



Hillcrest Newsletter

Autumn 2025

As we come to the end of a busy term, I want to take a moment to say a huge **thank you** to everyone who makes our school a safe space.

Our pupils have been absolutely fantastic and bring so much joy to the staff team. They have worked incredibly hard this term, and I think they've definitely earned a well-deserved break!

I'd also like to recognise our staff, who work tirelessly every day to support, encourage and inspire the children. Their dedication, care and commitment do not go unnoticed, and we are very lucky to have such a hardworking and passionate team.

Thank you to all of our parents and carers. The strong, positive relationships we share with you make a real difference. When school and home work together, children thrive. Your support, communication and trust help us create the best possible environment for learning and wellbeing. Working in partnership is at the heart of everything we do, and we truly value being able to work alongside you to support your children.

One of the highlights of this term was the school discos! Mrs Bishop's class organised events for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4/5 and did a fantastic job. Everyone had a brilliant time, and they raised an impressive £150 for the Cat and Dog Shelter. Special shout-out to Chris for being an amazing DJ!

I hope you have a restful and enjoyable break and look forward to welcoming everyone back next term on the 5th January.

Andrea Mead

KS3 - Class LM

Getting to know Each other

Class EM have had a great time this Autumn Term. We have spent time settling into our new class and classroom, getting to know each other and learning interesting things about our new peers. Uno, Minions Matching pairs and seat swap have been our favourite social games.

Topic

In Topic we have studied Changes in Living Memory and The Shang Dynasty. It was very interesting to learn about the Oracle bones used in the Shang Dynasty and we had great fun recreating our own models of these using clay.

WOW

We have really enjoyed our WOW word sessions and learning new vocabulary and using these words in silly sentences, if you see us, ask us about them!



We also designed and made our own chocolate bars adding ingredients of our own choices including rice crispies, marshmallows, popping candy, jelly beans and caramel. We even designed and made the packaging in Maths when we were learning about 3D Shapes.

Lego sessions on a Monday afternoon have been a highlight – we have spun the wheel and accepted a Lego Building challenge. These have included building aliens, houses and even candy canes.



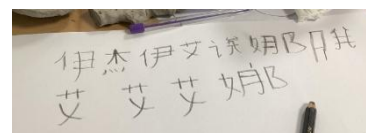
KS3– Class MP

Amazing Term

This term, Class MP have made an amazing start to the school year. They have all worked really hard and made me proud. We have spent lots of time down in Discover, spent time working on all of the student targets and had trips to the cinema, the park and the shops.

In the first half term, we looked at 'Changes in Living Memory' for our topic. This involved looking at Historical timelines and lots of significant time periods, events and people across the ages.

In the second half term, we studied 'The Shang Dynasty' where a lot of the highlights came from the phenomenal artwork was produced inspired by this topic.



Fantastic Progress

For English and Maths, the whole class have made fantastic progress and produced lots of incredible work. Some highlights in English include gothic stories, newspaper reports and haiku poetry. For Maths, I was thoroughly impressed by their multistep problem solving and how quickly they grasped statistics.

Well done Class MP, have a lovely Christmas and a Happy New Year!



KS4– Class GM

DofE

This Autumn 2 half term we have begun our DofE charity fundraiser, walking 100 miles in the local community to help raise money for Maggie's - Cancer Care. In DofE our students have been engaging in a broad variety of subjects such as languages (Korean and Cantonese), Film Studies, Gardening, Guitar lessons and Football.

Exams

The students have worked really hard preparing for and completing their Entry Level exams in Maths (Ratio and Money), Science (Biology 1A) and English (Speaking and Listening) and have all done really well. In English, our topic this half term has been Film Studies and we have been studying the 2011 movie 'Hugo' starring Ben Kingsley. We have dissected this movie, looking at the different characters, the genre, the plot and the twists, the setting and the moral of the story.

