

CONTACT

No. 1713 – Friday 19th December 2025



Advent Carol Service: on Monday we held our annual Advent Service for our school community and were delighted that so many of our students and their families were able to join us.

Particularly the huge number of year 7 students who attended and were able to celebrate the end of their first term at St Thomas More. It has been fantastic to share this service with so many members of the school community over the past two weeks, enabling everyone to reflect on this season of Advent with readings, reflections, prayer, and music. Thank you to the site and sound

team for their preparation of the hall, which looked beautiful in the candlelight; Mr Dixon, Ms Donoghue, members of the Choir, Band and soloists, whose hard work and practice certainly came to fruition. A special thank you to Max, Mr Kwasnica and the readers who took us through the journey to Christmas through scripture and reflections. And finally a huge thank you to Senora Williams and the MFL Department who prepared our Year 7 students for their beautiful and confident Spanish singing during the Advent service. Their enthusiasm, courage, and hard work truly shone and made the celebration special.

It has been a pleasure to work with the students of our school this term and to celebrate their achievements at our end of term presentations assemblies today. We wish you all a happy and holy Christmas and look forward to a hope filled new year.

Fundraising Events for the SVP: Over the course of Advent we have been working hard as a school to raise money and collect physical donations for the St Vincent de Paul (SVP) Society. They work hard to support those who need it most in our local community, whether it's a warm place to have a meal, assistance in finding work/ courses, food bank facilities, toiletries, and clothing.

Through whole school events (Christmas Jumper day), as well as events organised and lead by students in St David's house and the Caritas team charity club, we have raised **£1738.05!!!**

This does not include the vast number of food, toiletries, and clothing that have been donated (the pictures below do not do it justice!)



Clothing and consumable donations for the SVP



Stick the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to the wall event, and students/ staff enjoying stalls from the Advent Bazaar





Some of the students who lead or assisted in organising events for SVP



A Massive thank you:

Thank you to all staff and students who have helped with these events – both in organising them but also in taking part. We have raised and collected an incredible amount for the SVP this Advent, which will make a great impact for many families this Christmas.

Lord Jesus Christ tells us in the Gospels that what we do for the poor and lowly, we do for Him. With that in mind we should go into the Christmas season very happy to know that we spent this season of preparation doing God's work.

Beginning of Spring Term:

Students return to school on **Monday 5th January 2026** where it will be timetable **Week 2**.

Examination Certificate Collection Afternoon – Wednesday 7th January 2026: Invitations have been sent home to last years year 11 and 13 students to invite them to our Examination certificate collection afternoon on 7th January from **4-4.45pm**. This is an opportunity for us to welcome back students to receive their examination certificates and catch up with how life is progressing since seeing them in August. Those invited can confirm their attendance by [completing this form](#) so that we can ensure certificates are ready for collection.

Christmas Message STM Governors: As we approach Christmas, we would like to thank our parents and carers for the vital role you play in preparing your young people each day — supporting their readiness to learn, grow and flourish at St Thomas More. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to our dedicated staff, whose commitment and care help shape the whole person — nurturing academic excellence alongside faith, character and compassion. Thanks to Father Geoff for his spiritual support for all our young people. At the heart of Christmas is the birth of Jesus, a reminder of hope, love and service. Together, through strong partnership between home, school and parish, we support our young people to become confident, caring and conscientious individuals. We wish all our families and staff a peaceful and joyful Christmas and look forward to continuing our shared journey in the New Year.

COULD YOU HELP THE SCHOOL? WE NEED ONE MORE FOUNDATION GOVERNOR

St Thomas More is currently seeking a foundation governor with experience or confidence in finance to support our work. If you, or someone you know, has financial skills and a heart for supporting Catholic education, we would love to hear from you. Governors play a vital role in ensuring strong oversight, value for money and long-term planning. If interested, please contact the school office and speak to Mrs Ackred for an informal discussion. Daniel Cauchi

Prayer of the Week

Lord God,
You revealed Your boundless love for humanity
in the mystery of the Incarnation.
As You once came to dwell among us in the womb of the Virgin Mary,
so remain with us now as Emmanuel — God with us.
Strengthen our faith in Your abiding presence,
that in moments of fear or uncertainty,
we may remember that You are near.
May the light of Your Son bring peace to our hearts
and hope to our world,
for He is the fulfilment of every promise
and the sign of Your unending love.
AMEN

