate this at home.

By the time you read this, Year 10 will have been made aware of the prefect team, led by our recently appointed Head Boy and Girl and Senior Prefect team. As with the Head Boy and Girl applications before Christmas, the students impressed with their applications, writing maturely and articulately about what they could bring to the role and their passion for the school. I'm excited for them to get going and make improvements to the student voice side of Deer Park!

Now that February is just around the corner, I hope you all enjoy the slightly brighter mornings and longer stretch of daylight into the evenings.

Thanks,
Mr Smith



SUBJECT SPOTLIGHT: ENGLISH



It's been an incredibly busy time in the English department (Isn't it always!?), but it brings me great joy to be back from maternity leave and see the amazing things that are happening within the department. From trips to the theatre to see *An Inspector Calls* with year 10, to our upcoming author visit from Ele Fountain for year 7 and all the amazing work the team does inbetween. Our vision is that 'communication is key to our success' and you can see this thread throughout all of our schemes and current curriculum focuses - working with students to give them the tools to be successful communicators for their futures.

Kind regards
Mrs Walters

YR 7

After tackling poetry and re-writing the epic tale of Beowulf, Year 7 have launched into the new year with their first taste of Shakespeare at Deer Park! Exploring one of his comedies, 'The Tempest', year 7 are already getting to grips with the language (Thou art a villain!), the plot and acting out sections from the infamous Bard! Alongside this, they are learning the art of persuasion through those DAFORREST techniques we so often see in adverts, my favourite of all, the rhetorical question and direct address used in Cadbury's Creme eggs simple and timeless 'How do you eat yours?' advert. Year 7, Shakespeare may have died long ago, but you are bringing his stories to life in the classroom with your enthusiasm and creativity. Keep it up!

YR 8

Rebellion is amongst us... Year 8 have begun their studies of George Orwell's allegorical tale 'Animal Farm'. Just as the animals have driven out their master 'Mr Jones', in class we are exploring what would happen if our very own Mr Jones was driven out of the school and the students were in charge of making up the rules! Students are exploring the art of persuasion in speech writing, just like the animals on the farm or the political figures in history they represent did. By the end of the Spring term, they will be voting in their own 'class captain' who gets to make some decisions... but will they be true to their manifesto or, like the pigs in our story, start changing some of the rules to make them more favourable once they are leaders?

YR 9

As they embark on their KS4 journey, year 9 are tackling their first GCSE accredited assessment this half term - their Spoken Language Exam. Each student has picked their own topic to form their opinion, research and persuade a small group that they should come to their way of thinking. The learning mentors and teachers have been so impressed by the maturity of topics picked by students - from mental health to footballers wages and from animal testing to abortion rights - we can't wait to see them shine after half term when they will be performing and recording them.

YR 10

After covering *An Inspector Calls* and their poetry anthology in the Autumn term, January meant it was time to turn our focus to the language paper which will form part of their mock exams. Students have been looking at the way to answer the questions and how to craft a beautiful piece of creative writing under exam conditions - vital, when it is 40 marks and half of the paper! All of this is preparation for their upcoming mocks which will be on AQA Language Paper 1 and AQA Literature Paper 2. Watch their Google Classroom for revision guides which will be uploaded soon to help know what to look at from home!

CAREERS INFORMATION



A group of Year 10 students recently had the opportunity to explore the exciting world of childcare careers through an engaging interactive session! They discovered a wide range of roles within the industry, from early years educators to childcare managers, and gained valuable insights into what each job entails. The session also focused on apprenticeships and technical routes tailored to student's next steps, providing a fantastic pathway into the childcare sector. Students had the chance to explore what local colleges offer, from courses to dynamic learning environments, and learn how qualifications can open doors to further career progression. This eye-opening event sparked curiosity and inspired students to consider apprenticeship opportunities as a rewarding career path in childcare!



CLICK [HERE](#) FOR THE MOST RECENT LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION BULLETIN (LMI)

CAREERS INFORMATION

INVESTIN | THE ULTIMATE WORK EXPERIENCE

Weekend Career Opportunities

Choose your career, maximise your potential



We're excited to share that our weekend programmes are now open for registration! This spring, we're running weekend programmes for students aged 15-18 with 15 exciting careers to choose from, such as medicine, architecture, investment banking, law and many more.

