

Head Teacher's Report for Governors

December 2024

Part 2 – Highlights from the Autumn Term 2024

Blacon High School – More Than a School

The ethos of our school is one of ambition, excellence and high expectation



WE BELIEVE EVERYONE CAN ACHIEVE

BLACON HIGH SCHOOL
ASPIRE BELIEVE ACHIEVE

 <p>VALUES Respect Relationships Resilience</p>	 <p>AIM To prepare every young person for success</p>	 <p>MISSION To inspire students to love and enjoy learning through a thinking curriculum</p>
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MORE THAN A SCHOOL

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Chester School Sport Partnership

School Games Organisers Claire Smedley and Elizabeth Newstead are based at Blacon High School, which is the host site of Chester School Sport Partnership, and they organise events and initiatives which are part of the Youth Sport Trust School Games Programme, funded through Sport England.

Membership

We have had 34 schools (primary and special) join the Chester School Sport Partnership this year where we deliver programmes which are not part of the national remit.

Competitions

County wide this year, competitions have been split into three categories. This is to help provide opportunities for all children to take part and enjoy sporting events.

1. **Celebrate** for children who are new to the sport and / or the least active.
2. **Aspire** for children who are not very competitive but like taking part in sport.
3. **Inspire** for children who are sporty and competitive.

KS2 Ten Pin

On Thursday 26th September, we held our first Ten Pin event in Ellesmere Port. This was a pilot event to see how the event was run, and whether the children had a positive experience.

In total, 14 schools and 67 children took part in the event which was organised by Panathlon.

Panathlon is a charity which provides competitive sporting opportunities to children with disabilities and special educational needs.

Many of the children had never been ten pin bowling before and it was lovely to see the excitement on the children's faces as they grew in confidence.

This was a Celebrate event.



Year 6 Girls Rugby Festival

On Thursday 3rd October, we had a fantastic morning at Chester Rugby Club with players from the Sale Sharks women's team supporting the event. Children from nine Chester primary schools took part in mini games and a skills session with the Sharks players and coaches.

This was an Aspire event.



KS2 Touch Rugby Festivals

On Wednesday 9th and Thursday 10th October, we held our Year 3 and 4 and 5 and 6 touch rugby festivals at Chester Rugby Club. In total, 349 children from 36 school teams took part in the event over the two days. This event was an introduction to rugby for those who had not played before, and also gave an opportunity for those who have played to continue to develop their skills.

This was an Aspire event.



Girls Football Partnership

Chester School Sport Partnership were shortlisted for a FA / YST award at a highly prestigious awards evening at St George's Park.

A film crew came into Blacon High School in the summer term, to film the girls' football activator leaders in action whilst they led a football festival for our primary schools.

At the awards evening, the short film was shared with the audience which showed the girls being interviewed, and action from the festival.

The girls were 'Highly Commended' on the evening in which Ellen White (Ex Lioness) and Clare Balding presented the award.



SEND Boccia and New Age Kurling Festival

We held our Boccia and New Age Kurling festival at Ellesmere Port Sports Village on Monday 14th October. In total, we had 26 children from 6 schools learn how to play the two sports.

Two teams will be selected for the county final, which will be held in the spring term.

This was a Celebrate event.



Year 5 and 6 Quick Sticks Hockey Competition

On Thursday 17th October, we held our Year 5&6 Quick Sticks Hockey competition at Upton High School. We had 17 school teams taking part in the event and 98 children. Hoole Primary School won the event, with Boughton Heath Primary coming in a fabulous second place. Both teams will represent Chester at the Cheshire and Warrington County Final in March.

This was an Inspire event.



Year 1&2 Multi Skills Festivals

On Monday 11th and Tuesday 12th November, we had our Year 1 and 2 Multi Skills Festivals at Ellesmere Port Sports Village. Here, the children rotated around six stations involving throwing, catching, balancing, jumping and hand / eye co-ordination. The event involved 31 different school groups and over 800 children. It is such a lovely event to see all the KS1 children enjoying what for some of them is their first sports event outside of school.

This event was open to all children in the year groups involved.



SEND Table Cricket Festival

On Wednesday 6th November, we held our first Table Cricket competition at Blacon High School. This was run by Owen Williamson from Cheshire Cricket. We had 3 primary schools and 18 children come and try the event, and they all had a brilliant time. Thank you to Blacon for hosting the event and to Owen for a great festival.