4th Sunday of Advent

Matthew 1:18-24

Artwork: 'Adoration of the Shepherds' (1622) by Gerard van Honthorst



This week is the last Sunday of Advent and we hear from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. In this reading we hear of St Joseph's dream where the Angel Gabriel visits him to reassure him that the Blessed Virgin Mary is indeed pregnant with the Son of God. When Joseph wakes up he commits to do as commanded; marry Mary and gives Jesus his name. Matthew outlines that there is an Old Testament prophecy from Isaiah that speaks of a Virgin having a son called 'Emmanuel' which means 'God with us'. Outlining to those reading and listening to the Gospel exactly who he believes Jesus is. Emmanuel being a statement on His being instead of the name people would use for Him.

But there's something else. We often talk about Mary's 'yes' to God – for good reason – but here we have Joseph's 'yes' to God in a dream, something that is similar to circumstances his namesake in Genesis also experienced. Joseph shows willingness to do the right thing at every point. Before he is certain of the truth of Mary's situation he is unwilling to publicly shame her, when God speaks to him through the Angel Gabriel he graciously accepts his role, and we know from other stories in the Gospels that Joseph continues that protective and supportive role.

Over this weekend we should think about the great example that Joseph gives us, and how we could be equally as humble, gracious, and supportive in our own families or communities. We should also, of course, look at the whole season that we are breaking up from school to go and celebrate. The Incarnation, God becoming Man. This is something that is more incredible the more you ponder it. We can see and know God's presence in many places, but some people have seen Him in Flesh. Much like the artwork chosen for this week let's ensure that as well as celebrating we also take time to Adore God for this great mystery.








Have a Blessed Christmas, see you in the new year.

Max Morris, Lay Chaplain

Chaplaincy News

Thank you from the Chaplaincy team: This has been a busy term with many Masses, Services, and Events. We want to extend a massive thank you to everyone who has helped to make these possible. Thank you to Mr Dixon, Mrs Donoghue, and all members of our liturgical band and choir who have provided us with music at each mass and service. Thank you to all students who have served at the many Masses, as well as the readers and those who have written prayers. Thank you to everyone who has taken part and prayed with us this term.

Our Assisi Catholic Trust Family

Schools	Parishes
 Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School and Nursery	Our Lady of Lourdes and St Joesph Msgr Kevin Hale
 St George's Catholic Primary School	St. George and The English Martyrs Fr. Brett
 Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Nursery	Sacred Heart of Jesus Fr. Graham
 St Helen's Catholic Primary School	Our Lady Helo of Christians and Saint Helen Fr. Alex
 St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Our Lady of Canvey and English Martyrs Fr. Eamonn
 Holy Family Catholic Primary School	Holy Family and St Thomas More Fr. Eduard
 Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School	Our Lady of Ransom Fr Paul
 St Teresa's Catholic Primary School	Catholic Church of St. Teresa and the Child Jesus Fr. Gerry
 St Thomas More High School	St Peter's Fr. Jeff

Vacancies:

St Thomas More High School, Westcliff-on-Sea – Cleaners - [website](#) & LSA Apprentice - [website](#)

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Canvey Island – Early Years Practitioner – [website](#)

Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Benfleet – Headteacher - [website](#)

St Helen's Catholic Primary School, Westcliff-on-Sea – Class Teacher fixed term 2 days per week to cover maternity - [website](#)

SACRED HEART PRIMARY SCHOOL

IS YOUR CHILD STARTING SCHOOL IN SEPTEMBER?



BOOK YOUR VISIT NOW

Come and see how we can support your child

A catholic school that welcomes all

 01702 414200

 office@sacredheart.southend.sch.uk



Parent Reminders and Student Information

Flu Vaccinations: flu vaccination information and catch-up appointments at local clinics can be found [here](#).

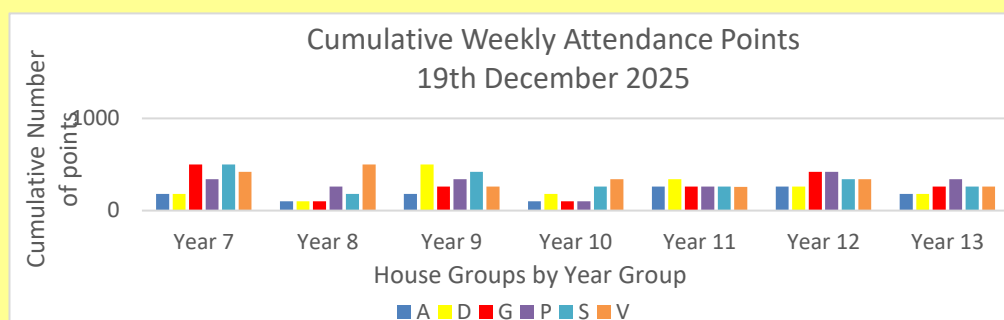
Term Dates: Please find the [Term Dates 2025-26](#).

