

The Greater Horseshoe School



December 2023: Issue 32

Message from the Head Teacher

This half term we worked hard to prepare our young people for the Christmas Fair and Winter Performance at Bickington Village Hall. A number of our students have attended various trips: Exeter Stadium, a Mosque in Exeter, Pantomime, Bodmin Jail and many more.

We would like to welcome new colleagues Amy and Mariam (Maz) - they introduce themselves below.

I'm delighted to share that our school has achieved the Bronze Award in our internal accreditation for Trauma Informed Practice (TIP). This week we also had a very positive visit from our Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS) assessor. She was profoundly impressed with everything we do to support each other, our young people and their families. She let us know in her feedback that we will be awarded the Wellbeing Award for Schools. This is the culmination of more than two years of work – thank you all for your massive contribution to this project.

Students return to school on Tuesday 2nd January. Wishing you a Happy Christmas and all the best for the coming new year from all of us at GHS.

Lukasz and the Team



**ACORN EDUCATION
AND CARE**

The Greater Horseshoe School

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The Greater
Horseshoe School

Ofsted
Outstanding
Provider

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Christmas Fayre

On Tuesday 5th December we welcomed GHS for another wonderful festive occasion. There was something for everyone!



A beautiful Christmas tree decorated by the pupils.



Live music from our School band!



Christmas Cards hand-crafted by one of our pupils!



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Festive outfits!



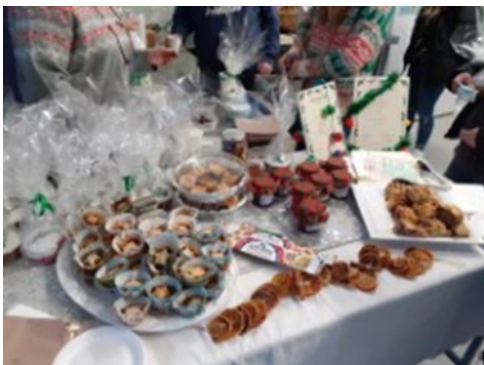
Christmas crafts, games, and activities!



Delicious Christmas sausage rolls and mince pies made by the children!



Together we raised £251.50 towards The Dartmoor Zoo Hedgehog Rescue Centre. Thanks so much!! It was so lovely to see you all.



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Animal Care

This term, due to the weather, the pigs and goats have moved into different accommodation. The goats are now living in the polytunnel, and the pigs are now in the goat shed.

Joy, Ginger and Dotty (the KuneKune pigs) have enjoyed eating the left-over pumpkins, as well as seeing students and having their tummies tickled.

The rabbits and guinea pigs have enjoyed spending time with students, even though they are all indoors now. Some students have been making enrichment toys out of recycled goods to keep them entertained.

We said a fond farewell to Benjamin the rabbit, who has returned to his previous owners. We also sadly lost Chocolate, one of our guinea pigs.

Students have been assisting with looking after the animals, making sure their needs are met and health is checked daily. They have learnt about the goats in more detail (ageing them by checking their teeth) as well as looking at health and safety and cleaning houses and cages to keep their accommodation neat and tidy.

In the new year we will be looking in more detail at all species of animals, understanding their needs and how they develop.



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Music

It's been a fantastic term for our music students who have all been working towards gaining skills on their instruments, learning either their favourite songs or festive tunes. They have also been preparing music to share with others, either virtually through recording or in live performance. Our band club has also become our first full student band to perform a range of events such as our Christmas fair and at Bickington Lights Switch on event, where they performed an incredible set confidently to a large audience.



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Media

Another whirlwind of a half term where the primary focus has been a huge group project to record both the music and the video for our band club's version of "All Star" by the American Band Smash Mouth. The idea was to combine the live recording footage with various green screen clips. It's been lovely to see everyone getting with each other so well and sharing both their creative ideas and technical understanding. They are "all" stars!