This was a Celebrate event.



Other events scheduled for this term:

Year 5 and 6 Basketball Competition

Year 5 and 6 Young Ambassador Training

Koboca Survey

We have paid for a license for all schools in Chester to access the Koboca website, where we are encouraging schools to complete the national Pupil Activity & Wellbeing survey. So far, 1269 pupils have completed the survey from 17 schools. Here, schools can see detailed reports on who the least active children are, those that want to be sports leaders, and those that do not know what a healthy balanced diet is amongst other questions. Schools can then put interventions in place to help the children who need it the most and this is being used by the pastoral team to support students in all aspects of their well-being and to break down barriers to learning.

English

Throughout the autumn term, the English Department have enjoyed teaching students a range of texts and topics. All students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum which serves to foster a thirst for learning and a love of reading, writing and speaking.

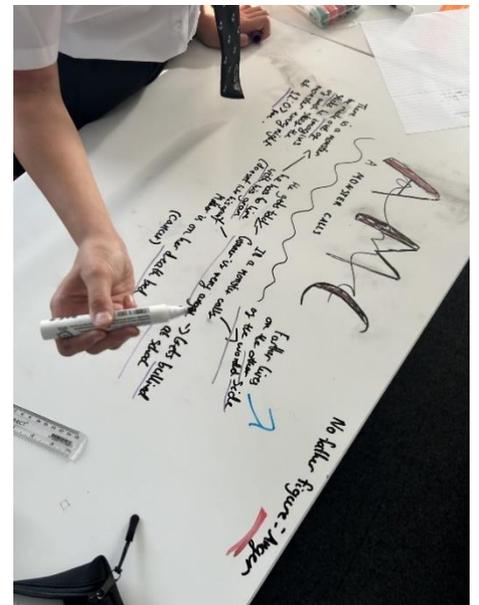
Texts and Topics:

Year 7 students began the year with a transitional unit: Me, Myself and I. This unit focused on biographies and autobiographies of influential figures such as Anne Frank, Malala, and Michelle Obama. Students wrote a chapter for their own autobiography for their assessment. To build on this, Year 7 are now studying Storytelling and the art of oracy.

Year 8 students began the year looking at rhetoric and studying speeches from famous orators such as Martin Luther King and Emma Watson. We really enjoyed studying the effects of persuasive features, and students used these in their own speeches about a topic of their choice. Year 8 are now studying *Oliver Twist*; we are really enjoying following the journey of Oliver and the range of characters he encounters along the way.



Year 9 students began the year studying The Power of Language, and the changes that people can make using just a pen and their voice. Our assessment focused on the work of Marcus Rashford during Covid and how he changed the lives of millions from just a letter. Year 9 are now studying *Of Mice and Men*, and are enjoying the many sides of society represented in the text.



Year 10 and 11 students continue with their studies of GCSE English Language and Literature, honing their exam skills and enjoying our carefully chosen Literature texts.

Open Evening:

As ever, the English Department was the place to be on this year’s Open Evening! Parents and prospective students came to visit our live lesson, during which our students were studying *A Monster Calls*, and *Oliver Twist*. Through using our whiteboard tables, students were able to work in groups and then carousel around the classroom to build on each other’s ideas. They produced some really fantastic work, which parents and prospective students were very impressed by!

Black History Month:

The English Department were, once again, proud to celebrate and commemorate such an important month in the calendar. We recognise the importance and influence of the writing of amazing black writers through time, and why it is so key for us to celebrate their works. The English Department led in the celebrations by each displaying a famous black writer on their classroom door, and why they find them such an inspirational figure. Students also enjoyed studying the works of black writers in their lessons; for example, Year 11 took the opportunity to re-visit the poetry of John Agard and his fantastic poem, ‘Checking Out Me History’.



Remembrance Day:

As always, the English Department took the opportunity to remember those who risked and lost their lives through war, by commemorating this special day. Students worked on a display, which takes pride of place in the English corridor. We studied the history and symbolism of the poppy in KS3, and in KS4 we revised the war poems of our Poetry Anthology cluster: Power and Conflict. ‘Poppies’ by Jane Weir was a particularly poignant piece of writing to study on this important day.

