



Senior High Notes Friday 16th January 2026

Dear Parents

This week has prompted me to reflect on the value of independence in education. What it allows schools like ours to do well, and why it matters so much for the pupils we serve. On Wednesday, I attended the Society of Heads' Board meeting. This is a small group of elected Heads who meet regularly. Being part of this board is both a privilege and a responsibility. It requires careful thought, open dialogue and a commitment to acting in the best interests of independent education as a whole, not just our own individual schools. These discussions are always energising and professionally enriching. They provide space to share best practice, to challenge one another's thinking and to learn from different contexts. They also reaffirm why independence in education is so powerful when it is exercised thoughtfully: it gives schools the freedom to make decisions that are right for their pupils, rather than decisions driven solely by national prescription.

At Derby High, our independence allows us to design a curriculum that genuinely meets the needs of our pupils, academically, pastorally and holistically. It enables us to prioritise depth of learning, curiosity and confidence, rather than simply preparing pupils for the next set of tests.

In the Senior School, this independence is reflected clearly in the structure, ambition and breadth of our curriculum. Pupils study separate sciences from Year 7, taught by subject specialists, allowing them to build strong foundations in Biology, Chemistry and Physics from the outset. In languages, all pupils have the opportunity to study French, Spanish and German in Year 7 before making informed choices about the languages they wish to continue. Alongside these subjects sits a rich creative and practical curriculum, with strong provision in subjects such as Music, Art, Design Technology, Food and Nutrition and Drama. This breadth ensures that pupils can discover and develop their talents, build confidence and creativity, and experience success across a wide range of disciplines as they move through the school. Independence also allows us to offer pupils meaningful choice as they move through the Senior School — in the subjects they study, the pathways they follow and the opportunities they pursue. This sense of ownership plays an important role in helping our pupils achieve highly and go on to exciting destinations when they leave us at the end of Year 13.

As part of the normal rhythm of school life, we are now within the window for our next ISI inspection. It has been almost exactly three years since our last full inspection, and the current framework operates on a three-year cycle. The new ISI framework, introduced in September 2023, no longer uses single-word judgements or grades. Instead, inspections focus on how well schools

meet the standards and on the lived experience of pupils, their learning, wellbeing and personal development.

Independence matters here too. ISI is the inspectorate specifically for independent schools, and its approach recognises the diversity and individuality of schools within the sector. It provides a rigorous but thoughtful process that allows schools to be evaluated in the context of their aims, values and ethos. We will not know which week inspectors are coming until we receive notification on a Monday morning, but this is something we approach with confidence rather than concern, seeing inspection as an opportunity to reflect on and share the everyday work and culture of the school.

As ever, thank you for your continued support of Derby High School, and for sharing our belief in the power of an independent education rooted in high expectations, strong relationships and choice.

Best wishes,

Amy Chapman

Head

House Chess Semi-Finals

This week, four talented KS3 members of the Chess Club represented their Houses in the annual House Chess Competition. Players were selected following a series of preliminary matches held last term.

The St. George vs St. David semi-final began with a well-balanced opening, featuring early exchanges of minor pieces. St. George secured a material advantage by winning a bishop and converted this effectively. A discovered check led to the capture of St. David's queen, and St. George went on to deliver checkmate several moves later to progress to the final.

The St. Andrew vs St. Patrick game was very closely contested. Playing White, St. Patrick opted for the Italian Opening and developed pieces effectively, gaining an early material advantage and going a rook up in the middlegame. St. Andrew responded well with solid counterplay and applying sustained pressure. This resulted in the promotion of a pawn, allowing St. Andrew to turn the game around and deliver checkmate a few moves later to secure a place in next week's final against St. George.



Year 10 Netball

On Tuesday, the Year 10 netball team hosted a friendly fixture against Littleover Community School in the sports hall. The team put in a determined and encouraging performance against a strong LCS side, with plenty of positives to take from the 29–10 result. LCS started quickly, leading 8–0 after the first quarter, but our players remained focused and worked hard to build momentum.

In the second quarter we began to find our rhythm, creating more attacking opportunities and converting five goals to make the score 17–5 at half-time. Our defensive unit showed real promise throughout the match, with some improved pressure, well-timed interceptions, and strong teamwork disrupting Littleover's play with some success. The third quarter saw continued improvement across the court, tightening the score to 24–9, before finishing 29–10 at full time. While there were a few missed catches and turnovers, the effort, attitude, and willingness to learn and perform to their best were clear to see.

A huge well done to everyone who played - thank you for being so versatile and supportive, stepping into a variety of positions when needed and backing each other throughout the game.



Year 7 Girls' Football

On Wednesday, the Year 7 girls proudly represented the school in rounds 2 and 3 of the City Football League, putting in an excellent set of performances across two challenging matches. In their first game, the team produced a dominant display to secure an impressive 5–0 victory against John Port Spencer Academy, showing great attacking play and solid defending throughout.

The second match proved to be a much tougher contest, with the girls facing a strong Chellaston Academy B side. In a tight, well-fought and highly competitive game, the team battled hard from start to finish and were rewarded with a deserved 1–1 draw.

