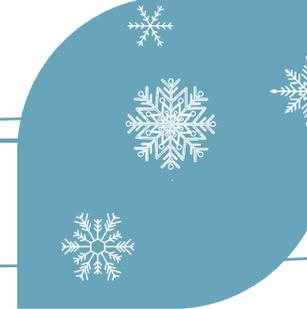


DECEMBER 2023



LINES FROM OUR LANDSCAPE



“ Thank you again for your commitment and dedication to our children and young people. ”

Lorraine Heath
CEO



As we approach the end of the longest and arguably the most arduous term, I would like to thank all our team members for your skill, kindness, positivity, resilience and commitment to our children, young people and their families. As I write this, I am putting together the first draft of our strategic plan to guide our work over the next 5 years but I also wanted to reflect on the very short journey we have all been on together over the last few months.

Everything starts with our mission which is a distillation of the shared values which set us on this pathway together.

Our Mission:

- To nurture and develop the ambition, talents and interests of every child.
- To break down the barriers that inhibit the opportunities and achievements of disadvantaged pupils so that they can go on to lead lives of choice and opportunity
- To create a family of schools that are deeply and purposefully connected to their communities.

It's fantastic to see this mission lived out in our schools in a myriad of ways. This includes the sport, drama, music, trips and visits at home and abroad which so many of you have led and participated in over the last term. We have also joyfully planned and shared nativities, concerts, pantomime, and carol services alongside engaging our communities through parent meetings and other information evenings and celebrations.

On top of this, schools have hosted community events ranging from breakfasts to PTFA fundraising as well as connecting with parents and carers through tutor and academic mentoring programmes. These are the features of school life that help to

create that sense of belonging and attachment that we know are so important to pupils' enjoyment of school.

As always, I want to use this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to privileging the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils in our schools as we seek to break down the barriers that work against them. We know that they thrive best when schools have protective factors in place to help them feel that they belong in our schools. These protective factors include feeling safe, secure and included by their peers. The soon to be launched trust-wide fundraising initiative is one such opportunity to bring the whole community together. Thank you to everyone in advance for your efforts in support of this.

The Autumn term is typically one of the most tiring in the school year and no more so than for our ECTs. If you are one of the many ECTs starting your teaching career at one of our schools, well done for surviving and I hope that despite the challenges, which I know at times can feel overwhelming, you have been well supported by your teams.

I would therefore like to wish all staff, families, volunteers, governors and trustees a very Happy and Healthy Christmas. Thank you again for your commitment and dedication to our children and young people and I hope that the Christmas break brings both rest and fun. Hopefully the experience will be equally positive for our pupils although we know for some that it may not. So, a particular thank you as well to our Safeguarding teams who are never truly off duty and who continue to help families navigate the most difficult of times.

See you in 2024, Lorraine.



JANUARY
2024



We have a plan to get fit together!
Starting on 1st January 2024, every member of our Trust community, students, staff, parents/carers, governors and other family members can join in. The plan is that as schools and families we walk, run, cycle, or otherwise exercise for one common goal.
>> [link](#)

OUR
BIG
EXERCISE
PROMISE

#bettertogether



OUR BIG EXERCISE PROMISE Starting on 1st January 2024, we are going to encourage students, staff, parents/carers, governors and other family members to walk, run, cycle, or otherwise exercise in January.

What are we hoping to achieve through 'Our Big Exercise Promise'?

- Students spending time being active so that they are seeing the physical, mental and social benefits of exercise.
- Students spending time with family members and/or friends, away from screens.
- As many students, staff, families and community members involved as possible.
- Raise as much money as we can to support the charities decided by the individual schools What do we need to do to get started?

Our Team across our schools will start promoting the event. Plans are in place to:

- Book some time to talk to the children about this.
- Talk to staff and promote it to gather ideas and generate a buzz.

- Write to parents/carers, asking them to take part with their children.
- Design a simple recording form which allows people to submit the distances they've travelled.
- Perhaps organise an event in January for everybody to take part eg: everybody walks/runs a particular distance during a PE lesson.
- Ask the children to come up with their ideas for how to raise money through their efforts: cake sales, a disco sponsorship from neighbours, everybody brings in £1, non-uniform day etc.
- Promote, promote, promote via social media.
- Communicate with regular updates to our communities throughout January, through normal channels.