Chester Cathedral Christmas Tree Festival:



For what we believe is the first time in our history, Blacon High School has its own Christmas tree in the beautiful cloisters at Chester Cathedral. The theme this year was ‘What Christmas Means to Me’, and our take on it was an English-Art cross-curricular project, which focused on ‘The Gift of Stories’. Students worked with Miss Wright (Art) and Miss McFetridge (English) to create stunning decorations made from book pages, along with quotations from classic tales about the joy of Christmas. We then visited the Cathedral to decorate the tree, which looked beautiful – if we do say so ourselves!



Upcoming Opportunities:

Year 10 and 11 students accompanied Miss McFetridge, Mr Stockdale and Miss Duffy, to Manchester Palace Theatre this week to see the ever-impressive stage performance of Willy Russell's *Blood Brothers*, which has been invaluable in supporting their understanding of one of the key GCSE Literature texts.



Maths

This term, our students have engaged with a wide range of topics, each carefully chosen to build both their mathematical knowledge and their problem-solving abilities, with a focus on how mathematics applies to real-life scenarios.

Year 7: Students have been exploring **Algebraic Thinking**, including understanding and using algebraic notation, as well as concepts of equality and equivalence. This topic is crucial for building a solid foundation in algebra, which is a key component of their future GCSE studies. Students have shown a keen interest in this area, and their ability to reason algebraically is improving steadily.

Year 8: The focus in Year 8 has been on **Proportional Reasoning**, including ratio and multiplying and dividing fractions. These skills are essential not just for future mathematics, but for understanding everyday situations such as financial literacy, cooking, and even certain careers in science and engineering. The students have been enthusiastic about applying these concepts to real-world problems.

Year 9: In Year 9, students have been developing their **Reasoning with Algebra** skills. This is an important step in preparing them for the more complex algebraic concepts they will encounter in GCSE mathematics. The emphasis has been on critical thinking and the ability to manipulate and solve equations, which are essential skills for success in both mathematics and other subjects.

Year 10: This year group has been studying **Similarity and Trigonometry**, two fundamental topics that provide the groundwork for many GCSE problems. The concepts of scale, proportion, and the use of trigonometric ratios are not only key to mathematical success but are also highly relevant in fields such as architecture, engineering, and physics.

Year 11: Year 11 students have been revising **Algebra, Ratio, and Fractions, Decimals and Percentages**. These topics are central to the GCSE syllabus and are often areas where students struggle. Through targeted revision and problem-solving sessions, we have seen improvement in both their confidence and their ability to apply these concepts in exam-style questions.

In addition to the curriculum, we have had some exciting extracurricular events that have enhanced our students' learning experiences. The **Liverpool Outreach Programme** organised two events for our Year 7 and Year 8 students: the **Fun Maths Roadshow**, and the **Dragon Quiz**.



These activities involved students working together to solve problem-solving challenges and taking part in a relay race of maths questions. These experiences allowed students to engage with mathematics outside the classroom, fostering teamwork, creativity, and a love for the subject. The students were incredibly well-behaved, representing the school with enthusiasm and professionalism. The events not only reinforced their mathematical understanding, but also demonstrated the importance of learning through hands-on experiences and collaboration.

Overall, it has been a productive term in the Mathematics Department, with students making strong progress across the curriculum, participating enthusiastically in extracurricular activities, and developing key skills that will support their academic and personal growth.

Science

This term, the Science department welcomed in the National Space Academy to do deliver some workshops to some of our Year 9s and 10s. The Space to Learn classes were aimed at inspiring and engaging



students in the science and physics concepts around space, space travel, and the solar system. The whole day event saw a Year 9 and Year 10 group take part in various hands on practical activities that explored the way in which modern science contributes to our understanding and exploration of the solar system and beyond.

The KS3 Masterclass with participants from Year 9, was called 'Artemis and Beyond', which looks at the physics of rockets and propulsion, exploring how we are able to reach the moon. It also investigates the survival challenges astronauts face in space, including the effects of pressure on the human body. As part of the session the groups had to design, make, and launch their very own model rocket using a high power air propulsion pump. The students were set the challenge of seeing how high their rocket would travel. All rockets were launched to an impressive height on our school field but the clear winner with a height of 65m was Jack-Jay Canty-Weir.