Our Learning

In Cooking our students have made various sweet and savoury delights such as Pizza, Fudge, Cheesy Chip Wraps and Cookies and have shown great culinary skills in the kitchen. In PSHE we have spent time looking at relationships, friendships and consent and have engaged with very mature and interesting discussions. In RE, we have learned more about Islam and how it is practised around the world. We have looked at different Islamic countries and what similarities and differences they have. In Science we have been learning about tropical diseases, viruses, bacteria and fungi, what can cause these to spread and ways to help prevent and protect. In Maths, our Functional Level students have been learning about position and direction, angles, elevations and plans and probability.



All in all, this half term the students have worked really well, shown a great sense of humour and completed all tasks set out before them, often exceeding along the way.



KS3 – Class CB

A Fantastic Term

We have had a fantastic start to the year in Class CB, packed with learning, trips, and exciting experiences. One of our highlights was a visit to Beamish, where pupils explored what life was like many years ago and made great historical connections.

English

In English, pupils thoroughly enjoyed our class reading texts, 'Gangsta Granny' and 'Beowulf', showing wonderful engagement and discussion. In Maths, everyone worked incredibly hard on multiplication, money, addition, and subtraction, demonstrating resilience and progress throughout. Science lessons were hands-on and memorable, with a heart dissection and our bendy bone experiment, which really brought learning to life.

Learning outside of Hillcrest

We've also enjoyed lots of learning beyond the classroom. Pupils took part in trips into the local community, including visits to Alexandra Park and travel training sessions using buses and trains. We are extremely proud that some pupils have now passed and become independent travellers. Another highlight was our Chillingham Road trip, where pupils explored different cultures by visiting an international supermarket and then enjoyed a drink in a local café. For PE, we travelled to Northumberlandia, where pupils climbed the hills and challenged themselves physically. Back in school, pupils produced some fantastic work during Rebound and Boxercise sessions.

It has truly been a busy and successful term. We wish everyone a lovely Christmas and look forward to an exciting New Year ahead!

KS3– Class NS

What a term!

What an amazing term we have had! This term pupils and staff have developed some fantastic relationships. From our trip to the discovery museum, learning about living memory to the hard work and creating of our own old fashioned toys last half term. Pupils this term have worked really hard on developing their resilience both academically and socially, having great discussions in PSHE around online safety and practising our resilience in teamwork exercises in THRIVE like the protect the egg and building a paper mache snowflake challenge.

Let's get creative!

We have explored various creative outlets this term throughout the curriculum. Mastering C-G on the keyboard and performing to each other has been a highlight for many pupils. Other pupils have exceeded expectations in their toy and clay design work. In science and English we have explored the use of AI to create our animals and explore adjectives to describe. We have worked so hard this term at maintaining a positive mindset and practising our strategies for positive thinking - our positivity chain and snowflake hangs high in our room!

Great effort

Pupils have academically worked really hard in our core subjects. This term we have explored the human body and forces and we even created our own DIGESTIVE system (yes the poo was smelly). We have had fun learning about the Brave Beowulf in English, roleplaying his fearsome fight against the wicked Grendel.



KS3– Class NM

Great Friendships

In Class NM this term we really enjoyed getting to know each other and starting to build some great friendships. We've spent time learning about each other and playing social games, and as a result we've witnessed some fantastic empathy towards each other which has been lovely. We completed an art project where we made toys with moving pieces, and have spent time together making a class playlist which celebrates our differences. We had an amazing time enjoying the snow when it arrived, even practising our knowledge of 2D shapes in the snow... and then practised our knowledge of 3D shapes using spaghetti and marshmallows!



We were able to go on two class trips to the local cinema which we enjoyed, and have really enjoyed exploring dragons as part of our Shang Dynasty topic. We were able to create some amazing clay sculptures of Shang Dynasty inspired pots and Chinese dragons. We've also really enjoyed doing some more practical Science lessons, including: trying a Benham's Disk, experimenting with shadows and magnets and conducting an experiment into friction and different materials. Well done class NM!



KS3 – Discover

Discover this term have been working hard on completing Unit Awards from the AQA Unit Award Scheme. Altogether they have achieved ten Unit Awards on mountain biking, maintaining a woodchip path and decorating etc.



