



Dear Parents,

As is usual at Upton, we have had a really busy term. One of the most rewarding parts of writing a newsletter is that it reminds me of all the opportunities that our pupils and 6th form students get to experience. With the Christmas break approaching I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the part that you as parents and carers, play in our fantastic community.

Spring Term: Important Dates

We would like to draw your attention to the dates below which, where appropriate, you note in your calendar. In particular, the Parents' Evenings are a vital opportunity to provide an update on your daughter's progress.

January 2026

Wednesday 14

Year 9 Parents' Evening, 4.30 – 7.30pm, Virtual

Monday 19

Year 7 – 10 Parents' Drop in, 5.00pm to 6.00pm

Mon 19 - Wed 21

Year 13 A Level Mock Examinations (2)

Wednesday 28

Year 11 Parents' Evening, 4.30 – 7.30pm, Virtual

Friday 30

Year 11 Option Form Submission Deadline

February 2026

Wednesday 4

Year 13 Mock results to parents

Tuesday 10

Year 13 Parents' Evening, 4.30 – 7.00pm, Virtual

Friday 13

School Development Day

Mon 16-Fri 20 *Half-Term*

March 2026

Monday 2

Year 11/13 Photographs

Wednesday 4

Year 8 Parents' Evening, 4.30 – 7.30pm, Virtual

Thursday 12

Chapel Concert, 7.00pm

Tuesday 17

Year 10 Parents' Evening, 4.30 – 7.30pm, Virtual

Thursday 26

Years 9 and 12 Reports to Parents

Progress Information to Parents (2) Years 7, 8, 10, 11 & 13

Christmas Celebrations

During the lead up to the end of term, pupils have been involved in the following activities:

Charles Thompson Mission Toy Appeal

Thank you to all the students and their families who supported our local charities this Advent. We supported 'Charles Thompson Mission' with a toy appeal and they were all collected in time for Christmas.

We received many donations which will help those in need this Christmas.

Feast Day celebrations

On Friday 5 December, we celebrated the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception. Our focus this year was on Those in Need and this was built into many tasks and events held throughout the day. Proceeds from the day will go to the charity 'Change a Child's Life'. Through them we sponsor Jane, a young Kenyan girl. The current fundraising total is £4844.41 which will make a massive difference to the life of this little girl. Our pupils also learned through assemblies how the funds they raise also impact the lives of other young girls who live with Jane. This year, we are hoping to raise enough money to refurbish the bedroom they all share. The funds will enable them to have a proper floor and walls made of plaster, rather than tin.

On Feast Day, we also celebrate Mass with every year group in our Chapel. This was kindly said by Fr Michael or at Saint Joseph's Church with Fr Robert. It is an obligation for Catholics (and those who choose to study and work in a Catholic school) to attend Mass.

Many of our pupils/students had the opportunity to write Christmas cards and/or letters of companionship to fellow FCJ companions in secondary schools in Australia, Ireland and London as well as a primary school in Jersey. Letters of companionship were also written to local parishioners as well as residents in Woodheath Care home in Upton. The range of letters which our



students participated in writing showed dignity and respect as well as a spirit of community participation which is extremely important, especially at this time of year when some people can experience isolation and loneliness.

Our students also had the opportunity of considering our global community as they were tasked with writing, in solidarity, to prisoners of conscience or people who have been imprisoned because of discrimination. The letters showed much thought, dignity and empathy.

Our Form Tutors also led form auctions and this was a fun and engaging way for the students to get into the spirit of giving as we considered those in need in our world. An activity specifically to raise awareness of Catholic Social Teaching using CAFOD resources was also organised.

Our Sixth Formers, ably assisted by their form tutors, led a Christmas 'Winter Wonderland' activity where our students had the opportunity to purchase Christmas novelties and confectionery or have their nails and hair done (to name but a few) as well as having the opportunity for selfies at Christmas displays with their Upton companions. The purpose of this activity was to raise funds for those in need in a fun and engaging way during Advent.

Senior Citizens' Christmas Party

From 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm on Monday 15 December, we welcomed Senior Citizens from Upton and beyond to this annual event. Festive refreshments were served thanks to our Dining Room staff with the assistance of members of the Sixth Form. The entertainment was provided by our very enthusiastic Junior Choir along with Senior and Chamber Choir and the School Orchestra who performed a variety of Christmas Carols and seasonal songs. They also enjoyed bingo and a raffle.