The KS4 Masterclass called 'Looking Out, Looking Back', explores the human desire to learn about our universe. It traces our journey of space discovery so far, as well as the ways we use satellites and space technology to look back at and learn more about our own planet. As part of this session, our Year 10s got to experience ways in which we can map the solar system using high tech detectors such as Infrared imaging



techniques. Pictured here is Aston and George in bin bags (a marked improvement!) demonstrating how thermal imaging can be used to produce images that the naked eye may not be able to see. Students also got to explore the engineering behind a real space suit and talked about how it was designed to compensate changing pressures during take-off and landing. Pictured here is George trying the suit on for size. Students loved the fact that this suit had, at one time in its life, been in orbit around the earth.



As well as this, KS3 students in Years 7 and 8 took part in some live workshops online focussed on climate change and cop29. Mr Evans' and Mrs Costello's class joined together to engage with a seminar explaining how climate change is affecting the deep sea marine ecosystem.



History

Grosvenor Museum loan items

The History Department loaned Roman items from the Grosvenor Museum in Chester, in September for two weeks. Year 7 students (and other excited year groups) were able to try on the items, which helped them to understand what life might have been like in the Roman times.



History Hot Scholars Trips

The History Hot Scholars have been on several trips so far this year. They went to the Cheshire Military Museum, and on a separate occasion went to Chester to walk the Roman walls.



Visit from a Local Historian

History Hot Scholars have also had a visit from a local Historian from the Blacon History Society. It was a really interesting and engaging talk about Blacon through time from Alan and everyone learnt a great deal about the local area.

Fundraising Bake Sale - Wreaths for Belgium

The History Hot Scholars did a brilliant bake sale for students to raise money for two wreaths for the Belgium trip with the Blacon logo on them. These wreaths were placed on the Ypres monument for the Cheshire regiment.



Trip to Ypres, Belgium, with Years 9 and 10



A group of 36 students from Years 9 and 10 visited the Ypres Battlefields for two days on November 11th. We took part in the Remembrance display at the Menin Gate on the 11th, which was particularly poignant. We visited cemeteries of the allies and also the German forces, visited Caterpillar Mine Crater and the trenches, a museum and lots more! The students were exemplary and it was a superb trip.



Year 11 Revision

The History department is doing everything possible to support Year 11 students in their upcoming GCSE exams. History revision has been running since September and has an average attendance of 20, which is around 1/3 of the History cohort. Revision is on a Tuesday lunch time and also after school to encourage attendance.

Upcoming Plans

- Shrewsbury Prison trip in December
- Hot Scholars trip to the Chester archive

Music

KS4 classes are working towards their Component 1 and 2 Coursework units for their BTEC course. Year 11 are developing skills in solo performance and production. Year 10 are developing their solo performance skills and analysing key songs and key features from different genres of music.

KS3 students have been working on Musical Elements this term; analysing music, composing eerie music and music for fireworks, and have now moved on to: Keyboard Skills in Year 7, Blues in Year 8 and performing with expression in Year 9.

The school Choir and a small KS4 ensemble performed at the Whole School Celebration Evening in November, and all ensembles are now working towards a busy Christmas Schedule.

Matt Baker Song writing Workshop

On Wednesday 20th November, the Year 10 BTEC Music were joined by local composer Matt Baker. The class worked with Matt to compose two pieces for his next production with Rewind Youth Theatre group, which is based around the theme of a group of children being lost in an AI world. The students had a fantastic morning with Matt and he is hoping to use some of the students as production band/musicians in April 2025.



Music Department Key Dates:

- Monday 9th December – Blacon Community Carol Service, Holy Trinity Church, 6.00pm – 7.00pm
- Tuesday 10th December – Blacon Pensioner’s Christmas Afternoon Tea performance
- Tuesday 17th December – Blacon Christmas Show (Dance, Drama and Music), Garret Theatre, Storyhouse 6.00pm – 7.00pm

Art and Design

Trinity Art competition

The art department have worked closely with Revered Tina from the Trinity church to run an art completion based on “the natural world”.

The 3 finalists were invited along to the opening night where their work was exhibited alongside Treena Cox’s stained glass windows exhibition – with the aim to celebrate local female artists. Revered Tina visited students at Blacon to present prizes to students involved.