There have been lots of adventures outside of school including bike rides to the Cramlington spoon, using the facilities at Concordia and shopping. Further highlights include the snow turning the meadow into a winter wonderland, decorating the classroom, tree planting, cooking and watching birds under the tarpaulin. We look forward to seeing what we can achieve next term.



KS3- Class SK

Working Hard

What a great first term we have had in Class SK! We have enjoyed getting to know each other and all our likes and dislikes. We have worked really hard in all our lessons and have achieved so much in a short space of time. We loved learning about Danny the Champion of the World and completing lots of practical activities to help us remember key parts of the story. (We also enjoyed watching the really old-fashioned film!).

Fantastic Trips Out

We had a great day out at the Discovery Museum where we learned lots about the history of the North East and enjoyed all the experiments in the Science section. We had brilliant fun in the snow and there was some great teamwork involved in making a really impressive snow man! Our trip to the cinema was very enjoyable and

the behaviour of the students was brilliant! Discover is always popular with our class and we have enjoyed everything from scavenger hunts to Tug of War.

We look forward to the Spring Term where we hope to have more adventures together- and lots of learning!

Thank you all for your support over the term. Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas



KS4 – Class RB

Very Proud

We have had an absolutely fantastic start to the new academic year in Class RB. Students have shown increased maturity and independence, excellent commitment to their learning and care and consideration to others. We are all really proud of them and they should be proud of themselves.



Amazing Effort

Students have completed their first Entry Level English exam this year which was on our crime topic. We looked at some amazing texts, both fiction and non – fiction, exploring what prisons and punishments were like during Victorian times as well as hearing real accounts from the children that were severely punished for crimes committed during this period. We also studied fiction texts by Roald Dahl, where students were required to use their inference skills to explain how characters felt or predict what might happen next. Their effort paid off and the all tried really hard in their exam.

PE

Our PE lessons have focussed on building up stamina as well as supporting the students in terms of teamwork and working well together and supporting each other. We have played different team games such as football, basketball and hand ball. As well as some more fun ball games requiring good hand-eye coordination and teamwork. We all had a great deal of fun, including the staff.



As a class we have explored a wide variety of Thrive activities, they have focussed on making students feel valued, learning new skills and working cooperatively with others. Students were able to push themselves out of their comfort zones, try new things and play alongside peers they might not normally do so with. These have been sessions that have been lovely to observe by staff working alongside them. We have also had some great sessions down in our Discover area.

KS4 – Class JP

Great Success

Transitioning into KS4 is never easy, the amount of work students need to do each week increases and students are expected to develop their independence and life skills alongside. This year Class JP has made this look easy! From day one they have had their heads down and put in the hard work each and every day. This has led to great success in our first lot of exams and incredible pieces of work being produced regularly.

Independent Regulation and Social Skills

It isn't all about the exams, we also focus on developing our independent regulation and social skills. This is something that can be difficult to develop as students move away from relying on staff to intervene when they need support.

That support is always available but students are encouraged to do something for themselves first. This is again something that Class JP have taken in their stride, proving how much they have developed in their time with us and pushing themselves forward onto bigger challenges! It is clear that this class will do big things and we are all excited to see where the rest of the year takes us.

KS4 - Class GF

Thank you

This has been an amazing first term in Class GF! We have jumped straight into some big changes and I would like to thank everyone for welcoming me as their class teacher.



In English we have explored the Crime topic and completed our first written exam, focusing on our creative writing skills. We also had a rather interesting courtroom debate to sentence a killer from one of our stories. In Entry Level Maths we have smashed a whopping 4 exams this half term, all with very impressive results. Everyone should be very proud of themselves.

Raising Money

We had a fantastic hot chocolate sale where we raised money to go bowling as a Christmas treat. The hot chocolate sale required lots of teamwork, confidence and resilience and everyone was amazing.

Preparation for Adulthood

In PSHE we have been focusing on money and budgeting in preparation for adulthood. We have had some successful trips out into the community to put this knowledge into practice.

Finally, this half term we started our collaboration with the Hope Centre, a local food bank, as part of our ELSA and work experience. The students

have demonstrated so much maturity and kindness during these visits!

A massive well done and thank you to everyone for this first term! We cannot wait to see you in the New Year!