Our weekend programmes provide students with the perfect introduction to an industry, where they can meet top professionals, participate in interactive career simulations and build practical skills to prepare for their future career.

What's more, students will gain real-life experience as well as a personalised certificate to boost future university applications!

[View Programmes](#)

IN-PERSON



Taking place at UCL in London, our in-person programmes allow students to fully immerse themselves in the day in the life of a professional in London.

ONLINE



Our online programmes are delivered live by our industry experts. Nothing is pre-recorded and all our content is carefully curated to be interactive and engaging.

SPRING WEEKEND PROGRAMME DATES

9th March 2025 - London or Live Online

Doctor | Architect | Entrepreneur | Computer Scientist | Artist

16th March 2025 - London or Live Online

Lawyer | Dentist | Engineer | Filmmaker | Forensic Scientist

23rd March 2025 - London or Live Online

Banker | Psychologist | International Politics | Fashion Designer | Vet



[Find Out More](#)

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CAREERS INFORMATION



Huge thanks to all our wonderful guests that supported our annual careers fair on Friday 17th January. It was wonderful to see all our students engaged in conversations, learning about the variety of different post-16 options available to them. Thank you also to all our parents who supported the event.

Congratulations to Aimee S and Aoife M in year 8 for winning the Leaders prize and a huge thank you to Leaders for this



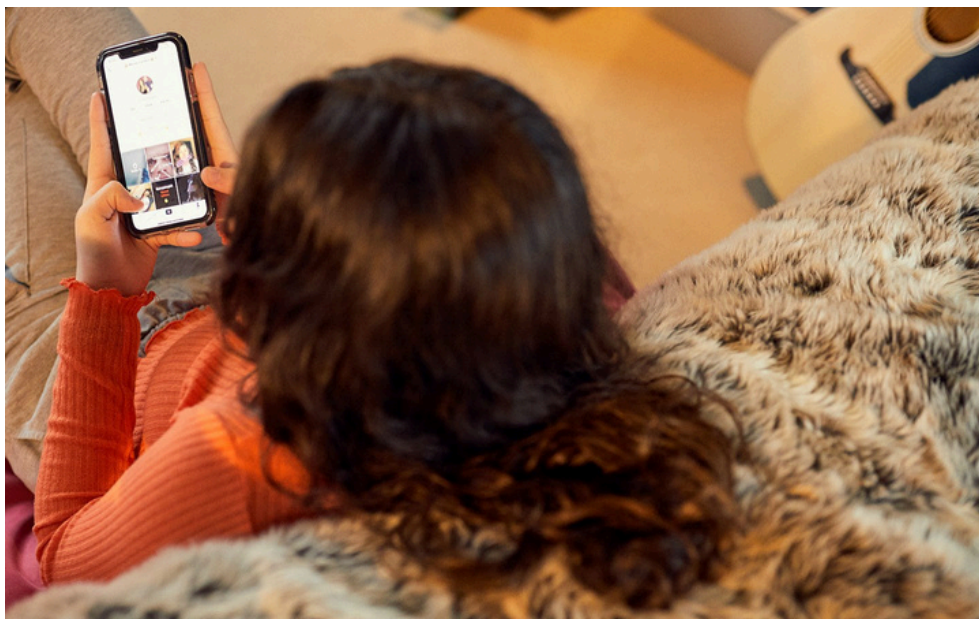
CLICK [HERE](#) FOR THE MOST RECENT LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION BULLETIN (LMI)



SAFEGUARDING RESOURCES

We ask all parents to remain vigilant in their child's device use. We are aware of certain Whatsapp groups whereby students are being added and subsequently being exposed to inappropriate or indecent material. Any student who is found to be using the groups to send such material risk being sanctioned accordingly by the school as well as the activity being logged with police. As always, we encourage students to only join/be added to groups with small numbers and with people they are familiar with. We would encourage parents to check Whatsapp privacy settings and ensure that 'who can add me to groups' is set to contacts only to ensure children cannot be added to any chats by people outside of their friends and family.