Celebrating Diwali

To celebrate the festival of Diwali the art department worked with all students across KS3 to produce beautiful rangoli patterns to decorate the canteen, where students had a selection of Indian food to choose from. The festival fitted in perfectly with year 7's Indian art scheme of work, so we showcased some of last year's final paisley outcomes!



Year 7

Year 7 students have made a brilliant start to their art careers here at Blacon. They have been researching Indian art – researching the culture and exploring the use of colour and pattern through drawing and painting.



Year 8

Year 8 students have been mastering their skills in drawing, tonal shading, blending and water colour through the bug project! They are producing fantastic work so far! They will explore more artists and eventually produce a 3-D sculpture based on Julie Alice Chapell to round up this project.



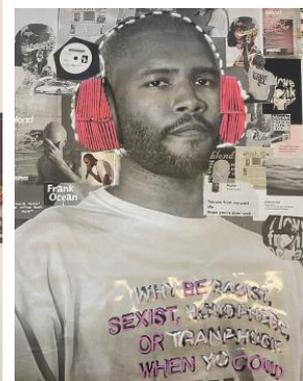
Year 9

Year 9 have been creating beautiful outcomes at the start of their Urban Landscapes project. They have been looking at tone, perspective drawing, Cheism and Ciara Phelan's collage work so far this year. We are looking forward to seeing how their work develops throughout the year!



GCSE Fine Art

In Year 10, students have been delving into their first project of layers. We have been focussing in on stitching into photographs in the style of Mexican Artist Victoria Villasana. We have some surprisingly good sewers hiding in Year 10.



Performing Arts

The Autumn Term has been filled with exciting projects in addition to the curriculum based activities planned by Dr Salisbury. We have enhanced our creative offer to our existing curriculum, forged international links with creative practitioners, developed pilot research programmes and hosted Initial Trainee Teachers (ITTs) from Cheshire West and Chester.

In addition to this, the Head of Department was officially awarded as a Doctor of Education at the University of Chester Graduation ceremony on Friday 8th November. Upon awarding Dr Salisbury, Vice-Chancellor, Professor Eunice Simmons, commended the value of the research conducted and has requested that Dr Salisbury send her work for the Vice-Chancellor's consideration.



Dr Salisbury's Thesis is entitled ***Emancipating Voice: the role of Drama in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people in a secondary school setting***. It may be accessed through the University of Chester Repository by clicking on the link provided:

<https://chesterrep.openrepository.com/handle/10034/628836>

The Arts-Based research study was conducted here at Blacon High School and has influenced pedagogical theory and practice in schools and institutional settings, being used in Initial Teacher Training, specialised Mental Health practice, professional CPD and as an allusion for further research. Dr Salisbury is currently considering a number of offers from academics and professional artists and practitioners to engage in and lead on further Arts-Based research projects in education.

Key Stage 3

Year 7 have engaged in a practical exploration of Drama skills and techniques focusing on the effective use of voice and movement to develop their verbal and non-verbal communication skills. They have created their own performances of scenes from Romeo and Juliet and devised stylised scenes from The Tempest. Through SMSC lessons, the students are exploring the social, moral, spiritual and cultural context of Shakespeare's theatre through practical engagement in creative play, devising and performance. The study of Classical theatre has been enhanced by the annual Story house Schools Production, which was performed to the Year 7 cohort and an audience of our Year 6 Primary students in October here at Blacon High School. This year's production was *The Tempest*. This annual event is part of the collaborative work between Dr Salisbury and the educational outreach team at Story house.



Year 8

This Term, Year 8 students have explored Commedia dell'arte in Drama. This popular 16th Century Italian style of theatre has influenced many successful and popular comedy performances including Rowan Atkinson's Mr Bean, Fawlty Towers, Monty Python and Blackadder. The students have excelled at making each other laugh with their comedic dramatizations as they produce high quality Lazzos (short comedy scenes) using exaggerated body language and gestures. In SMSC they have been exploring healthy relationships and consent, in line with our PSHE curriculum. Dr Salisbury works collaboratively with Kathryn Kirk from CSASS (Chester Sexual Abuse Support Service), a highly experienced Drama and Dance practitioner, to deliver highly informative sessions through Drama practice and exploration, encouraging discussion and problem-solving through a range of practical scenarios to present resolutions and encourage students to make the right choices.



Working in pairs, the Lazzo of the Servant looks at class, power and status, exploring relationships and moral choices.