Christmas Carols

Congratulations to Mrs Hulme, members of our Music Department and the very talented young musicians and singers who provided a beautiful programme of music at our Christmas Carol Service held this week at

St Michael & All Angels in Woodchurch. Particular thanks to the Parish Priest, Cannon Niall Mullaley, for his kind support and hospitality. The collection from this event will be donated to our chosen charity 'Change a Child's Life'

Last day of term

On Thursday 18 December, we will have a non-uniform day for all our students. They are encouraged to donate at least £1.00 and all proceeds will go to Maggie's Cancer Care. Staff will be taking part too. Year 7 took part in the annual Elf Run on the last Monday of term, raising money for the Tiny Stars Neonatal Appeal at WUTH Arrowse Park.

Rewards Week at Upton Hall

During our last week of term, Year Heads have been leading reward events for groups of students in recognition of their hard work. There is a criterion (as always) and this includes achievement and behaviour points using our school information management system (SIMS).

Each Year Head has organised something different and these range from reward breakfasts to 'box rounders' to movie events with cookies. Thank you for all your support in ensuring that your child aspires to the high standards and our FCJ values that underpin school life at Upton Hall.

Library News

Poetry by Heart Final

On the 1st of December our Poetry by Heart Final took place.

Students in year 8 all learnt a poem by heart over the summer holiday. Then in library lessons students all took a turn to perform their poem and our top scorers from each class went on to represent their class in the school final

Performances were scored for their voice, understanding, presentation and accuracy. Mrs McDonald said 'the performances today were so moving, students brought alive the poems for us and added their own interpretations.'

Ms Murphy, our Head Judge, presented the awards and medals to the students who will now go on to



represent our school as we enter the National Poetry by Heart competition.

Congratulations to our winners 1st Place Olatoni O., 2nd Place Brooke S., 3rd Place Sydney B., 4th Place Maia G., 5th Place Elsie A., 6th Place Larissa G.

Clips of the final performances are available on the library Instagram page: [uptonhs.library](https://www.instagram.com/uptonhs.library)



Aether House win the Reading Engagement House Cup

READING CHAMPIONS



Congratulations to year 7 students in Aether house for their incredible efforts in reading this term. They have won the house cup for reading engagement.

1st place- Aether (7U) 4655 points, 2nd place- Fire (7C) 3771 points, 3rd place- Water (7H) 3689 points, 4th place- Earth (7S) 3683 points, 5th place- Air (7J) 2626 points

READING HOUSE CUP



AETHER WINS!



Individual prizes were also awarded to students in each house who have gone above and beyond in their reading efforts this term.

Congratulations to: Emily C., Jessica G., Paige R., Gabrielle B., Abigail G., Jessica W., Madeleine B., Mya L. T., Thea G., Iris R., Summer L., Grace E., Ia E., Orla R., Rose M., Hallela O-O.

Tote Bags



We are delighted to inform you that we are adding a new optional item to our school uniform for lower school and sixth form students which is a book tote bag.



This tote bag can be used by students in addition to their school bag to carry books and school materials. Many students wear out their school bags in the school year or struggle to fit all of their school equipment and library books in their bags so we have designed a library tote bag with this in mind.

If you are interested in purchasing a tote bag for your child, they can be purchased on Scopay our online payment system for £3. Tote bags can also be purchased in the library (cash only). Funds raised will go towards supporting our school library.

Upton Book of the Year: Shortlist/ Longlist

Students from across our school voted to nominate a book for the Upton Hall School FCJ Book of the Year. After a lengthy vote counting process (pictured below) we have an exciting shortlist for students and staff to explore this year. Books on the shortlist are being featured in library lessons.



Can you help us by donating a book from our Wishlist?

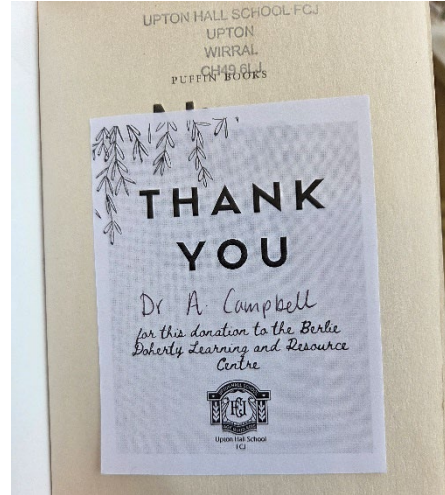
If you or someone you know would like to support our school library, please consider looking at our Lingham's Booksellers Wish List:

<https://linghams.co.uk/product-category/school-wishlist/upton-hall/>



There is an option at checkout to add a discount code to deduct 10% from the purchase price. This is SCHOOL10 and should be applied in the box marked

'Apply coupon'. This is only available for school purchases. Parents purchasing via the website for the school library should ensure the default 'collect from shop' option is selected, then select 'deliver to a different address' in the billing section and add the school address.