Calendar for Parents: can be accessed [here](#).



Absence: If your child is unwell and unable to attend, please notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school and selecting attendance or by emailing attendance@st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk. If the absence lasts more than one day, please update the school daily. Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. You can request a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances by through school gateway or alternatively email attendance@st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk or by collecting a form from Reception. Please keep medical evidence of absence eg appointment cards or letters, copies of prescriptions, pharmacy receipts etc in case you need them to provide more details on your child's return to school.

House Attendance Points: The form with the highest attendance in the year group gets 100 points each week and every form achieving 97% or above for the week achieves 20 points towards their house.



Changes to Contact Details: If you have moved house, changed your email address, mobile telephone number or work contact number, etc. over the summer holiday, **please remember you can make these changes via your child's [School Gateway](#) account.**

Student Medical Conditions: Please ensure school is made aware of any updates regarding students medical conditions, particularly if they can potentially have an impact on their time in school and require support. Please contact Mrs Walford mwalford@st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk if you wish to discuss your case in detail.

16–19 Bursary Fund – Support for Sixth Form Students

The Government's **16–19 Bursary Fund** is available to help students stay in education by covering costs such as travel, meals, books, equipment, and trips. There are two types of bursaries:

- **Vulnerable Student Bursary** – up to £1,200 for young people in care, care leavers, or those receiving certain benefits.
- **Discretionary Bursary** – for students facing financial hardship, awarded by the school based on household income and individual need.

To apply, parents/students should complete the bursary application form (available from the Sixth Form office or school website) and provide supporting evidence. For full details and eligibility, visit: www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund If you have questions or need help with the application, please contact our Sixth Form office.

Lights Required for cyclists: With the darker evenings drawing in, it won't be too long before it is dark at the end of the school day. This is a reminder to all cyclists to ensure your bike is equipped with proper lights. Riding with front and rear lights is not just essential for your safety, but it's also a legal requirement to help you stay visible to others on the road.

Please check:

- **Front Light:** A white light on the front of your bike.
- **Rear Light:** A red light on the back, plus a rear reflector if possible.
- **Visibility Gear:** Consider reflective clothing or accessories to further increase visibility.



Considerate Parking: Thank you for your support and understanding when learning our routines for dropping and collecting students at school, this half term is a busy one and extracurricular clubs and trips are numerous thanks to our dedicated staff. Please **do not use school carparks** for dropping off in the morning or picking up at the end of the school day. The closest collection point is behind the fire station. Cars that attempt to drive in at the end of the day cause congestion and are a hazard. Please remember that this exit is also the main pedestrian exit from the school. If using the local area to park, please be considerate to our neighbours and local community. **Please do not 'drive by' to try and drop off or pick up or use surrounding roads** which get congested. Thank you for your co-operation.

ACHIEVEMENTS FOR CONTACT

HAS YOUR CHILD DONE SOMETHING OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL THAT DESERVES RECOGNITION?

WE WOULD LIKE TO CELEBRATE IN CONTACT

Send Information & Pictures to: office@st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk

Spotlight on Wellbeing and Keeping Safe

Please don't forget that staff are here for you and your children, and you can get in touch with Mrs Walford via welfare@st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk if you need some support. Parental factsheets on various topics are available on our website under the Safeguarding section, [Parent Fact Sheets \(st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk\)](http://st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk)

At The National College, our **WakeUpWednesday** guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, digital literacy, financial literacy, diversity, the environment, the United Nations, and more. For further guides, films and tips, please visit nationalcollege.gov.uk.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI TOYS

This festive season, the newest toys on the shelves do not just blink or make noise; they listen. Many now come with artificial intelligence (AI), allowing them to talk, learn, and even respond to a child's emotions. This guide explains what that means for families and why it matters.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- TOYS THAT LISTEN AND LEARN**