Students have produced excellent comedy scenarios. They have explored a number of Lazzi, including The Lazzo of the Chair, The Lazzo of the Statue, The Lazzo of the Fly and The Lazzo of the Money.

Year 9

Year 9 students are currently exploring Dennis Kelly's play *DNA*. They are making excellent progress in developing their understanding of the roles of actors, directors and designers as they work collaboratively to create selected scenes from the play. Year 9 is when we introduce the technical aspects of performing arts, including set design, lighting design, and special effects make up, in addition to developing their skills as actors and directors.



Students take the roles of actors, directors and designers. The actors are instructed by the directors through a workshop rehearsal of a scene, though the actors may also interpret their roles through personal choice. Lighting designers are introduced to the lighting desk and rig to create their choices to light the scene. Prop designers are tasked with making a camp fire using the materials provided and set designers are given a brief to create a set using only chairs. Students may explore all roles across the sequencing of lessons in this term.

Year 10

Year 10 students have made an excellent start to their BTEC Tech Award in Performing Arts course. They are exploring William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, through a range of theatre styles. They have devised work using Physical Theatre, applying Frantic Assembly's technique of Home Chairs.



To support the completion of Component 1 coursework, the students have watched The Bridge Theatre Company's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the Fairies were trained in circus skills to complete choreographed aerial work and the audience were physically immersed in the performance. The roles of Oberon and Titania were reversed to present a shift in power between the genders, presenting the students with examples of how Shakespeare's work could be adapted for an inclusive and diverse audience experience. The costumes and props were modernised and contemporary music was used to enhance the storytelling. Characters spoke directly to the audience, addressing them as if they were in the play. Students are now working on devising their own scenes using the production as a stimulus to create performances for assessment. Their work is also supported by their workshops with external providers, including Queens Park High School 6th Form, Drama Centrum and University of Chester ITT students.



Year 11

Year 11 students have just completed their coursework for Component 1 of the BTEC Tech Award in Performing Arts. They have explored the musical *Kinky Boots* after watching the live theatre performance at Storyhouse. They have researched and analysed the production process and engaged in a range of workshops which included a heels choreography session, drag make-up and finding props on a budget. Students are now preparing for their upcoming exam. The theme will be released in January and all elements of the exam should be completed by Easter. Dr Salisbury is extremely pleased with the creative choices, resilience and commitment that students have shown to their work.



Research and Collaboration

Dr Salisbury has facilitated workshops for our students by engaging with leading International Drama educators and creative practitioners. It was an honour to work alongside Professor Allan Owens from the University of Chester in a research opportunity with practitioners from Drama Centrum in Czechoslovakia. Curriculum design, sequencing and mapping was shared with our visitors to support them in their knowledge and understanding of curriculum planning in England. It is hoped that Dr Salisbury will be able to accept the invitation to Czechoslovakia to observe their Drama practice and advise further on curriculum development.



Professor Allan Owens is a highly respected and widely published Drama practitioner, who is at the forefront arts-based research into creative practice. He works internationally with students and teachers to explore ways of breaking down physical and cultural barriers through storytelling. Here, Dr Salisbury and Professor Owens are performing a short piece of Drama to Year 10 Performing Arts students.

Drama Centrum delivered a creative practice workshop to the Year 10 Performing Arts group, where students explored how to present Czechoslovakian words through the Drama practice of Mantle of the Expert. The students were highly creative and presented work of a high standard, taking a new knowledge and understanding into their work in Performing Arts.

Drama PGCE students from the University of Chester delivered exciting workshops to Year 7, Year 8 and Year 10 students to enhance their understanding of the topics being studied in school. Our students engaged well and were highly creative, showing great progress and strengthening their Drama skills and techniques.

Dr Salisbury invited International PGCE English students from Sweden join us in November and work with the Performing Arts and English departments to observe teaching practice and deliver cultural lessons and workshops to our students in Key Stage 3. This was the second consecutive year that Dr Salisbury has worked collaboratively with the University of Chester on the Swedish ITT project. The Swedish students observed outstanding teaching practice and shared their cultural heritage with our students through their engagement in English and Performing Arts.