I will look forward to working with you all on this.

Dave MacCormick,
Headteacher, Holyrood Academy





“
Our library remains a hub of opportunity and is an integral part of why there is a culture of reading.
”

Rob Crocker
Headteacher

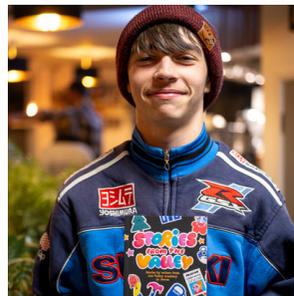
As we approach Christmas I'm proud to reflect upon a brilliant half term at Axe Valley where we've been breaking records. Firstly, students have earned the highest amount of house points ever in a term. Whilst many are for contributions to the community, extra curricular activities or reading, most of them have been awarded in lessons – for students working hard and achieving great things. Secondly, I was thrilled to learn that we've had our highest number of first choice Year 7 applications to the school ever – a real testament to what's on offer at Axe. Thirdly, we had a joyous Christmas in the Quad event with stalls, games, music performances and a raffle – some real snow on the day added a touch of magic and the fundraising record was broken too.

Our library remains a hub of opportunity and is an integral part of why there is a culture of reading. This half term I attended

a book launch, where short stories from students have been collated, edited, and published into an excellent book. I've also enjoyed seeing students work with poet Louisa Adjoa Parker, student work will be published as an anthology ready for International Poetry Day in March. Students from our Book Club were fortunate enough to take part in an online talk from Katherine Rundell who just won the Waterstone's book of the year award. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful librarian Matt Brown who makes such a positive difference to so many students' lives every day.

We've also had a very successful first round of Year 11 Pre Public Exams. Behaviour has been exemplary throughout and it's clear that so many students have put huge amounts of effort into revision and preparation.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas from everyone at Axe.





“

It is with great pride that I share the achievements and events across our community.

”

Polly Matthews
Headteacher

As we reflect on the past term at Court Fields School, it is with great pride that I share the achievements and events across our community. Once again, our students have demonstrated our values of Achieve, Belong and Participate in their learning, enrichment, and engagement with others.

Our Year 11 students exhibited resilience and dedication during their Pre-Public Examinations (PPEs), setting the stage for success in their upcoming final exams. Anti-Bullying Week was a powerful reminder of our commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive environment, with activities echoing the theme “Make a Noise About Bullying.”

Remembrance Day held special significance as we united with the Wellington British Legion for a touching ceremony. The Last Post, played by our Head of Music, Mrs. Chidgey, marked the minute’s silence, honouring those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

In the spirit of compassion and social responsibility, we rallied together for Children in Need, raising an outstanding £744.

This exemplifies our broader commitment to supporting various causes, including our link with the Madagascar Development Fund. Notably, our contributions are now helping to fund the building of a new cyclone-resistant classroom at Antanimarina Primary School. Local charities also benefit from our collective efforts, with donations this year going to Reminiscence Learning, a Wellington-based dementia charity, and Heart Heroes, supporting children with heart conditions.

The dedication to holistic development continues through our careers education, focussing particularly on Year 11 next steps, Year 10 Work Experience placements and Year 9 Options, Glee Club performances in our local community, and diverse sports competitions. Rehearsals for ‘The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe’ are in full swing, promising a spectacular





production, with a cast of over 50 students. Meanwhile, our students have embarked on practices for the Exmoor Challenge 2024, displaying resilience and teamwork.

Guest speakers enriched our students' perspectives, from barristers to business leaders, fostering aspirations for the future. We also addressed issues of global importance, learning about the impacts of ultra-poverty in Burundi and contributing to the Wellington Food Bank.

Our extracurricular activities have flourished, from crime scene investigations at STEM Club to monitoring the growth of our school tarantula at Bug Club. The bustling Homework Club

exemplifies our commitment to academic success.

A heartfelt congratulations to our Leavers 2023, celebrated at the Year 12 Presentation Evening. Special mention goes to Emily Morrison, recipient of the inaugural Odette Hallowed Award for Overcoming Adversity.