There is lots of information to support parents keeping their children safe online on our school website and the NSPCC have put together [this](#) advice for parents and carers.



LUNAR *New Year*

BY KEZIA SWAIN



YEAR OF THE SNAKE

On Wednesday, the first new moon of the lunar calendar effulgently ushered in the new year, stamping the imminent arrival of spring. With it, slithered the Year of the Snake, coiling itself around the Lunar festivities, and hissing its presence of good luck, rebirth and regalty. The timeless tale of the 12 zodiac animals tells the story of one of the most significant Gods in the traditional Chinese religion, Jade Emperor, who set it upon himself to organise a race and invited all the animals in the word to conquest for the valiant victory of 1st place. 12 ardent creatures tussled there way to the start line: a pig, dog, rooster, monkey, sheep, horse, snake, dragon, rabbit, tiger, ox and rat. As a reward for turning up, the Emperor named a year in the zodiac after each of them, while the race would determine the order each animal would place. Even though it finished with 6th place, the tenacious wood snake has seized 2025, representing growth, flexibility and tolerance. Those fortunate enough to be born in it's year, are said to demonstrate qualities of resilience, leadership and courage. The snake has declared change and character development for all who grace it's year, urging us to expunge unhealthy habits and enter with an auspicious attitude. A sign for us all to be more snake-like this 2025.

Bills of mortality

members needed!!!

For an epic band

can you play an instrument??

we need a rhythm guitarist and bassist

do you have what it takes?!

are you able to perform?

application Form

required if your

intersted

CLICK HERE 

Bills of mortality



STUDENT FOCUS GROUP UPDATE

RIGHTS, RESPECTING COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP

The RRC Focus Group has been working hard at raising the profile of Children's Rights across the whole school. They have given a presentation to all staff about what it means to be a Unicef Rights Respecting School, and how they feel we need to act - as a community - moving forward; we are currently a Bronze Award School but hoping to attain Silver prior to the Easter break. The students are integral to this process and at the heart of everything we do.

They have also given an assembly to every year group and designed two Education for Life sessions within the Tutor Group programme - there have included interactive sessions that gain insightful feedback from the student population.

They are always keen to welcome new members to the group, and have made it clear that anyone is able to join the RRC - student voice is an essential part of education and Deer Park recognises the perspective this brings.

ECO FOCUS GROUP



Eco Focus group have started work on making our school more sustainable by working towards our Eco Schools green flag accreditation. Students have focused on three main goals with actionable steps that will make our school a more environmentally conscious place. Those goals include addressing single use plastic in schools and seeing where we can reduce them. Another goal is building bug hotels and hedgehog houses to encourage wildlife. Finally we are hoping to work alongside the wildlife ambassadors and gardening club to improve the biodiversity by planting wildflower beds made up of only native species.

Our Eco Focus group is so passionate and positive, they have as always been incredible this last term.

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP UPDATE

DIVERSITY FOCUS GROUP

The Diversity Focus group hosted a raffle and sold some treats to raise money for Stop Hate UK, a charity dedicated to working to challenge all forms of Hate Crime and discrimination, based on any aspect of an individual's identity.

The lucky winners of the raffle were Pandora D (Year 8) and the kitchen team. Congratulations to the winners!

We managed to raise £65 for the charity to help them to continue to do invaluable work around the UK, like run workshops and work closely with vulnerable families. Well done team!



STUDENT FOCUS GROUP UPDATE

DEER PARK TV FOCUS GROUP

Deer Park TV Focus Group has been very busy this year, and it's still only January!

A group of DPTV students visited the University of Winchester Media Department, and attended a talk given by Rob Ferrin (Programme Leader - Film Production, UoW), on all aspects of studying Film Production at the university, as well as what working on real productions is like. The students were then able to look around the facilities, including the podcast studio, media lab, sound/lighting equipment, film sets.

We are also working with the Formula 24 Crew to document the building of their amazing racing car. We can't wait to film the first test run!