Dr Salisbury and Louise Thompson are working with Curious Minds on an exciting pilot project called Rhyme and Reason, funded by the Steph Lampl Foundation. We are one of only 5 schools selected from the North West of England to engage in this work which builds on the Arts for the Blues research model, exploring and evaluating the impact of the Arts on mental health and wellbeing using poetry as a vehicle. A professional poet will work collaboratively with us through workshop sessions to support our students in using poetry as a form of expression.

Drama Club

Both Drama Clubs are currently rehearsing for our upcoming performance of Alice in Wonderland. The production date is yet to be confirmed as we are still trying to raise funds for costumes, make up and set.

Chester Schools Together

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Conference

On Thursday 19th September, 10 students from the new Year 11 Leadership Team attended the CST Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Conference. This took place at the University of Chester, with students from the other CST schools. We were delighted to have two renowned guest speakers:

- *Laura Bates*, an activist, writer, speaker and journalist. She is the founder of the Everyday Sexism Project, an ever-increasing collection of over 200,000 testimonies of gender inequality.
- *Clarke Carlisle*, a former professional footballer. Clarke is also an ambassador for the mental health charity Mind. Suffering from depression and mental health issues throughout his adult life, Clarke speaks openly about his battle, working to break down the stigma around these issues and explore topics of racism, tolerance and difference.

The day was split into 2 sessions, starting with a presentation from each speaker and followed by a student workshop. Students made a superb contribution to this conference, giving them the opportunity to work with young people from the five schools across the partnership.

Year 8 Rowing Team

A new group of Year 8 students have started training with the King's School Rowing Coaches, and attend weekly Rowing sessions early on a Monday morning. They are working well as a team and we have seen some fantastic rowing in a short amount of time on the water.

Year 9 Rowing Club

A group of last year's Rowing Team have joined the Chester Royals/King's School Rowing Club afterschool on a Friday, and train with other rowers from the clubs and schools across Chester. They will compete in Regattas throughout the year.



Scalextric Masterclass

4 students from Year 8 are attending Saturday Masterclasses at Bishop's Bluecoat High School for four Saturdays throughout November, where they are designing and creating a Scalextric car from scratch and will race their cars against schools from across the UK. This project aims to raise awareness of STEM and wider engineering roles among students. Working with students from across the six schools, they will design and manufacture Scalextric cars using CAD/CAM design principles, engage in graphic design through the customisation of their cars and work with advanced technologies such as 3D printers. The students have enjoyed the masterclasses so far and have been outstanding ambassadors for our school working with the technology department at Bishop's.

Cathedral Christmas Trees

On Monday 18th November, students were taken to Chester Cathedral to decorate the CST Christmas tree and Blacon High School Christmas Tree. Musicians had created decorations for the CST tree, creating beautiful paper origami shapes using music scores, the Blacon logo, and CST logos. They were added to decorations from other CST schools to create a beautiful tree in the Cathedral. CST also funded the Blacon High School tree, which has been decorated by the English and Art Departments, with outstanding decorations to create a wonderful tree for our school. Please visit the display in the Cathedral Christmas Tree Festival and look out for our trees.



Chester Schools Together – Celebration of Partnership



I had the privilege of visiting the House of Lords on 5th November, with Selena O’Donnell from the Kings School for the parliamentary launch of the ISC’s 2024 Celebrating Partnerships report, hosted by Lord Lucas. This event brought leaders from independent and state schools involved in partnerships, MPs and Peers, along with representatives from across the education world. As one of the founding schools of CST, it was an honour to attend at this prestigious event and to have our work recognised in this way. Blacon High School is featured in the report to

celebrate the partnership working between independent and state schools.



Celebrating Partnerships 2024

The Celebrating Partnerships booklet is our annual report of cross-sector partnership work between independent and state schools.

The full report can be accessed here with Chester Schools Together and Blacon High School featuring on page 52: <https://publuu.com/flip-book/706698/1573120/page/52>

Careers and Personal Development

All Year 10 students attended the Cheshire West and Chester Pledge Careers Fair on the 24th October. This is the second year we have attended this event and there were over 50 representatives from Post-16 provision, local and national employers, and training providers. Students found the experience valuable and it also supported their confidence in approaching employers to ask questions.

Ten Year 10 students, for the fifth year running, have been taking part in the Bank of America mentoring programme. This runs over four sessions and covers aspects of future aspirations and goal setting and also University and FE.