As we wrap up a successful first term as part of the Blackdown Education Partnership, I would like to thank our students, staff, parents, and wider community for their support. Wishing everyone across the Trust and throughout the BEP community a Merry Christmas, a wonderful festive season, and all the very best for 2024.





“

I would like to thank the whole of #teamholyrood for pulling together to further improve our school.

”

Dave MacCormick
Headteacher

This year continues to be a really positive one at Holyrood, with our work to improve attendance, attainment and community links taking centre stage. I would like to thank the whole of #teamholyrood for their hard work and focus upon these areas since September and for pulling together to further improve our school.

We have recently formalised our partnership with Chard Community Hub so that both organisations can work closely together to ensure that our entire community has what it needs and so that children and their families have great support at the earliest possible stage. It has been so pleasing to see colleagues in a variety of roles across our school reaching out to run events and groups such as community choir, craft fair, community breakfast, EAL food event, bingo, coffee mornings and all manner of other wonderful things to connect the school with its community.

A particular highlight of this term has been Paul Hannaford's visit to our school on what was a busy and varied PDP Impact Day! It was a hard-hitting day full of excellent messages for our students. On the same day, it was great to see workshops for students aspiring to study medicine and a variety of other safety classes taking place.

Recently, we have also hosted the Somerset SACRE Conference for leaders of RS to learn more about curriculum design and implementation, led by our own Shell Sullivan. This was testament to Shell's excellent leadership of RS here. Finally, we have also been asked to host the West100 future Headteachers on 7th December, to share our work on community leadership: another nice recognition of the work of the school and the Trust.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from all of #teamholyrood!





“

2023 was a fantastic year,
but we promise 2024 will be
even better!

”

Richard Healey
Headteacher

2023 seemed to go by in a flash, particularly since September as IKB and Orchard Grove schools have been enjoying learning and growing together. It has been enriching to see both communities coming together in their shared values of belonging, participating and achieving, and this half term has provided even more opportunities to celebrate.

During the week of 13th November, both schools came together to 'Make a Noise About Bullying' and support national anti-bullying week. We kicked off with whole school odd socks days to highlight the fact that everyone is different and to celebrate our own uniqueness. The theme continued throughout the week, promoting kindness and tolerance, and looking at our whole school approach to ensure that bullying has no place within our schools.

As always, community partnership has been a priority for us. November saw children working closely with the Wellington

Rotary club within our school grounds as they embraced their green fingers and engaged with crocus planting. The purple crocus is the Rotary's worldwide symbol for working to eradicate polio and our children enjoyed learning about this whilst refining their gardening skills. As we closed in on December everything started to become festive at the schools. One of the highlights was our IKB Year 2 children representing the school at the Wellington Christmas lights switch on. The event is a big one in the local calendar, growing in popularity every year. The children sang a variety of Christmas carols on stage in front of hundreds of revellers and their performance shone brightly amidst the dark wintery afternoon. A huge amount of credit must go to our wonderful children, committed staff and supportive families for making this event happen and ensure its roaring success.

2023 was a fantastic year, but we promise 2024 will be even better!





“

It has been lovely to be able to welcome parents into the school building once again.

”

Ali Collins
Headteacher

Christmas preparations are well and truly underway at Neroche. Children in Reception, Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 are so excited to perform their Christmas play “Bethlehem Bake Off”. The teamwork they have shown is impressive and the confidence in their singing and acting is wonderful to see. Brodie our school dog is making his Neroche Christmas play debut with the starring role as the donkey. The children gave members of the public a sneak preview of the songs when they represented the school at the Ilminster light switch on event last week.

Our Year 4 and 5 children represented the school at the Broadway Christmas tree light switch on and our Year 6 children are busy preparing for a community carol event next week they are holding in the school hall for the elderly community in the village.

Our talented Year 6 children entered a public speaking event last week, Youth Speaks, which gave them their first experience

of formal public speaking in front of an audience. They had to prepare a topic and work as a team with a chairperson and 2 speakers. Members of the public posed questions and after conferring as a team they had to deliver their answers. We entered an impressive 4 teams and the support the children showed for each other was commendable.