Our YouTube studio is getting used a lot; we're waiting for some powerful new equipment to make it possible to make streaming videos and work on more advanced programming. One of our students has been making "football card reveal" videos and another weekly football updates as well as short films. They are all doing some great work and showing a huge amount of confidence in filming and editing, as well as some very creative ideas.

All students have started well on the new Digital Functional Skills qualification and we're trying to incorporate as much practical experience as we can.

We're very much looking forward to carrying on developing these skills into next year when we'll organize another showcase event for you all to see.



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Mosque visit

On Wednesday 29 November 10 KS4 and KS5 students had the opportunity to visit Exeter Mosque and Islamic Centre. The students all came with respectful clothing, including head scarves for the females, and clean socks, as shoes have to be taken off at the entrance. We were greeted by Imam Ahmed and we went to the conference room for a short introduction. Our visit coincided with Prayer time, and we were invited up to observe the prayer rituals, lead by Imam Ahmed and attended by around 50 people.

We then discovered what the prayers meant in a translation from Arabic to English and some of the rituals of prayer, and how to become an Imam you have to study a Masters Degree in Islamic Studies, and memorise the entire content of the Quran and be able to recite it in Arabic. Students were then able to ask questions, such as how long does it take to read the entire Quran.

It was then time for Imam to conduct the “call to prayer” and we were privileged to be able to observe this part of the Muslim worship too.

It was a very interesting afternoon of learning for students and staff. As staff we were extremely proud of the students’ respectful behaviour, excellent listening, and inquisitive questions.



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Horticulture

This term has been all about harvesting and grounds maintenance. Students have really enjoyed harvesting our own pumpkins, as well as visiting Devon Pumpkin Picking. The students from the farm learnt about the different varieties of pumpkins and they were kind enough to donate some for carving!

Students have worked hard maintaining the grounds by carrying out seasonal tasks for autumn. This includes keeping the farm tidy with leaf blowers, and planting winter bedding to make the pots and planters more cheerful. Students have learnt how to use machinery safely and which plants are best for the colder weather.

In wetter and colder weather, students have been learning about houseplants and how to propagate them. The most successful houseplants were sold at the christmas fair!

After Christmas, we will be looking at preparing the beds for planting crops that we can harvest next autumn term.



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Autumn term 1 & 2 Star Readers 2023

Students can be nominated for a Star Reader award by fellow students or staff for their excellent engagement, effort or progress in reading. The student awarded Star Reader each week is given a book voucher and can purchase a book for themselves to keep, as well as a school copy of the same book to go in the library. This term the star readers have chosen a range of books including Harry Potter, a book about boxing, A-Z of Skylander, Captain Underpants and some of our star readers are still deciding which book to choose.

Congratulations to all our students who have been awarded star reader this Autumn term and well done for all your hard work and effort in reading! We look forward to celebrating many more in the new year. Keep up the great reading.

Star readers this term: Toby, Lewis W, Harvey, Braydon, Parker, Eloise, DracovichTV, Ethan M, Logan, Will R, Olivia, Cedes, Alana and Grace.



Winners this term:

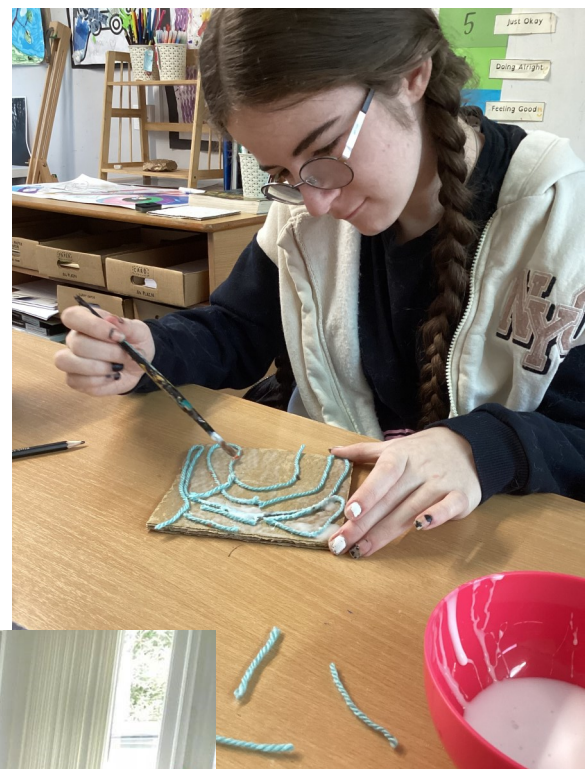
Toby, Lewis W, Harvey,
Braydon, Parker, Eloise,
DracovichTV, Ethan M,
Logan, Will R, Olivia, Cedes,
Alana and Grace.