Despite the freezing temperatures, the girls showed outstanding resilience, teamwork and determination. Their commitment, motivation and positive attitude were evident throughout, with everyone working hard for one another and supporting each other on and off the pitch.

A huge well done to Racil, Saran, Bea, Lily, Isla, Mahi, Darcy and Romy for their fantastic effort, sportsmanship and teamwork. The girls should be extremely proud of their performances and the way they represented the school.



Year 10 Basketball

Derby High's Year 10 basketball team produced a confident performance to secure a 43–26 victory over West Park.

Derby took control early, opening up a lead in the first quarter and gradually extending it as the game went on. The team showed some very good attacking play throughout, moving the ball well and creating scoring opportunities. Defensively, there were plenty of positives too, although there were a few moments that will give the team areas to work on in training.

George and AJ carried the team well, with George in particular keeping the scoreboard ticking over consistently. Dhian and Amaad were strong contributors, adding physicality and effort at both ends of the court.

Player of the Match went to Barney, whose energy in both attack and defence stood out. His work rate, commitment, and positive attitude set the standard for the team and played a key role in the win.

A well-earned result for Derby High, showing steady improvement and teamwork across all four quarters.



Art & Design Photography competition

Many thanks for all of the wonderful creative entries received. The judges are busy reviewing the many entries and winners will be revealed the week beginning 26th of January.

Keep your eyes peeled for the announcement and virtual exhibition of all of the entries.



Calling all Alumni

At Derby High School, we are working hard to connect with our Alumni, and we love to hear from our past students. If you, or someone you know, attended Derby High School and would be happy to share what you are now doing with our wider community, please do get in touch.

To sign up to our Alumni database please complete this short form on our website: [Alumni Form - Derby High School](#). Thank you.



Please Submit Your Vote - Lots for Tots Awards

Last week we were delighted to announce that Derby High Primary has been nominated for three Lots for Tots awards.

- Preschool Education Provider of the Year
- Primary Age Education Provider of the Year
- Early Years Educator of the Year: Dora Eleftheriou (Mrs E)

Voting is still open! Please cast your votes and help us get to the finalist stage by [clicking here](#). Thank you for your support!

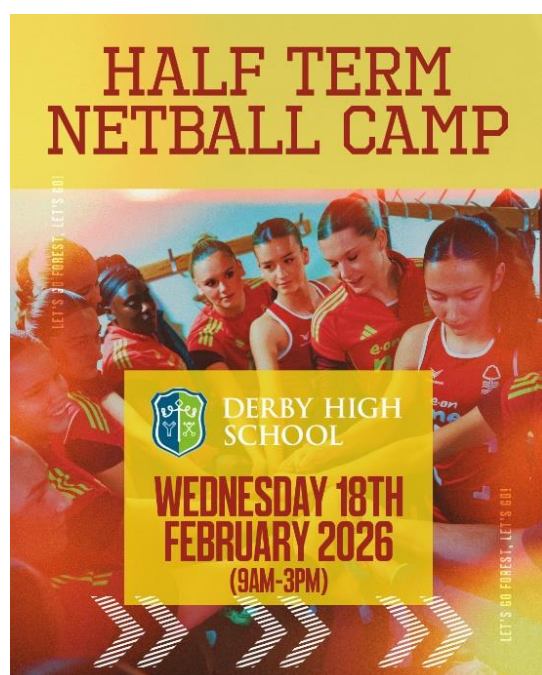


Nottingham Forest Netball Camp – February Half Term

Nottingham Forest Netball are hosting a netball camp at Derby High School, designed for players aged 11 to 16 of all abilities.

Led by experienced coaches and Forest staff, each day is filled with exciting drills, match play, team challenges, and plenty of fun surprises. It's the perfect opportunity to learn new techniques, stay active over the holidays, and be part of a positive and supportive netball community.

For more information and to book [please click here](#).



Safeguarding Corner

Safeguarding Podcast: Episode 55, In2 Early Intervention

This week Mrs. Bellman and Mrs. McBride discuss pastoral care at Derby High School. Two outside agencies are also discussed which are, Bridge the Gap and Compass.

To listen to the podcast, [please click here](#).



Links for more information can be found below.

[Child Mental Health Support](#) | [Bridge the Gap](#) | [Derby](#) | [Emotional Literacy](#) | [Anxiety Support](#)

[Compass Changing Lives - Compass](#)

[Early Help Assessment - Derby City Council](#)

Dates For Your Diary

Monday 19th January – Parent Information Briefing for Ski trip to Salzburger Sportwelt, Austria (online)

Tuesday 20th January – Articulation Regional Final

Tuesday 20th January – Year 7 Entrance Exam Day for External Year 6 Pupils

Wednesday 21st January – End of Year 11 Mocks

Wednesday 21st January – Year 11 trip to Megazone

Friday 23rd January – House Football

Monday 26th January – Year 7 – 9 House Music Heats

Tuesday 27th January – Year 13 Learning Reviews (Online)

Friday 30th January – House Football

Useful Links