When a toy uses AI, it collects data such as voice recordings, interactions, and background location. This information is sent to a central server, where it is analysed to improve responses. Your child's voice becomes training data, which may be stored indefinitely or shared with third parties.
- WEAK SECURITY PROTECTIONS**

Some AI toys have poor password protection or open network connections. Others may have insecure data storage. This can mean that the information you share with your child, including conversations recorded for play, could be accessed by others.
- ARTIFICIAL VOICES, REAL INFLUENCE**

For many young children, an AI companionary becomes one of the first voices they interact with regularly. This kind of voice has the potential to influence a child's self-image, confidence, and how they interact with others.
- PRESSURE TO KEEP ENGAGING**

Some toys reward repeated use of their engagement, encouraging children to interact more. When a child's favourite toy is not working, it can create pressure to play more often. This increases the amount of data collected and can create learning that is not intended.
- MARKETING THROUGH PLAY**

Toys that learn a child's preferences may feed that data into future advertising. A toy could help to encourage a child to buy more toys, or even help to encourage a child to buy more often. This increases the amount of data collected and can create learning that is not intended.
- PLAYTIME AS DATA TRAINING**

The information collected from children helps train AI systems. Their voice, emotional responses, and behaviour are used to create 'understander' people. They become part of a much larger system that influences how future technologies behave.

Advice for Parents & Educators

- START WITH A CONVERSATION**

Talk to young people. Explain that there are new toys on the shelves that can listen and learn. Help them understand that there are some risks. They should have boundaries, and to ask questions if they are not sure. It's important to be open and honest.
- SET LIMITS ON USE**

Turn off Wi-Fi or Bluetooth when they are not using the toy. Check the app settings, as they can change privacy or safety settings. These connected toys like any smart device, they should be encrypted, updated, and have a strong password.
- RESEARCH BEFORE YOU BUY**

Look for toys that look offline or have data locally. Check for a clear data policy so you can see how it will be used. If you need to buy a toy, look for a toy that has a clear data policy and a good reputation. Check where it goes, and whether it's shared with others.
- REVIEW PRIVACY SETTINGS**

Find out where the data is stored and who has access to it. Look for privacy and safety settings. These connected toys like any smart device, they should be encrypted, updated, and have a strong password.
- BALANCE AI WITH REAL PLAY**

All toys can be fun and creative, but there are some risks. Encourage your child to play with toys that are not connected to the internet. Encourage your child to play with toys that are not connected to the internet. Encourage your child to play with toys that are not connected to the internet.

Meet Our Expert
 Clare Hawking is Executive Director of Kompass Educators. She advises governments, school boards, and global organisations on digital safety and safeguarding, helping schools and families understand how technology shapes learning, wellbeing, and the digital future of children.

WakeUpWednesday
 The National College

[@wake_up_weds](https://twitter.com/wake_up_weds)
www.thenationalcollege.gov.uk
[@wakeupwednesday](https://www.instagram.com/wakeupwednesday)
[@wakeupweds](https://www.facebook.com/wakeupweds)

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 13.02.2022

Departmental News

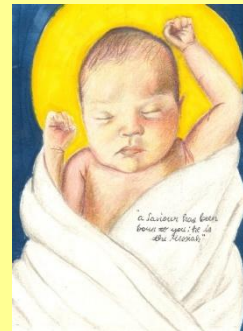


Our [Amazon Wishlist!](#) Friends, family and alumni can donate directly to the school library. We still accept preloved copies from home you may wish to donate, but student and departmental requests for library stock can be found here. The book wish list is chosen and updated by the Library team as texts that benefit the student's reading comprehension, engagement with the curriculum and foster an interest in reading. If students have overdue library books, you should have received an overdue notice and may be charged an overdue fee per book via Gateway. To have the overdue notice removed, students can return the book, pay the fee, or replace the missing book with a new copy.

Does your child need somewhere quiet to study with access to a computer to complete extended learning? We currently have two Study Clubs available: Study Club: Monday 3.30-4.30pm in CR3 overseen by Mrs Williams (open to all years). Veritas Mentors: Thursday 1.30-2.25pm in the Year 12 study room. The Veritas mentors idea is based on the plan on having an extended learning support group run by sixth form students who will be on hand to offer support if needed (open to key stage 3 students). Mrs Napper (Enrichment Coordinator)



Christmas Card Competition: This half term, students took part in the annual Christmas Card Competition, submitting a wide range of inspiring pieces focusing on the nativity. The department received many creative entries from all age groups. A big congratulations to Alana (12D) for taking first place! And well done to Ava (12G) for Second place and Lucy (12A) for third place. Well done and thank you to everyone who participated! Wishing you all a Merry Christmas from the Art Department!