KS4- Class MW

Great Relationships

What a first term Class MW have had! The class has formed some fantastic relationships between peers and with the staff - it has been lovely to watch the friendships develop as the weeks have gone by. It has also been lovely to see each pupil grow in confidence and see their independence developing.



There have been so many fantastic moments in school and the pupils have gotten off to such a good start towards gaining their qualifications. We have completed Maths, English and Science papers, all of which have showcased the immense amount of progress each student has made so far. We have been on trips, participated in BoxFit sessions, created graffiti art pieces in Discover and a particular highlight of this term has been organising our Christmas Market. We cannot wait to continue all the fun and hard work in the new year!



KS4- Class SM

Exam Preparation

Pupils in The Bridge have been working extremely hard this term focusing on exam preparation for a range of qualifications, including AQA Entry Level, TQUK Functional

Skills, the AQA Unit Award Scheme (English, Science, Maths, and Lifeskills), ASDAN PDP (Silver), Duke of Edinburgh and ICT Entry Level 3.

There is a big focus on independence and functionality and the pupils have managed to get out and about a lot this term. They have enjoyed exploring the local community which has included visiting Northumberlandia, Manor Walks shopping centre, Vue Cinema, The Hope Centre, and Alexandra Park. Throughout these visits pupils have shown great respect, maturity and responsibility when completing activities, both individually and as part of a team.

As part of their ongoing work experience with The Hope Centre, pupils took the lead in supporting the Harvest Appeal. They organised a school-wide collection and delivered an impressive 30 kg of donations, showcasing their commitment to making a real difference for a local charity that supports our community.



This term, The Bridge has also launched a range of alternative work experience opportunities. These include setting up and running a lunchtime café serving toasties and soup to staff, a Christmas craft shop where they have been able to showcase their creativity and a horticulture project which currently involves maintaining the flowerbeds and outdoor areas around The Lodge. All of these projects provide valuable opportunities to develop work-related skills while building confidence and resilience as part of their transition to adulthood.

Mobile Phones- If pupils bring a mobile phone into school, it **must be handed in** at the start of the day. If a phone is not handed in as expected, parents/carers will be contacted and asked to come into school to collect the phone. Thank you for your continued support with this.

Hillcrest School

School Improvements

This term we have freshened up our main corridor. We have replaced the carpets and added a touch of colour. A huge thanks to Mr Dobson for making this happen.



Absences Reminder

If your child is absent from school, please call the school office before 9am.

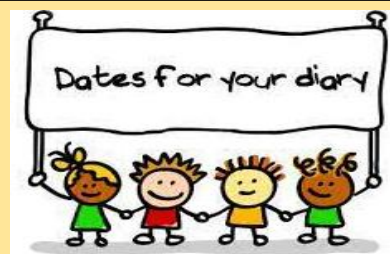
Holidays

Everyone at Hillcrest wishes all of our students and their families a Happy New Year and that you all enjoy the holiday. We can't wait to see everyone back in January.

Free School Meal Holiday Voucher

Please see the below information regarding the holiday vouchers that are funded by the UK Government/funded by DWP Household Support Fund.

"Please ensure this voucher is used for its intended purpose only. The voucher must not be sold, passed on or used for any other purpose. If you are not able to use it, or do not require the vouchers for food/clothing please contact the school and arrange for its return. Northumberland County Council reserve the right to carry out checks to ensure the vouchers are used for their intended purpose, and by accepting this voucher you agree to these checks being undertaken. If anyone is found to misuse the voucher Northumberland County Council may take action to recover the money, in full, from you as well as taking any other action they deem appropriate".



19/12/2025- School Closes (Christmas)
05/01/2026- School Returns
13/02/2026- School Closes (Half Term)
23/02/2026- (School Returns)
02/04/2026- School Closes (Easter)
20/04/2026- School Returns
04/05/2026- May Day
22/05/2026- School Closes (Half Term)
01/06/2026-School Returns
15/06/2026 -Teacher Training Day
17/07/2026- School Closes (Summer)
01/09/2026- School Returns



Please remember to update us here at school if you move house, change telephone/mobile phone number or email address so we can contact you.



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