Please include your name on the form so that we can add in a dedication sticker to the book to thank you for your donation.

Cyberfirst Mega Event at Box Park

On December 9th 2025, 30 Year 8 students travelled to Box Park in Liverpool for a day of Cyber fun. We attended the second Liverpool 'Cyberfirst Mega Event' and gained valuable skills that will help us in our future careers.



When we first arrived it was all so unexpected because there was a disco, with Dj Dex and we all ended up dancing; what a surprise. We were then divided into our teams and set off on our adventure.



Our initial activity was giving a computer 'AI prompts' to help it to generate specific images. Lots of us won prizes from Cap Gemini because of how well we performed. We got notebooks and water bottles. We then moved on to building Lego robots and programming them with coding to make them run, jump, crawl and flip. Our last activity before lunch was with Everton football club. We had to use 'Code Blocks', to guide 'Spheros' (sphere shaped droids) around a football pitch.

We all had lunch together in the main arena. Everyone had Pizza, and we were visited by the sneaky Grinch who caused mayhem and chaos; he even gave Miss Cranney a hug! Everyone was given a Christmas cracker full of chocolate, badges and a raffle ticket. We won some excellent prizes such as gift bags and even tickets to see Everton Ladies play at Goodison Park. We all ended up dancing on the main stage with Dj Dex, which was mega fun.



Our final activity of the day brought all our skills together. We had to solve a series of puzzles to stop the Grinch from ruining Christmas. Fortunately we were successful so you can all breathe a sigh of relief.

We thought that the Mega Event was exciting and informative. On top of it being a great day out, we learned how valuable cyber technology is for future generations.

By Isla W; Freya W; Scarlet W; Poppy H; Elsie A; Emily B; Isla E

Computing



Students have participated in a number of competitions this term, including the Bebras Challenge, CyberFirst Girls' Competition and Codementum Coding Challenge.

The *Bebras Challenge* takes place worldwide during a two week period every November. It tests students on their computational thinking and encourages logical thinking and problem solving skills, all age group appropriate. This year we entered 460 students and received 128 Distinctions, and 66 Gold Certificates. Gold Certificates are awarded to the top 10% of participants nationally in each category.

Well done to everyone who took part. Special mention to our 'Best in School' winners:

- Juniors: Abby M (8C)
- Intermediates: Amalie H (9J)
- Seniors: Ffion C (10S)



- Elites: Robyn P (13JPE)
 Further details can be found on our department
 Instagram: @uptonhallcompsci

Poet Laureate 2025-2026

For the fourth year the English department have appointed pupils to take on the role of Upton Hall's Poet Laureate.

A poet laureate is a poet officially appointed by a government and they are typically expected to compose poems for special events and occasions. The British Poet Laureate is an honorary position appointed by the monarch of the United Kingdom, currently on the advice of the prime minister. The role does not entail any specific duties, but there is an expectation that the holder will write verse for significant national occasions. The current Poet Laureate is Simon Armitage.

Our Upton Hall Poet Laureates will write poetry throughout the year to reflect local and national events and the changing seasons. Pupils across all key stages were invited to submit a piece of poetry in application of the post. We had so many that we decided to appoint a Poet Laureate from Year 7, 8 and 9.

