

13th February 2026

Dear Families,

My end of term update this week is written in the shadow of the death of Year 11 student Elise Green. Elise died this morning following a cardiac arrest. I know that many of you will feel a sense of shock and disbelief as you come to terms with the news. We have been working closely in consultation with medical professionals attending to her and working with her family to ensure that the messages we sent were in line with their wishes. It has been a terribly difficult situation, and we offer all of our sympathies and condolences to Elise's family and friends, and anyone affected by this news.

The support we provide to one another in times of hardship is a mark of the strength of a community; our Academy community is showing its strength and resilience this week more than ever. We know that grief can be a slow process, and each person will move through it at their own pace. We are committed to supporting our students, staff and community over the weeks, months and years ahead, as we come to terms with this sad loss. This will include increased capacity provided by a range of external agencies both on site and beyond.

Guidance for families, provided by our Educational Psychologist, and links to external agencies and charities to support children and young people through bereavement and grief, are appended to this letter.

Around the Academy

Over recent weeks we've had a real focus on visiting lessons and I have been very impressed by the quality of learning going on in classrooms, workshops, studios, halls and on the fields of the Academy this year. Our teachers have been working hard on a range of new techniques to enhance student participation and thinking in lessons, and it's fantastic to see this paying off in improved student progress and higher outcomes.

Beyond the classroom, we've also had a packed term. We've had parents' evenings for our examination years, and our Year 9 Options and Parents'

Evening was exceptionally well attended. We're so grateful for the strong parental support we see, not only on parents' evening, but throughout the year.

Our sports teams and extra-curricular activities have also continued apace. I popped into the inter-school Sixth Form Dodgeball this term, and was delighted when Mr Heysham returned with the trophy! I also attended the regional final of the Vocabulary Competition, and the stunning final of the Churchill Young Musician of the Year at St John's Church. Our inter-house competitions have continued, with Windsor House currently leading in the Heads of House Challenge Cup, and Tudor House ahead in the Academics Cup.

The cast, crew and production team of *Legally Blonde - The Musical* have been hard at work putting the finishing touches to the show, ready for "curtain up" in the first week of term 4. It is a whole-school effort to put on a show of this scale and ambition, and they have our full support as they enter the final stretch of their rehearsal process. There are some tickets still available - [get yours here](#).

Staffing Update

We wish Mrs Taylor, Head of Lancaster House, well as she begins her maternity leave, and look forward to her returning next year, in her new role as Associate Assistant Headteacher for Safeguarding and Wellbeing. We have appointed Mr Thomas to be the new permanent Head of Lancaster House from the start of term 4. Congratulations and best wishes to Mr Thomas.

Meanwhile, in the school office, our Finance Manager, Miss Dunning, is leaving us to work in the Lighthouse Schools Partnership's central finance team. We look forward to welcoming Mrs Hendy to lead the finance team at Churchill in March. Also within the office, Mrs Hamill (Head's PA and Clerk to Governors) has been seconded to be office manager at St Mary Redcliffe Primary School within the LSP. During this period I'm delighted that Mrs Colvin is acting as my PA, and we have also welcomed Mrs Belcher back into the office.

All that remains is for me to send you best wishes for a restful half term. I look forward to welcoming students back to Term 4 on Monday 23rd February, for a timetable week two.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Hildrew, Headteacher

Supporting young people with bereavement

The following advice for parents on supporting young people through bereavement has been provided by our Educational Psychologist:

- Provide an honest explanation of the facts in accessible language
- Be available where possible to listen when they want to speak
- Be mindful of behaviour changes: shock, increased anxiety, hopelessness, anger, social withdrawal, acting out, increased risk taking
- Create a safe, calm space to talk
- Ask open questions and be patient. Avoid trying to cheer them up but rather for example say 'It is really hard and I am here to support you through this'
- If they do not talk, it can be helpful to sit quietly with them or do an activity that provides them with the opportunity to speak.
- Support them in understanding that everyone grieves differently.
- Support them to understand that it is ok to have fun and to carry on with activities.
- Friendships/communities (school, sports, groups) are important for young people. Encourage connection. Social media will be used. Reinforcing messages of being safe, calm, sticking to the facts, staying connected to good friends and feeling in control where possible is helpful. They may want to take a break from messages at times and this is also healthy.

Further support is available as follows:

- Winston's Wish provides bereavement support via a phone line, email, WhatsApp (13 and over) or online chat via this link: <https://winstonswish.org/supporting-you/>
- Young Minds provides mental health support to young people and their families: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>
- Cruse offers advice on helping young people cope after someone has died: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/understanding-grief/grief-experiences/children-young-people/supporting-children-and-young-people-after-someone-dies/>
- Apart of me is an app which provides a safe space for young people who are grieving. <https://www.apartofme.org/>

The following helplines are also available:

- Text SHOUT to 85258 to contact the Shout textline
- Call HOPELINE247 on 0800 068 4141 or the NHS on 111 and select option 2
- Contact Childline by using 1-2-1 chat or calling 0800 1111
- Mindline 0800 138 1692
- Samaritans 116 123