In addition, DPTV were approached by St Luke's Church in Hedge End to design some promotional artwork for an upcoming local project - final design pictured below.

Quote from Maddie at St Lukes:

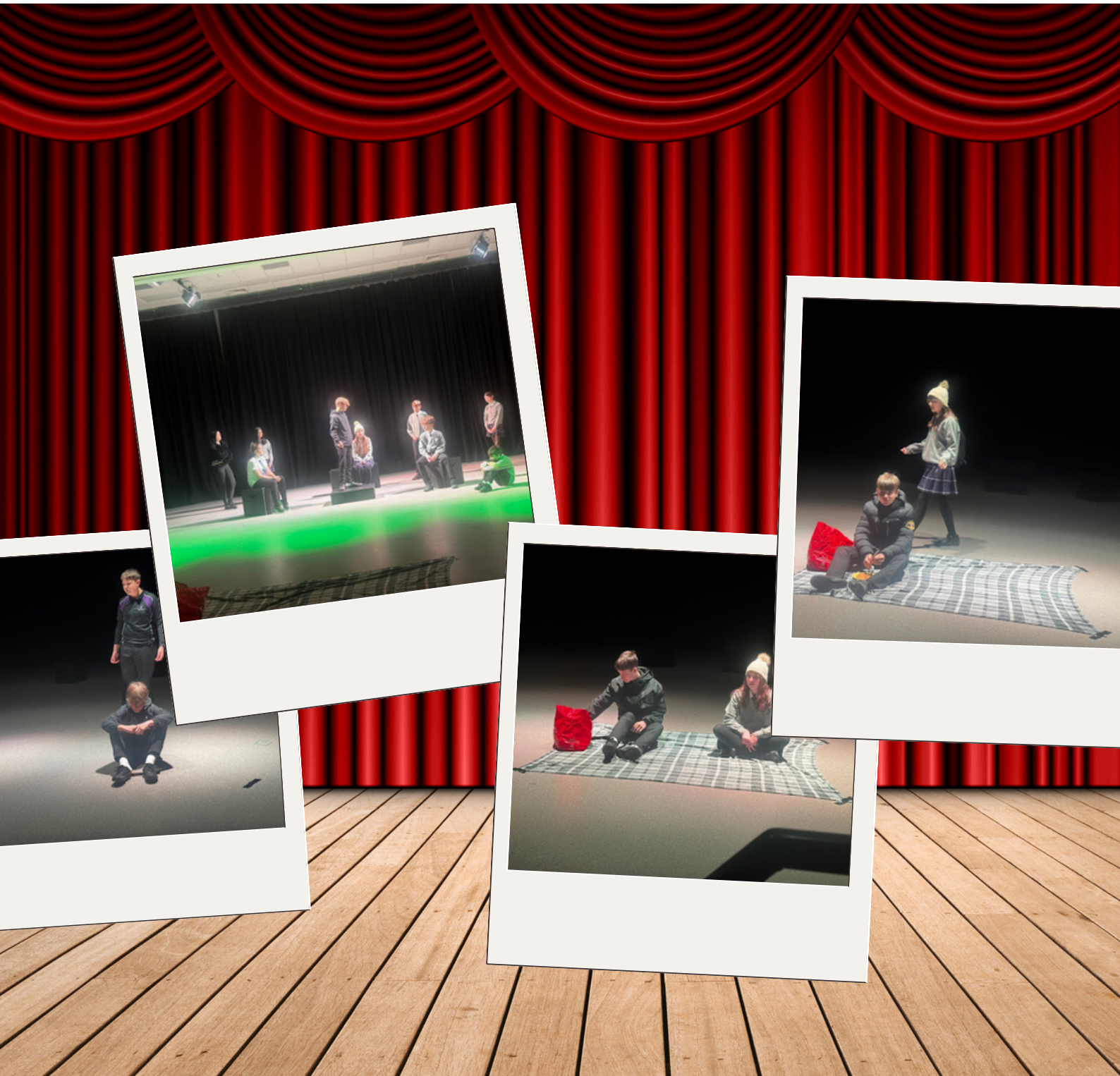
"We absolutely loved seeing all the designs the students came up with and were so impressed by their work! It was a really hard decision to choose which design to use for Hedge End's Got Talent, and in the end we combined elements from each design we received to create the final image. We hope the students are really proud of the art they created and thank them for all their hard work!"