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Art

Each term in art this year, we will be focusing on one of the 7 formal elements of art! This term we have been exploring how we can use and portray texture in our artwork. Texture is the Element of Art that has to do with the perceived texture of an object. Texture can be actual, real texture as you would get in sculpture, or it can be implied texture as in two-dimensional works and how we THINK an object would feel if we would touch it. Alongside personal projects, students have engaged in various activities to develop their knowledge and skills. This has included creating relief prints, sculpting clay twisty trees and discovering how we can imply texture through drawing.



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Geography

This half term the focus in Geography has been all about Rocks and Soil. Students have been learning about what rocks and soils are, how they are formed, the processes that shape them and the features they create.

Activities have included testing rock and soil properties, making volcanoes and earthquake proof buildings, making fossil imprints and using chocolate to explain the rock cycle

Some students have also gone on trips to Dartmoor to look at rock formations and different types of erosion.

This term seven Year 9 & 10 students have started the ASDAN Geography course, learning about physical geographical processes including soils, volcanoes, earthquakes and river features.

Next term we are studying Weather and Water, describing and measuring the weather, learning about the seasons, and finding out about the water cycle.



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ILS/post 16 team

We took six students on our latest social trip to Exeter Christmas market. The students are given the opportunity to socialise outside of school with the support of familiar adults. Everyone was looking forward to the trip and several students had never experienced a Christmas market before. The students' behaviour was impeccable. They were considerate of each other's preferences and took the opportunity to spend time with other students which they may not have had much time to get to know before. Some students were able to do some Christmas shopping for their families, others just enjoyed the atmosphere and looking around the stalls which were predominately local, homemade craft businesses.

Each student said they enjoyed the experience and would like to take part in another social event. We will arrange another event next term, offering the experience to other students.