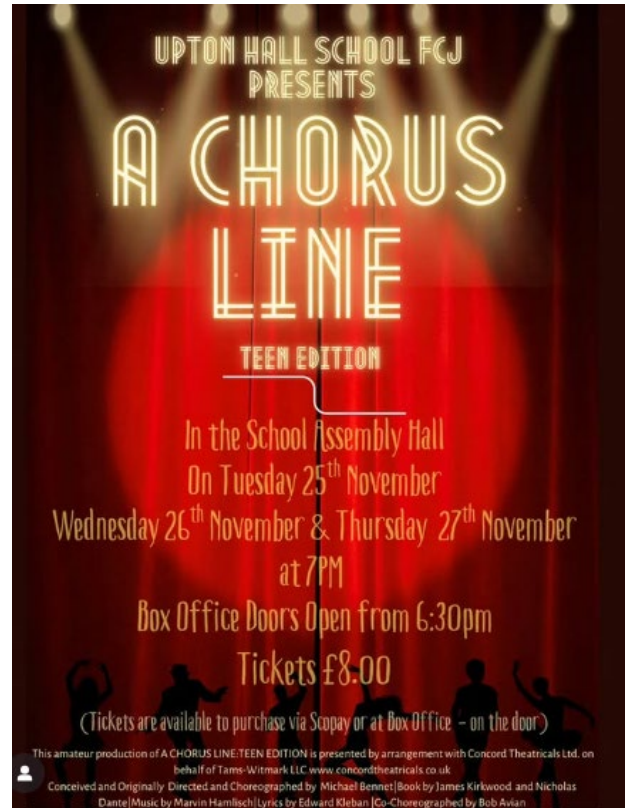
Our successful entries were Ayla in Year 7, Poppy in Year 8 and Rocio in Year 9. We look forward to reading more of their work during the rest of this school year. Their winning submissions can be read on the English department's Instagram page.

Drama news

School Production

We've had an extremely busy term in Drama, which culminated in a fantastic run of performances with this year's school production 'A Chorus Line – Teen Edition'.

We had over 120 students across Years 8-13 who participated in this year's show, either as performers, musicians, production team and/ or front of house.



We are incredibly proud of all involved and would like to say a big thank you to them all, for their hard work and commitment, and congratulations on an absolutely fabulous show!



We would also like to say a massive thank you to staff, parents and guardians for their generosity, help and support with this year's production. We really couldn't do it without you. Thank you! 😊



Theatre Visits



We have had several theatre visits this term. We took students to see Miss Saigon at the Palace Theatre, Manchester in November and we watched Matilda, the Musical at the Liverpool Empire, in December. We have lots of other theatre visits to look forward to in the new year including Mary Poppins, Moulin Rouge, Stranger Things – The First Shadow (London), The Curious Incident of the Dog in the night-time and Back To The Future, the Musical. Keep an eye out for letters and further information about forthcoming Drama trips, for all years!

Please remember to follow our Instagram page for all Drama news and events!
@uptonhalldramadepartment

Individual netball success



Jess M in Year 10 has recently been signed to 2 county netball teams: Merseyside and Nottingham Forest. It is a highly competitive process to be

selected for county teams and we are incredibly proud of her achievements.

D&T Update

In Design & Technology this term, all of our pupils have been working hard designing and making a range of products in Product Design and Food. From LED lamps in Year 7, user centred products in Year 8, candle holders in Year 9 and jewellery boxes in Year 10, pupils have developed a range of skills and showcased their creativity. Our GCSE and A Level pupils are working hard on their NEA coursework



projects and are looking forward to entering the manufacturing phase of their projects in January.



12 of our Year 9, Year 10, Year 12 and Year 13 Product designers took part in the Annual Rotary Club engineering tournament at Neston High School. Although we didn't win this year, we came away with a respectable second place for our Foundation and Advanced teams and a third place for our Intermediate teams.



All of the teams showed great collaboration and perseverance throughout the day.

Mr Jones' Year 8 class are working with a local café in Upton Village, 'On the Corner', to design and make some products for their space including signage, cake displays, and table centres. They have visited the café twice and were able to sample the wonderful cakes on offer!

This week we held our first of two Upton Hall Bake Off competitions for Year 7 & 8.



We had 26 entries including cakes, pastries and savoury treats. The standard was fantastic and the winners were awarded in their achievement assembly this week.



The Year 9-13 Bake Off takes place in our final week and I anticipate this will be just as exciting! All of our

Year 7 and 8 Food groups have also been backing Christmas treats over the last two weeks.

In a collaborative endeavour, D&T and Art have been very fortunate in being awarded a significant grant by the Wolfson Foundation to buy some new equipment for the departments. This term we have received a new laser cutter and 3D printer. The 3D printer in particular is proving very popular with all of our year groups! We will receive additional funding throughout the year and we are looking forward to enhancing our curriculums and the experience of our pupils.

Safeguarding Update

Concerns and risks about misuse of weight-loss injections in children

This is a growing safeguarding concern and has not only health and medical risks for the children but parents and carers are also not aware of the risks of a possible referral to social services or even a police referral. Social media is again fuelling the misinformation and increase in this trend. Within Merseyside, there have been multiple incidents, whereby **children have been given unprescribed weight loss injection**. This is a safeguarding concern, as children may experience significant harm.