YEAR 9 SHINE IN "DNA" PERFORMANCE!

Year 9 Drama students recently showcased their talents with a compelling performance of "DNA" by Dennis Kelly. Having previously studied the play in English lessons, students were able to bring their understanding of the text to life on stage.

The performance explored important themes of guilt, responsibility, and peer pressure, offering a thought-provoking experience for the audience. Congratulations to all involved on a successful production!



FARADAY COMPETITION

15 year 8 students took part in a Faraday competition at Wildern school on the 21st January. The 3 teams of 5 needed to plan, design, build a working prototype and present their solution to a design brief they were given on the day. They were competing against 3 teams of 6 from Wildern School.

Thomas M, Jacob B, Isaac D, Ruby H and Amber C were victorious and won the trophy!



HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Deer Park School recently marked Holocaust Memorial Day with a live webinar hosted by the National Literacy Trust. Students were able to take part in a live webinar featuring award-winning writer, Tom Palmer, author of *After The War* in conversation with Holocaust survivor, Alfred Garwood. Alfred shared the story of his family and childhood, and discussed the importance of Holocaust education in the modern day.



LITERACY AT DEER PARK

On the 13th of February, we have the award-winning author Ele Fountain coming to visit Y7. Ele will be delivering a talk, a question and answer session and, for a lucky few, a creative writing workshop!

If your child wants to familiarise themselves with Ele's work, here are the stories she has written so far. Perhaps you may want to pop one of her books in your basket next time you are at your local bookshop! Her titles are also in our lovely library!




STEM GLIDING TRIP


9 students from years 9 and 10 visited Lasham Airfield for a GoGliding event. Students toured the hangar, engaged in STEM activities, and got to experience their gliding simulator. They are also eligible to apply for a £500 gliding scholarship to help get them into gliding. They loved the day and all got involved!




CHILDRENS MENTAL HEALTH WEEK
3RD-9TH FEBRUARY



WELLBEING ACTIVITIES



<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHERE</u>
MINDFULNESS COLOURING	MONDAY BREAK 1 & 2	ROOM 112
GAMES/PUZZLES & ACTIVITIES WITH ST JOHN'S & ST LUKES	TUESDAY BREAK 2	ROOM 001
CROCHET	TUESDAY BREAK 2	ROOM 112
CREATIVE WRITING	WEDNESDAY BREAK 1	ROOM 007
GRATITUDE JOURNALING	WEDNESDAY BREAK 2	ROOM 107
SINGING	THURSDAY BREAK 2	MUSIC ROOM
MANDALA MAKING	FRIDAY BREAK 1 & 2	ROOM 112



Deer Park will be taking part in Children’s Mental Health Week, February 3rd-9th, 2025. The theme this year is “Know Yourself, Grow Yourself” and the week will shine a spotlight on the importance of children and young people’s mental health.

At Deer Park, students are encouraged to engage in various activities that support mental health and well-being and an additional timetable of activities can be seen above. The school promotes reading as a powerful way to maintain a healthy mind and provides resources and guidance to students and parents on mental health.

Additionally, all students will be participating in an extended assembly next week that has been created by Here4You with six of the UKs leading mental health charities.

We urge all students to reach out and talk about their mental health and wellbeing.



PHYSICAL EDUCATION & SPORT UPDATE

FIXTURES & RESULTS

Year 7 boys and junior girls have achieved top of the table position following this week's results. A great start to their league football at Deer Park. League website: <https://southamptonsschoolsfa.leaguerepublic.com/index.html>

Yr7 Boys - DP 7 - Cantell 2
Jnr Girls DP 4 - Hamble 0

Deer Park Junior Girls Triumph at Wildern!

A massive congratulations to the Deer Park Junior Girls' football team for their fantastic 3-2 victory away at Wildern School! It was a closely fought match, but the team showed incredible skill and determination to secure the win. Well done, girls – we're so proud of you!