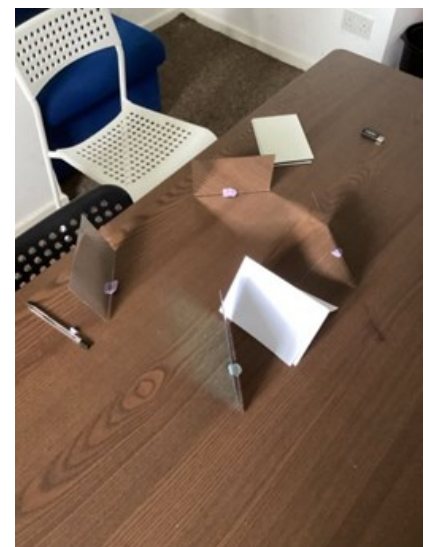
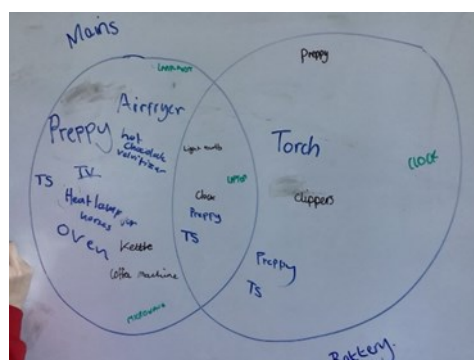
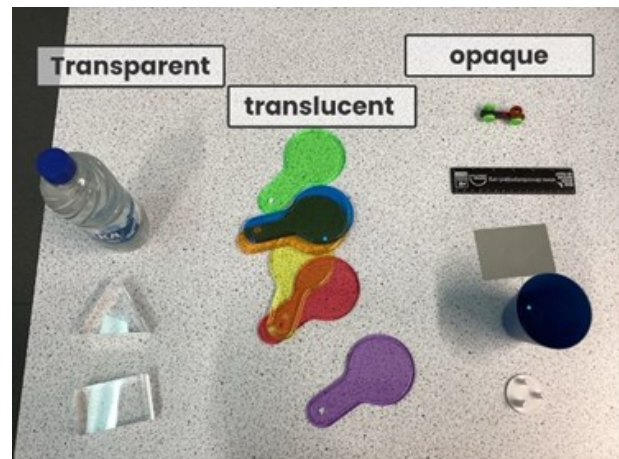
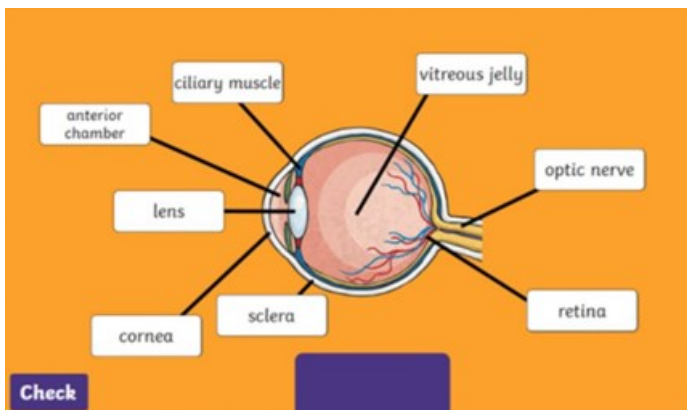
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Science

Starting off the new academic year students have been exploring light, sound and electricity. Students have experimented with sounds and observed how the vibrations of different instruments travel from a source to our ears and how we can affect the volume and pitch of different sounds. Students have been able to plan their own investigations on sound to apply the knowledge they have learnt. Next, we have explored different elements of light, from how light travels, how our eyes interpret the light and how to distinguish opaque, transparent, and translucent objects. To finish the half term, we explored how electricity works, how to create an electronic circuit with different components and how to fix common electrical errors.

After Christmas we will be exploring elements of chemistry by looking at states of matter, everyday materials, properties of materials and rocks.



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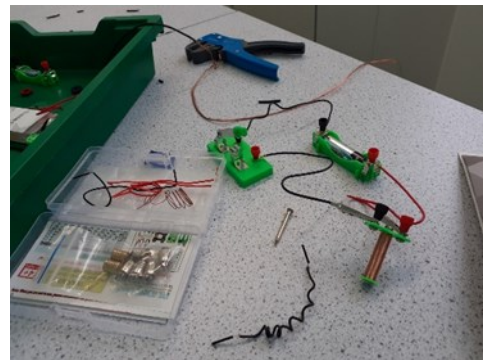
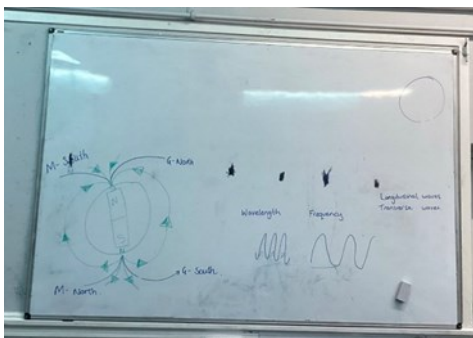