After a visit from the Air Ambulance and critical care team to school this term, the children chose to raise money for the air ambulance after the care they had showed for a member of our school community. We decorated 2 school Christmas trees as part of the Minster annual Christmas tree festival which were proudly exhibited alongside a number of other charity trees for the public to view.

After the completion of the first phase of our building work, it has been lovely to be able to welcome parents into the school building once again. They loved working with their children on a range of Christmas Crafts. Parents will have the opportunity





to explore the new building improvements when coming in for parents evenings this week. The arrival of our new furniture has given our new central area a wonderful feel of space and purpose and the children love the coloured mood lighting.

Chris our talented Caretaker is now busy working on phase 2 of our building project which will provide us with a new office area, a larger foyer, a new reprographic area and additional meeting space for parents. We are very lucky to have Chris as our caretaker and we have all been impressed at his building skills.

Next week we are looking forward to our whole school pantomime trip to the theatre to watch Cinderella. Our whole

school trip to the pantomime has become a Neroche tradition and it is wonderful to be able to offer this trip as a whole school. The PFA have supported this trip after their impressive fundraising efforts.

Mrs Buttle has celebrated a big birthday alongside the school celebrating it's 50th year. Mrs Bowditch has completed her NSENCO qualification which she has worked really hard for alongside her day to day role at Neroche. We would like to extend our congratulations to her for this achievement and her efforts to achieve this qualification.

Everyone at Neroche would like to wish all BEP colleagues a wonderful Christmas and a great start to 2024.





“
I am especially pleased that the report recognises the work that we do to educate the ‘whole child’.
”

James Lamb
Headteacher

We have been celebrating our Outstanding grading in our recent Ofsted inspection, making us the first non-selective secondary school in the South West to achieve Outstanding under this current Ofsted framework.

The report states that pupils flourish, they work hard and their behaviour is exemplary. The curriculum is broad and ambitious, with a rich set of experiences. Teachers have expert knowledge and the school’s approach to reading is highly ambitious. It also highlights what wonderful students we have in the school and how we are committed to our vision of enabling every child to achieve, belong and participate. I am especially pleased that the report recognises the work that we do to educate the ‘whole child’, helping to build character, whilst ensuring that we maintain our academic ambition for all our students.



This term we have also been delighted to have the opportunity to welcome various guests into our school including Dr Jamie Frost, His Majesty’s Royal Marines Band and Gamelan Orchestra.

Dr Jamie Frost, the founder of DrFrostMaths spent the day working with our year 9 students, before hosting an after-school session for colleagues from across Somerset. DrFrostMaths provides an online learning platform, teaching resources, videos and a bank of exam questions and is used by over 7500 schools in 133 countries, achieving over 3 million page views a day.

His Majesty’s Royal Marines Band joined us for the day in November, performing to students from The Castle School as well as several students, who we welcomed from various schools around Somerset, followed by an amazing evening performance to members of the public.



As well as welcoming exciting visitors into our school, the students have also been given fantastic opportunities to get out and about and experience a wide range of activities during the school enrichment days:

- Our year 7 students visited various places of worship in Exeter, as well as a day out at Weymouth Aquarium
- Students from year 8 visited Bristol Aerospace as part of their maths studies
- Year 9 went to Blackrock Outdoor Education Centre
- Year 10 went Shepton Mallet Prison, linking to citizenship, the rule of law and sociology
- Year 11 went to Wimbleball Lake for water sports and outdoor activities

There are also various house trips planned ice skating and to Nija Warriors prior to Christmas.

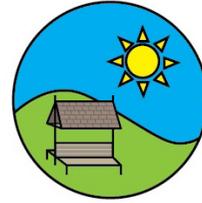
Also, as part the enrichment days, in PSHE;

- Year 8 learnt about prejudice and protected characteristics, social media, self-esteem and had first aid training.
- Year 9 covered assertiveness, rights and responsibility, diversity and listened to a talk on misogyny and sexism.
- Year 10 learnt about online exploitation, relationships/sex education, County Lines and practiced their interview skills and CV writing.
- Year 11 had first aid training and learnt about computational thinking

Well done to Balmoral House, who won the Open Art competition and well done to Sandringham House, who won House Dance for the second year running!