Christmas Parties: we were pleased to welcome the students and staff from Kingsdown School on Monday and Lancaster School on Wednesday last week for their annual Christmas parties which are traditionally organised by our 6th Form students and lower school helpers. A beautiful occasion, with the school choir and band led by Mr Dixon singing Christmas carols, followed by pass the parcel and a late arrival of Santa Claus himself, to give out presents to each of the students. A big well done to everybody involved and a thank you to all the staff that have helped make all of the Christmas parties a lovely occasion.





SkyPeople Aviation Workshop – Tuesday, 16 December 2025: This week, some of our students recently took part in an engaging and informative aviation workshop delivered by a representative from SkyPeople. The workshop was divided into two comprehensive sessions, giving students valuable insight into both aviation security and in-flight first aid. The first session focused on aviation security, exploring how the industry has evolved by learning from past aircraft disasters, including the Lockerbie tragedy of 1988. Students examined current threats to aviation, discussed de-escalation techniques, and learned about modern in-flight security procedures used to keep passengers and crew safe. The second session concentrated on aviation first aid. Topics included the principles of first aid, travel health and hygiene, infectious diseases, and common onboard illnesses. Students also had the opportunity to learn about and practise CPR and were introduced to MedAire, a global medical support service used by airlines. SkyPeople were extremely impressed with the students' existing knowledge of the aviation industry and the science behind flight. They commended our students for being a real credit to the school, highlighting their excellent manners, enthusiastic participation, and exemplary behaviour throughout both sessions.



More. Newspaper are delighted to bring you the second issue of our publication. We hope you enjoy reading it, and if you would like to contribute to future issues of the newspaper, please speak to Mrs Lewis. Thank you again to our budding team of journalists. We wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas. Mrs Lewis



Alumnus of the Month: [December.](#)

Aspire: online resources for all things careers/universities and apprenticeships, great for those not sure of the opportunities after GCSE's (POST 16) and A levels (POST 18). Click to find out more [The Aspire Guide - Flipbook - Page 1 \(paperturn-view.com\)](#)

Connexions Events: a list of 6th Form and colleges open events for 2025/26 can be found [here.](#)

[Webinars & Workshops - Amazing Apprenticeships](#)

[The Telegraph Media Literacy Programme 2026 :: Telegraph Media Group Jobs](#)

CAREERS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is a collation of all the opportunities we have heard about from employers and universities. Please use the links included to read more information and apply to anything you are interested in. Links are underlined.



Careers Newsletter can be found [here](#).

The Deca Tree

In the forest there is a Christmas Deca Tree.
A Deca Tree has 10 trunks,

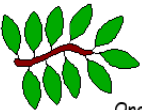


and on each trunk there are 10 branches,

and on each branch there are 10 twigs,



and on each twig there are 10 leaves:



One day a woodcutter came along and cut down one trunk from the tree.

Then he cut off one branch from another trunk of the tree.

Then he cut off one twig from another branch.

Finally he pulled one leaf from another twig.

How many leaves were left on the tree then?

Maths Problem of the Week

Answer to last week's problem:
One third are left handed

Poetry Corner No.85

Wit Wonders

A God and yet a man,
A maid and yet a mother:
Wit wonders what wit can
Conceive this or the other.

A God and can he die?
A dead man, can he live?
What wit can well reply?
What reason reason give?

God, Truth itself, doth teach it.
Man's wit sinks too far under
By reason's power to reach it:
Believe and leave to wonder.

Anonymous, 15th Century

MFL Department's Word and Idiomatic Expression of the Week:

Empezar la casa por el techo

Literal translation in English: To start the house with the roof.

When do we use it?: When things have been put in the wrong order (to put the cart before the horse)

Example: Si empezáramos la construcción sin los fondos, estaríamos empezando la casa por el tejado.

If we started construction without the funds, we'd be putting the cart before the horse.