Risks to child:

- Medicines obtained through unregulated or unapproved sources may not have been subject to the normal safety and quality controls on manufacture and, as such, may not be of the required quality or be an unknown substance.
- Giving medicines that have not been prescribed by a healthcare professional can delay a person from seeking professional help and can lead to increased side effects, interactions, and drug allergies.
- Incorrect administration technique causing pain, infection, swelling and bruising.
- Common side effects include alopecia; asthenia (generalised physical weakness); dizziness; hypersensitivity; hypotension (low blood pressure); appetite decreased and gastrointestinal symptoms



Risks to parents and carers:

- If a carer/parent is suspected of administering an unprescribed medication/substance, a referral to the local Children's Social Care can be made by any professional. Depending on the circumstances, it is possible that the Police may consider any relevant charge or crime, which may be considered assault.

What should parents and carers do instead:

- If a parent or carer has a concern for a child who is overweight, they should speak to their GP or any health professional who will assess and consider referring them to approved local weight loss services for children.

Polybuzz and children's safety

Polybuzz has been flagged as potentially unsafe for children due to its content and lack of parental controls. The app is designed with safety in mind, offering graded modes for different age groups, but it has been criticised for allowing underage users to bypass these safety features. The app's content is heavily skewed towards relationship bots, romantic scenarios, and sexualized encounters, which can be inappropriate for children. Additionally, Polybuzz lacks effective age verification and parental controls, raising concerns about the safety of its content for younger users. Parents are advised to exercise caution and consider alternative, safer AI chat platforms for their children.

Attendance Update

As we approach Christmas, we would like to thank families for the continued support you give in helping pupils attend school regularly. We know that life can be busy and that children may occasionally feel unwell, tired or overwhelmed, particularly during the winter months.

National research shows that attendance matters across all year groups, not just in Year 11. Patterns of attendance often begin to form much earlier. Pupils who attend consistently in Years 7-9 tend to find the transition into GCSE courses smoother, they feel more confident in lessons and they are better prepared for the demands of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5.

Research following pupils through secondary school also shows that even when pupils have similar attendance in Year 11, those who attended more regularly in earlier years, especially Year 10, often achieve stronger outcomes. Good attendance builds knowledge, confidence and resilience over time.

This does not mean that absence automatically leads to lower attainment. There are many reasons why pupils may miss school, including illness, medical or mental health needs. However, higher levels of absence can increase the risk of gaps in learning, which is why early support and strong attendance habits really matter.

At Upton Hall, we take a whole-child approach. When pupils are absent for genuine reasons, our focus is always on:

- supporting a positive and confident return to school
- helping pupils to catch up on missed learning
- working closely with families to reduce barriers and provide the right support

If your child is absent, please let us know as early as possible:

- Email: attendance@uptonhall.org
- Telephone: 0151 641 8133

If we have not received a reason for absence, we always send a text message. This is a safeguarding measure to ensure we know that all pupils are safe.

Thank you for working in partnership with us. By supporting good attendance from Year 7 onwards, you help your child to develop positive routines that will support their wellbeing and their success at school.

Parking

Parking is always an emotive subject and we are frequently contacted by local residents with concerns about parents parking their cars when dropping off and picking up their children. Please could I give a polite reminder to parents that they park in a considerate manner which enables our local residents to access both to the road, in which they



live, as well as their driveways. The current situation outside the gates before and after school is frequently hazardous, with an accident waiting to happen.

Parking on the lines outside of school is prohibited. If parents ignore this, we have no jurisdiction to do anything about it, however, I would hope that the prospect of causing harm to a child is deterrent enough to act safely in your cars around school.

Website & Social Media

Follow Upton Hall School FCJ on Social Media



We have recently updated our school social media accounts.

Follow along to see new features about alumni careers; inspiring current students; news in our school; showcases of student work and photos of educational visits.

Instagram:

[instagram.com/uptonhallschoolfcj/](https://www.instagram.com/uptonhallschoolfcj/)

Facebook:

[facebook.com/uptonhallschool](https://www.facebook.com/uptonhallschool)

Upton Community

This Christmas will be difficult for many families associated with the school because they are coping with the illness of a family member or a recent bereavement. As is often the case, we have had a number of pupils who have lost a close family member this year or indeed have suffered through illness themselves. I would ask you to remember these families in your prayers.



Christmas Card

Thanks to Nora in Year 11 who created this year's beautiful Christmas card.

Finally, I want to thank you for your support this term and wish you all a very happy and joyful Christmas and a peaceful and healthy New Year.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Andrea Gaunt
HEADMISTRESS