I hope you all have a restful and wonderful Christmas.





UFFCULME PRIMARY SCHOOL



“

Open Mornings were a huge success, and I would like to thank our wonderful Year 6 ambassadors.

”

Fraser Wallace
Headteacher

It has been another busy term of learning, sport, and fun at Uffculme Primary and I cannot quite believe we have reached the end of term already.

The school Open Mornings in November were a huge success, and I would like to thank all our wonderful Year 6 ambassadors who did a brilliant job of showing off our school. Every single visitor commented on how amazing they were and how calm and settled all children were in their classrooms.

As part of our 'everything with HEART' vision, we partnered with Whizz Kidz to offer Charlie the experience of meeting other wheelchair users of the same age. This was a great opportunity for his parents to meet other parents facing the same challenges. This really typifies the work the school has done around equity. Charlie had a great time and is looking forward to his next visit already!

In November, the school choir performed with other schools and adult choirs as part of the Teachers Rock Youth

Performance in Exeter Cathedral. It was such a brilliant evening, Last week saw both the Year 1 & 2, and the Reception Christmas performances. The Year 1 & 2 performance of 'A Tale of Two Birthdays' was fantastic. The children were outstanding: they all sang beautifully, spoke with loud voices, and acted with great confidence. They played in front of two sell-out audiences and there were no nerves to be found anywhere!

The Reception version of the Nativity story was another brilliant school performance. Our children are such a credit to the school and seeing all their smiles and waves to families and friends in the audience made all the hard work worthwhile.

Last week also saw the Christmas Fair taking place which was incredibly well-attended by the wider community. The children's arts and crafts, not to mention the edibles, were very popular and raised a well over £1000.

We would like to wish all our friends and colleagues across BEP a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!





“
We are really embracing
'everything by design
and nothing left to chance'
at Uffculme School.
”

Laura Jenkins
Headteacher

We have had another fantastic term at Uffculme School full of focused hard work in our classrooms, joy, healthy competition and a huge wider curricular offer. We are really embracing 'everything by design and nothing left to chance' at US and engineering the most exceptional offer that we can for every student in our school. I wanted to highlight our House Music competition the finals of which were held across last week. Across the week, successful finalists for each house went head to head in a packed Venue. Tickets were gone in less than 6 minutes at break and we had a spate of counterfeits produced such was the desperation to gain entry. The pure joy, support and enthusiasm was heartwarming and the plucky Yondercott, who have lain dormant for a decade, made House Music history by taking the triple crown. The talent continued to be showcased at the Winterfest sold out show.

Other highlights include the beautiful opportunity to come together as a school at for Remembrance and the spectacular

Christmas Craft Fair which hosted over 125 different stalls and raised £11,645.15!

Lessons remain purposeful and disruption free with a focus on retrieval practice and effective adaptive teaching to ensure accelerated progress for all learners. From an extra curricular perspective the offer and uptake has been relentless including; The German Markets trip, a School music trip, a STEM trip, the Tower of London Trip, fixtures galore, caving, canoeing, bike maintenance course, Duke of Edinburgh, Three Moors, Ten Tors, Beauty & the Beast rehearsals before we start on the clubs!

Next year sees our 70th Anniversary of the school opening and we had the pleasure of showing round Tony Burnett, a teacher who was teaching in the term of opening in 1954. He was filled with joy at the school and was treated to spontaneous applause by classes as he was introduced on his tour. We all take the importance of legacy seriously!





“
We have our Christmas lunches, gift shop & ‘Carols & Cocoa’ evening to look forward to.
”

Carly Wilkins
Headteacher

This half-term has been jam-packed with learning, fun and enrichment! Here is just a snap shot of the amazing things we have been up to at Wellesley Park.

We have been learning about what ‘Remembrance Day’ is and why we commemorate it in Britain. All classes contributed towards a brilliant display in our school hall. It was a great opportunity to experiment with different art medias. The whole school congregated on our playground to observe Remembrance. Our talented teacher, Mr Doyle, played The Last Post on the trumpet which helped us to honour the soldiers who have given up so much in war – it was very poignant. Mrs White and some of our Year 6 pupils had the important task of representing us at Wellington Remembrance Day Service; laying a wreath at the War Memorial.