Science

ELC 1

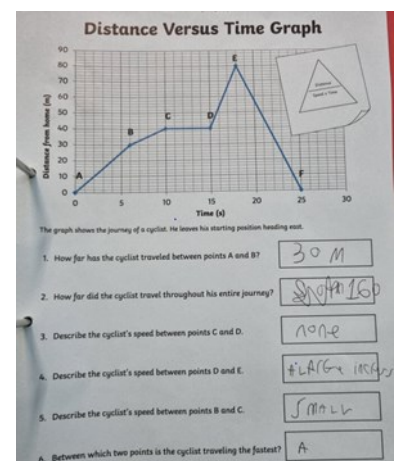
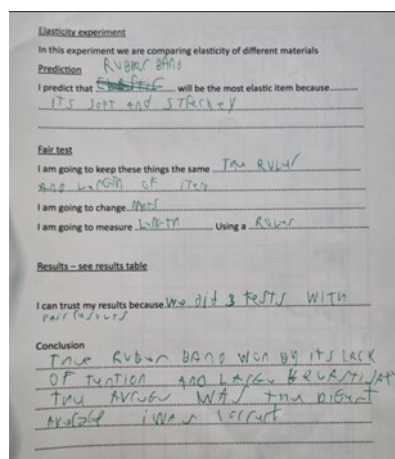
This term the students have continued to make excellent progress towards their Entry Level qualification by looking at magnets and waves. With magnets, we discovered how they work, how to draw magnetic fields and how to create our own magnets through induced magnets and created our own electromagnets.

We then moved on to look at how waves carry a variety of information that our brain interprets from sound to light. We looked at how waves are different and how transverse and longitudinal waves look and work differently. Finally, we draw all this information together to look at how the electromagnetic spectrum combines our knowledge of magnetism and waves and what types of uses there are to the different wavelengths e.g. radio waves and gamma rays.



ELC 2

The students at this stage are on their second year of the Entry Level qualification and are completing their final modules before the qualification submission in May. This half term we have been exploring forces, weight and elasticity, showed how forces can be represented as arrows and how they are measured. Following this we have learnt about speed and stopping distance of moving vehicles and the importance of including thinking distance into stopping distance calculations. We have linked to maths and used these skills to calculate speed and interpreted speed/time graphs. Finally, we have explored atoms and nuclear radiation and the dangers associated with unstable atoms.

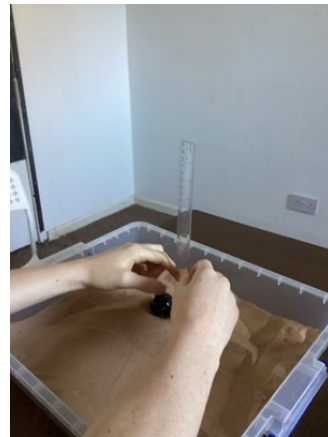


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GCSE

This is our first year as a school to run a GCSE programme for our students. We have looked at a range of topics in all three areas (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) of Science to fulfil the GCSE Trilogy criteria. In Biology we have covered cells and organisation in body, cell division, the digestive system and the respiratory system. In Chemistry we have explored atomic structures, the periodic table and structure and bonding of molecules. Finally, in Physics we have studied Energy, heating, Energy resources and electrical circuits.



ASDAN Science Short Course

This half term students have been continuing with challenges for the Space Physics module. Our focus has been on researching the Apollo 11 moon landings mission and reviewing evidence that humans successfully landed on the moon verses theories that the moon landings were faked. Another challenge which involves planning and testing an investigation into crater dimensions has also been started and will continue in the new year. Students are engaging well with the variety of activities ASDAN has to offer which is great to see.

Careers

This half term we have been starting a new "Futures" curriculum in conjunction with the Prince's Trust. This has meant a slightly different way of working compared to the ASDAN system used previously. The theme for this half term has been on Personal Development and Finance. We have explored Taxes, different forms of Income, setting SMART Goals for the future and identifying skill sets. Next half term will be focusing on Apprenticeships including a KS4/KS5 visit to the National Apprenticeship Show in Exeter.