From Miss Andrews



#DPS SPORTS

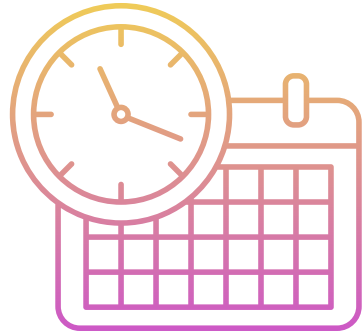


Extra Curricular

TIME TABLE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Break 1	Poetry (004)- Monday Week A Drama Club (KS3)	Get Active (SH) Year 7 Maths Drop-in (117 & 118) French Support Drop in (103/104/105) Gardening Club(Meet in AS)	Get Active (SH) Year 8 Dominoes Club (AS) French Support Drop in (103/104/105) KS4 Intervention (Maths/Science) (117) Ks4 History Support B week (110) Year 9 & 10 Art Catch-up (203)	Get Active (SH) Year 9 English Drop In- 007 (EJL)Year 10	Get Active (SH) Year 10 ICT Drop in (101 & 102)
Break 2		Global Affairs Club (108) IT and Coding Club (102) French Support Drop in (103/104/105) Chess club (114) Bronze Arts Award' Year 8's (121)	Debate Club (year 9/10) (003) Puzzle club (119) French Support Drop in (103/104/105) Boys Dance Company (Dance Studio) Ks4 History Support A week (110) Year 9 & 10 Art Catch-up (203)	ICT Drop in (101 & 102) Guitar ensemble (008 - all guitarists welcome!)	
After School	Badminton Girls Football (Astro) Rugby (Grass Pitches) Self study club (LRC) Flower Arranging - For Students and Staff Art Club (203)	Outlet Basketball Club External booking (paid sessions) Self study club (LRC) Percussion ensemble (008)	Boys Football (Astro) STEM Club (211) Dance Live (Dance Studio) Dance Live Crew (201) Book Club (002) History Film Club (109) WEEK A only Self study club (LRC) Fantasy Games club (LRC)	Netball (Courts) Dance Company (Dance Studio) Mathletes (118) Spanish Club (104) Deer Park Magazine (003) Self study club (LRC) Team Deer Park - Formula 24 Invite only (215)	Self study club (LRC)

UPCOMING DATES



Date	Activity	Year Group
Week Beginning Monday 3rd February	Children's Mental Health Week	All Years
Wednesday 5th February	Imperial War Museum Trip	Some Year 9
Thursday 6th February	Parent Support Programme (PSP) - Pathways 18.00-19.00	Year 8 Parents
Friday 7th February	NSPCC Number Day	All Years
Week Beginning Monday 10th February	National Apprenticeship Week	All Years
Tuesday 11th February	Safer Internet Day	All Years
Wednesday 12th February	V & A Art Trip	Some Year 9
Thursday 13th February	Year 8 Parents Evening (virtual)	Year 8
Friday 14th February	Last day of half term	All Years

TERM DATES FOR THIS
ACADEMIC YEAR CAN BE
FOUND [HERE](#)



Polite reminder: All meal deals are £3.20 and served at break 2. The daily limit to spend is £7.50 unless you have asked us to cap this. Hot food is also available at break 1. If you receive the FSM allowance of £3.20, this does not get reset from break 1 and is to be used across the day. If your child does fall into a negative balance a red slip will be issued at the office and a phone call home will be made to ask to top up the account. We can no longer allow purchases on overdrawn accounts. many thanks.