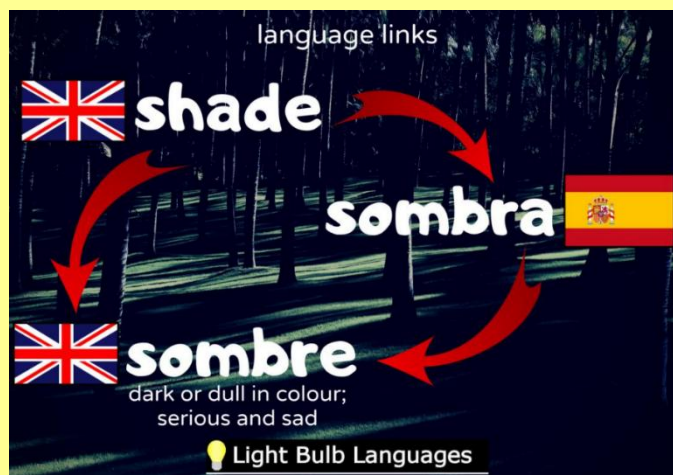
Cinturón

(seen-too-rohn)

Masculine Noun


English translation: Belt

Example: El cinturón tiene que ir a juego con los zapatos.
(The belt has to match your shoes.)



Yr. 11 Revision Timetable

Well, we made it! What a term, full of highlights and memorable moments already. As far as year 11 study goes, an early reminder for January: students will have their mock results day once we return. Staff will be having academically focused conversations with students and plot a route forward for the remainder of the year. I cannot stress how quickly the year goes once we get the other side of Christmas, so please ensure you rest up over the break. Thank you to the parents who have supported your children and us so far this year, it is very much appreciated. Have a wonderful and peaceful break. God bless. Mr Dooley and Mr West.

 REVISION TIMETABLE 25/26				
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
8am – 8:30am (Speak to teacher for specific time)				
	RC-English E4 JFE-English E7 (Week 1) PGR-RE RE2	ZR- English (sets 7-9) E4 JFE-English E7 (Week 2)	SS- Science Lab 2	GDO -English E1
	LDO-Music listening paper revision-H1			
1:30pm – 1:55pm (speak to teacher for specific time)				
DCO - Media and Film E7	Art-KBA AR3 (Week 2)	DCO - English E7	API - Physics Lab 2	JH-Geography G1 1.45-2.25pm
GRO-RE 2.00-2.25pm RE2	KDO-History H1		AB - Product Design Tec 3	SEM-English E6
JH- Geography G1 1.45pm-2.25pm	LMY - Business B31	CJC-Computer Science CR5	KDU - English E5	DMA-Maths (Higher Tier grades 7-9) Studio
KAY & KBA Art AR2 & AR3	AMB-Tech Tech 3		Art – KAY AR2 GRO- RE 1.40-2.20pm RE2 (week2)	JS-Maths (foundation) M5 1.30pm
			MAR-Further Maths M2	
2pm – 2:25pm (speak to teacher for specific time)				
	API-Physics (double & triple) Lab 2	CJC-Computer Science CR5	MAR-Further Maths- M2	KBA-Art AR3
		SMN-Food Preparation and Nutrition revision/NEA catch up CR6		
After School (speak to teacher for specific time)				
CWI- Spanish- CR3	FLE- Media and Film Coursework M31	MLO - Maths (set 3) M7	TMI- RE (12mark Clinic) RES	
	GWE-Geography-G3	GWE-Geography-G3		
	LDX- Music MUS1			
	LMY - Business B31			
	CJC-Computer Science CR5			

Sports News



Personalised Athletics vests are available for those students who will be representing the school in competitions or those wanting to wear them for Sports day, they are not compulsory for all students. They are priced at £20, sizing and personalising details are all on the [School Gateway](#), we will be placing the order on Friday 23rd January 2026, a further order will be placed before Easter. Any questions contact Mr Ackred.

Fixtures

DATE	FIXTURE
05/01/2026	No Fixtures
06/01/2026	Year 9 'B' Basketball v Cecil (HOME) 4pm tip off Year 7 Basketball v Chase (AWAY) 4pm tip off - Return 5:30pm
07/01/2026	1st XI Football v Southend (HOME) 2pm kick off
08/01/2026	Year 7 Basketball v Shoebury (AWAY) 4:15pm tip off - return 6pm Year 8 Basketball v Southend High (HOME) 4pm tip off Year 11 Basketball v Southend High (AWAY) 4pm tip off - return 6pm
09/01/2026	No Fixtures