New Staff

Hi, I'm Amy Hewitt and I joined the school as a learning support assistant at the beginning of November.

I enjoy travel, languages, cooking, art, reading and scuba diving. I have begun giving Spanish lessons to a few students already!



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Eco School News – GHS Goes Green

This term the staff and students have been getting involved in a number of Green Projects and spreading the news out into the community with more Green Challenges, Green Days and community projects.

November saw us looking into the Energy we use and where it comes from. In today's world we have the luxury of electricity powering the majority of our technology and most of us take it for granted.

Electricity helps us in our daily lives, by keeping our food in our fridge fresh to allowing us to travel great distances. However, some electricity is still generated using non-renewable sources and contributes to carbon emissions. As well as this, electricity costs money to use.

Our students looked at energy conservation and how by all of us changing our daily habits in a small way we can contribute to big changes. We took part in Switch Off Fortnight by going a whole afternoon without using any electricity – food tech went outdoors to the firepits, we played boardgames instead of games online and the music department tried going acoustic to name a few!

Our top tips for Saving Energy and doing your bit are:

Turn lights and appliances off when you are using them or in the room so you don't waste energy

Switch off at the plug – appliances still use loads of energy when on standby!

Close windows when the heating is on

Avoid the tumble dryer

Turn thermostats down your 1 degree or wash colours on a cooler washing setting.

For December our focus was How to be a Global Citizen. Global Citizenship is taking an active role in your community and making our planet more peaceful, sustainable and fair and this month also saw the start of the UN Conferences about Climate Change COP28.



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Interventions

Our interventions team at the school have been growing and developing in the skills and provision we offer. Our team have been able to support the team in supporting students day to day and we have seen amazing results from this.

Our team has changed with us welcoming Mia (Occupational Therapist), Hannah (Educational Psychologist) and Kate (Southwest Therapy Lead). This has helped the school work collaboratively with our sister schools in the Southwest region and link to other schools more widely. We are however sorry to say goodbye to Sophie who has led our THRIVE programme. Sophie has been with the school for four years and has been key to developing and enhancing the THRIVE provision at the school. Sophie is moving on to exciting new opportunities and we wish her the very best for the future. We will be continuing to work on developing and enhancing THRIVE, by welcoming Danny to the THRIVE team. Danny is a Learning Support Assistant at The Greater Horseshoe School and we are delighted to be able to draw on his therapeutic skills into the team.

Over the Christmas period we know this can be a tricky time for some of our students and their families. I'd like to share a link to some support which might help. [Helping your neurodivergent child cope with Christmas - Support for Parents from Action For Children](#). A reminder that DIAS [Home - Devon Information Advice and Support \(devonias.org.uk\)](#) is also a very good place to look for advice or guidance at any time of the year. We all wish our students, staff team and families a very happy Christmas and the best for 2024.

Chris Clements



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Family Support

It's nearly Christmas! This term has gone so quickly! It was lovely to be able to see so many families at the Christmas Fair this week, and to be able to talk to some of you in person. I hope that you enjoyed the afternoon and I'm sure that you were all proud of how hard the students (and staff) have worked to put this amazing event together.

Over the holiday, there are plenty of places, around Devon and beyond, offering Christmas themed activities. Although this can be a fun experience for many, this can be a little overstimulating for some so, as you know your young people the best, please do use any information available to plan any events beforehand. The holidays can be particularly tricky as they struggle with a lack of routine and changes so here are some tips to help:

- Try to keep to a routine where possible e.g. bedtimes, mealtimes etc
- Have a visual calendar so they are able to see and prepare for events e.g. the return to school/days out
- Use a social story to aid preparation for changes, transitions, rewards.

Try to organise some activities throughout the holidays.