CAR PARK

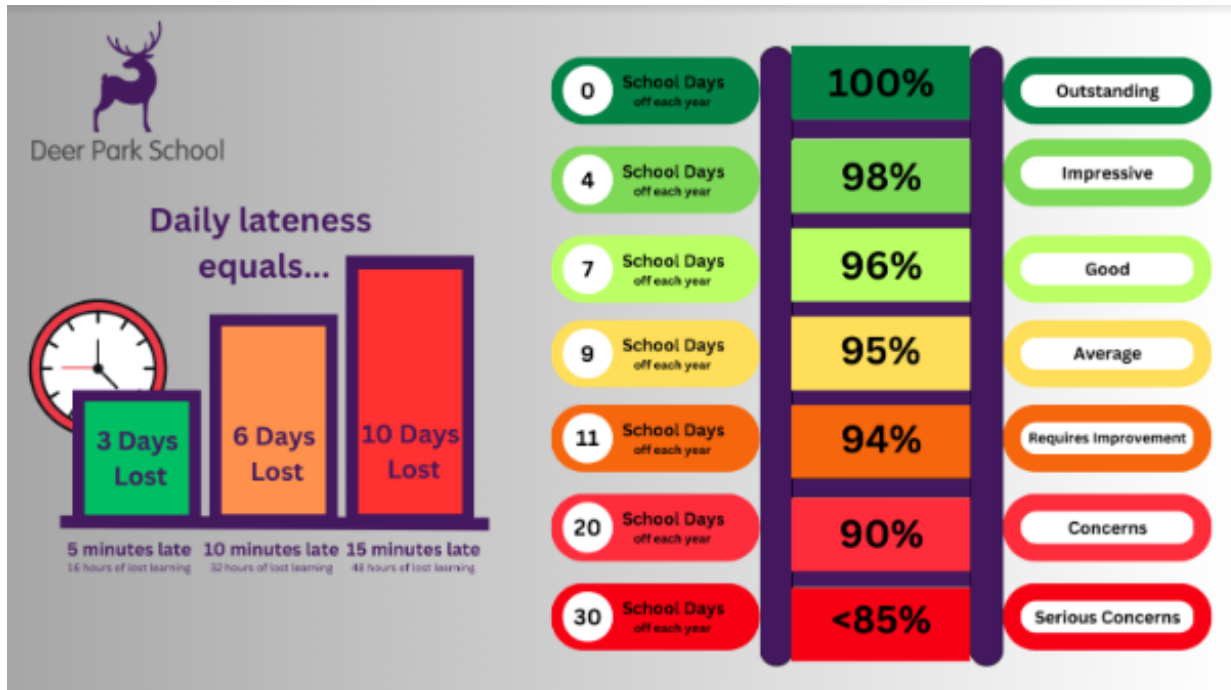
For the safety and security of all students and staff, please be reminded that the school car park is reserved exclusively for those who hold a valid car park pass or a Blue Badge . We kindly request that you do not use the car park for general drop-offs or collections (Unless you are collecting your child during the day for an appointment).

To ensure a smooth and safe drop-off and pick-up process, please utilize the designated drop-off points available on Sika Avenue.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding in helping us maintain a secure environment for everyone.

ABSENCES

Please, where possible, could you contact us before 8.30am if your child is unable to attend school. Absences can be recorded via Edulink or by e-mailing absence@deeparksecondary.org. Alternatively please call the school on 01489 351100 and select option 1 to report your child absent.



HOLIDAY FORMS

If you need to request an authorised absence from school, for example for holidays, attending family funerals, etc Parents will now need to complete an online google form. This should make it easier for parents to complete. The link for the form is [here](#).

Lost Property

All lost property is kept in the Library (LRC). If your child(ren) has lost anything, please ask them to collect anything that belongs to them. Items will be kept for 3 weeks and then donated. Please help us to get items back to your child by clearly labeling items.

Thank you.





Safe Haven Southampton

**NO
LiMiTS**
Helping Young People
Help Themselves

**Out of hours support for young people aged
11-25 and experiencing crisis with their
mental health**

- Emotional and practical support in a safe, calm space to help you explore your current situation
- Open access drop-in sessions
- Face-to-face, online & telephone appointments available
- Brief interventions to signpost and refer you to other sources of support
- Supporting you with skills and resources to help you to improve your mental health

Mondays
Ages 15-25

Drop-in session
4.30pm-5.30pm

One-to-one sessions
6.30pm-8pm
(by appointment only)

Fridays
Ages 11-14

Drop-in session
4.30pm-5.30pm

One-to-one sessions
5.30pm-7pm
(by appointment only)