In November we kicked off anti-bullying week by wearing ‘Odd Socks’ to school. This was an opportunity to encourage everyone to express themselves and celebrate what makes us all unique. This was followed up in our class Reflection Books where the whole school considered how we could ‘Make A

Noise About Bullying’ being the theme for this important week this year.

The ‘Into Film Festival’ is a UK-wide celebration of film – providing memorable cinema experiences for children and young people aged 5-19. We were fortunate enough to secure free cinema tickets for Year 4 -6. Year 4 watched Minions, The Rise of Gru and Years 5 and 6 watched Ruby Gillman: Teenage Kraken both at the new Scott Cinema in Bridgwater. After the film, we completed film studies.

This week, we have really ramped up the festive activities with Year 2/3 performing a Carol Concert at Wellington Baptist Church. Year 4,5 6 will perform their concert next week. EYFS/ KS1 are busy practising The Twinkly Nativity in preparation for 3 performances. We have our Christmas lunches, Christmas gift shop and ‘Carols and Cocoa’ evening to look forward to – finishing with class parties to end the term. I would like to end by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas. I hope this year’s season fills you with the things that mean the most to you and energises you for a happy and healthy new year.





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COUNSELLING

AT BLACKDOWN EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP



What is counselling?

Counselling is considered to be a talking therapy that involves you meeting with a trained therapist who will listen to you and help you find ways to deal with emotional issues.

What are the benefits of counselling?

Like most therapies, counselling can help you cope with several different emotional issues that you may be experiencing at various points during your life.

It is important to remember that we are all individuals and that we deal with aspects of life in our own way, you may feel like your worry is perceived as trivial. However, this is not a reason to avoid seeking help.

Counselling may help you to cope with:

- Mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety or even an eating disorder.
- Physical health conditions, such as infertility, alopecia, and many more other conditions.
- Processing difficult emotions, such as low self-esteem or even anger issues.
- Processing difficult life events, such as a bereavement, relationship breakdown or even stress.

What to expect from counselling?

Counselling can take place in various formats, it can be done face to face, over the phone or even by email and/or Zoom. Counselling can be done on an individual basis or as a group activity.

Counselling sessions are wholly confidential, and it is important to remember that the trained therapist who will be listening and supporting you, is doing so without judgement or critic.

At your appointment, you will be encouraged to talk and discuss your emotions and worries openly.

Counselling sessions may be offered on a single basis, a short course of sessions over a few weeks or months, or a longer course that lasts for several months or years may even be required.

It is useful to remember that it can take several sessions before you may start to feel the benefit of your sessions however this should not make you feel disheartened.

How can I access counselling?

Counselling can be rolled out through the NHS through a referral from your GP. Counselling via the NHS is a free service.

You can, if you feel necessary, pay to see a private therapist however it is recommended that you make sure that they are qualified, and you feel comfortable with them. Private counsellors charge anywhere between £10 to £70 per session.

Some charities and voluntary organisations offer counselling services. The sessions may be free, or you may be requested to pay a minimal fee to cover the cost of the session.

Some charities that may offer counselling include:

- **Samaritans** – call **116 123** to discuss any troubles at any time day or night.
- **Cruse Bereavement Care** – call **0800 808 1677**, available Mon – Sun.
- **Rape Crisis England & Wales** – call **0800 802 9999** for anyone aged 16+ who has experienced any form of sexual abuse or assault.
- **Relate** – visit www.relate.org.uk to find your local contact Centre.
- **Victim Support** – for anyone who has been a victim or witnessed a crime call the 24/7 support line on **0800 1689 111**.

Counselling can be sought via our Wellbeing Service and delivered by Amanda Woodward, Director of Wellbeing. Amanda has over 25 years experience of wellbeing delivery and is a trained in counselling and cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), with her approachable and positive presence, this immediate service on site is invaluable.

How do I book a counselling session with the BEP Wellbeing Service?

Simply use the following wellbeing booking link to book your appointment, please make a note that you are seeking a counselling session.

Please remember, all sessions are completely confidential and can take place either on a face-to-face basis on school site, at a mutual meeting point or via Zoom.

www.bep.ac/wellbeing



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