Please keep looking out for emails on upcoming events, support services, courses and funding as I will continue to send out information about what is available for families but, should you have any specific worries or issues that you would like to discuss, then please get in touch. You can contact me directly by email on SarahS@enhancedlearningservices.co.uk and I am also available to contact on 07435 815755, from 8.30am to 4.30pm, Tuesday to Friday during term time.

I hope that you and your families all have a very happy Christmas!

Support Services during the holidays

During the holidays, there are several services which you will be able to contact for support and advice, should you need it:

The Devon Information and Advice (DIAS) service is a really helpful resource to look at. DIAS provide specific advice, links and guidance to families for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability. <https://devonias.org.uk>

Pinpoint Devon has links and information to thousands of services available in Devon. You can search for these using keywords in different locations, to find a suitable organisation near you. Please visit www.pinpointdevon.co.uk. For services in Torbay, please visit the Torbay Council website www.torbay.gov.uk and for Plymouth, please use the Plymouth Online Directory [Plymouth Online Directory - Plymouth Online Directory](#).

If a child or young person (under 18) is experiencing a mental health crisis, you can now access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) 24/7. Please contact 03300 245 321 during normal hours (8am-5pm, Mon to Fri) or 0300 555 5000 outside these hours. There are also services such as Shout, Kooth and Young Devon, which are able to support young people with their mental health needs.

<https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/> for parents of children aged 0 – 19 to get in touch to ask questions and talk 1-1 about any parenting questions.

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Family Support

This year, in particular, with the cost-of-living crisis, many more are struggling to pay bills and in need of support with food and other essentials. If, over the holidays, this is something that you need support with, there are many food banks and other organisations that can help families. Please use Pinpoint to look for support or contact your local council and ask for advice on what services are local to you. The Trussell Trust has several food banks in locations around Devon. Please see their website for details at www.trusselltrust.org. There are many other food banks in locations all over Devon. To find your nearest one search for foodbanks near me or look on Pinpoint Devon. Some that are available are Teignbridge Homeless Action Today (THAT) and Homeless in Teignbridge Support (HITS) in Newton Abbot, Rediscover Church and St Thomas Community Larder in Exeter, Exmouth Food Bank, Dawlish Community Larder, Exmouth Food Bank, Crediton Foodbank, Okehampton Foodbank and Dartmouth and District Foodbank. Some of these also offer support for utility bills and other essentials.

There is also funding available through the Household Support Fund for eligible families. If you need support or a referral for one of the food banks, please contact Sarah on 07435 815755 or email SarahS@enhancedlearningservices.co.uk.

The NSPCC also have lots of information and advice on how to support children in young people, particularly if you have a concern about them. Please visit their website on www.nspcc.org.uk.

If you are concerned about the safety of a child in Devon and want to speak to someone, or if you are a child worried about your own safety, contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0345 155 1071 or email mashsecure@devon.gov.uk and give as much information as you can.

If your child is at immediate risk, ring 999.

Attendance

As you may be aware, since the pandemic, school attendance has become a national concern. At the Greater Horseshoe School, we believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is important that students arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that students should not be at school if they are unwell. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and failing to attend this school, on a regular basis, will be considered as a safeguarding matter. A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason; an attendance plan would then be in place. We do understand that our students have sometimes previously struggled in their settings and will ensure that we work with you to put in place an individual plan that is tailored to support their needs, and help them to return to education. If you would like some information on what you can do to support you child, if you are concerned that they are struggling to attend school, please visit <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/school-anxiety-and-refusal/>

However, if your child is unwell, you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, giving the reason for their absence, by phoning either the school reception or Chipley farm. If we have not been informed by 10am, we will contact you by telephone or text.

As a school, our overall attendance, so far this year is currently, **81.2%**. We would expect this to rise during the year, as our new students have completed any transitional timetables and we go towards the warmer months, when there are usually fewer severe illnesses circulating. However, we do ask that you support your young person to attend, whenever possible, and please contact us, at the earliest opportunity, if you are concerned about their attendance and would like any support.