No Limits Advice Centre, 13 High Street
Southampton SO14 2DF



Call 07918 259 365 to book a one-to-one appointment



Scan to find
out more

www.nolimitshelp.org.uk
enquiries@nolimitshelp.org.uk

No Limits (South) is a registered charity in England and Wales. No. 1088835

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

WHATSAPP

AGE RESTRICTION
16+

In UK and Europe;
rest of the world 13+

With more than two billion active users exchanging texts, photos, videos and documents, as well as making voice and video calls, WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service. Its end-to-end encryption only allows messages to be viewed by the sender and any recipients: not even WhatsApp itself can read them. This privacy issue has been in the spotlight recently, as the UK's Online Safety Bill proposes to end such encryption on private messaging; WhatsApp is unwilling to do so and has reportedly considered withdrawing its service in the UK should this legislation go ahead.

...MSG ME...

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EVOLVING SCAMS

WhatsApp's popularity makes it a lucrative hunting ground for scammers. Recent examples include posing as the target's child, requesting a money transfer because of a spurious 'emergency'. Plus a scam where fraudsters trigger a verification message by attempting to log in to your account, then (posing as WhatsApp) call or text to ask you to repeat the code back to them, giving them access.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

To start a chat, someone only needs the mobile number of the WhatsApp user that they want to message. If your child has ever given their number out to someone they don't know, that person could then contact them via WhatsApp. It's also possible that your child might be added to a group chat (by one of their friends, for example) containing other people that they don't know.

FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp's connectivity and ease of use allows news to be shared rapidly - whether it's true or not. To combat the spread of misinformation, messages forwarded more than five times on the app now display a "Forwarded many times" label and a double arrow icon. This makes users aware that the message they've just received is far from an original ... and might not be entirely factual, either.

ONLINE

'VIEW ONCE' CONTENT

The facility to send images or messages that can only be viewed once has led to some WhatsApp users sharing inappropriate images or abusive texts, knowing that the recipient can't re-open them later to use as evidence of misconduct. People used to be able to screenshot this 'disappearing' content - but a recently added WhatsApp feature now blocks this, citing increased privacy.

CHAT LOCK

Another new option allows users to store certain messages or chats in a separate 'locked chats' folder, saved behind a passcode, fingerprint or face ID authentication. The risk here is that this function creates the potential for young people to hide conversations and content that they suspect their parents wouldn't approve of (such as age-inappropriate material).

VISIBLE LOCATION

WhatsApp's 'live location' feature lets users share their current whereabouts, which can be helpful for friends meeting up or parents checking that their child's safely on the way home, for example. However, anyone in your child's contacts list or in a mutual group chat can also track their location - potentially letting strangers identify a child's home address or journeys that they make regularly.

Advice for Parents & Carers ...TYPING...

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Encourage your child to treat unexpected messages with caution: get them to consider, for example, whether the message sounds like something a friend or relative would really send them. Make sure they know never to share personal details over WhatsApp, and to be wary of clicking on any links in messages. Setting up two-step verification adds a further layer of protection to their WhatsApp account.

THINKING BEFORE SHARING

Help your child to understand why it's important to stop and think before posting or forwarding something on WhatsApp. It's easy - and all too common - for content to then be shared more widely (even publicly on social media). Encourage your child to consider how an ill-judged message might damage their reputation or upset a friend who sent something to them in confidence.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

It's wise to change your child's WhatsApp settings (go to 'Privacy', then 'Groups') to specify which of their contacts can add them to group chats without needing approval; you can give permission to 'My Contacts' or 'My Contacts Except ...'. Additionally, if your child needs to use 'live location', emphasise that they should enable this function for only as long as they need - and then turn it off.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY

Some parents like to check in with their child about how they're using WhatsApp, explaining that it will help to keep them safe. If you spot a 'Locked Chats' folder, you might want to talk about the sort of chats that are in there, who they're with and why your child wants to keep them hidden. Also, if your child has sent any 'view once' content, you could discuss their reasons for using this feature.

Meet Our Expert

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



...HEY OSCAR...



National Online Safety

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