Sixteen Product Design students from Year 10 were selected to take part in a STEM workshop run by EDT – Industrial Cadets. This was set up by Mr Hughes and students received a certificate on completion. This is a recognised award by employers and universities.

Students in Year 11 have attended assemblies from CCSW, QPHS 6th Form, LLS Sports, and the Steven Gerrard academy.

Students in Year 10 have had their Work Experience launch assembly from Mploy. This is due to take place in April 2025.

Year 11 students are having their 1:1 Pathway / Careers meetings. Students will be seen on a rota or they are able to come and request a session. Some students have already had their college interviews and have secured a place on their chosen course for September 2025.

Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Career Guidance into practice

Key updates and themes include:

1. **Maintaining Core Benchmarks:** The eight benchmarks remain unchanged in title but have been updated to reflect the latest evidence and best practices from the past decade. These updates aim to improve the career outcomes for young people, with clear, measurable criteria for institutions to follow.
2. **Inclusive and Impactful Careers Guidance:** The framework emphasizes that careers guidance should cater to the individual needs of every student, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and ensure all young people have equal opportunities. Institutions are encouraged to tailor their careers programs and support for disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.
3. **Variety in Career Experiences:** Meaningful encounters with employers and educational settings are highlighted, with an emphasis on ensuring these interactions are well-planned, interactive, and reflect real-world expectations. These encounters should be part of a progressive, sequenced career program, offering students insight into various sectors and roles.

4. **The Role of Leadership and Staff:** Careers guidance should be a whole-school or whole-college effort, led by educational leadership and involving all staff members. Clear roles for careers leaders, advisers, and teachers are outlined, with a focus on embedding careers advice across the curriculum.
5. **Use of Data and Information:** The importance of sharing high-quality, up-to-date information on career pathways and labour market data is stressed, with an emphasis on ensuring this information is accessible and useful for young people and their families. The framework now encourages institutions to focus on using destination data and tracking students' progress to better evaluate careers programs.
6. **Parental Engagement:** The updated benchmarks stress the need for stronger involvement of parents and carers in the career development process, supporting them in making informed decisions alongside their children. This is now incorporated into the strategic planning of careers programs.

The updates reflect a commitment to providing high-quality, inclusive, and impactful career guidance, ensuring that young people are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary to make informed decisions about their future.

September Guarantee 23/24

Intended Destination Data / September Guarantee

2017 – 2024

	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		21/22		22/23		23/24	
	No. of students		No. of students		No. of students		No. of students		No. of students		No. of students		No. of students	
Number in Year Group	58		70		89		111		118		138		129	
A-Levels / Level 3 Vocational	31	53%	38	54%	57	65%	62	57%	53	45%	58	42%	81	63%
Level 2	15	26%	13	19%	17	18%	22	20%	39	33%	50	36%	23	18%
Level 1	6	10%	13	19%	5	6%	21	20%	19	16%	18	13%	22	17%
Apprenticeship / Employment	3	5%	0	0%	3	3%	2	2%	3	3%	7	5%	2	2%
Forces	0	0%	2	3%	3	3%	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%		
Other	3	5.2%	2	2.9%	4	4.5%	3	3%	3	3%	4	3%	1	1%

Cadets

So far this year we have had some new recruits join us, as well as a new member from the Cadet training team. We have been Poppy selling in Chester City centre 3 weekends over October/November, as well as Remembrance Sunday where our students marched through the streets. Weapon handling tests have recently been completed by all Cadets for the Scorpion air rifle. This is so all Cadets are able to participate in an upcoming shoot.

This week we are going to meet Upton High School to propose we join forces and for them to come along to our Cadets sessions on a Monday in a bid to increase our numbers.

We have a weekend away planned for the end of January, where Cadets will learn their skill at arms. Providing they pass their new weapons handling test, we will have a weekend on the ranges at Fox barracks in March. Our annual camp week away will be 12th - 18th July.



Blacon High School Remembers

On Monday 11th November, students led a moving assembly with the Cadets to remember all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in wars, both past and present. The whole school joined together in two minutes silence at 11.00am and marked this occasion with respect as we have done each year. Representatives from each year group came together to lay crosses at the front of school and Ben Littler from Chester Wind Band kindly returned to play The Last Post, which could be heard throughout school.



Culture Capital / Learning outside the classroom overview

Culture Capital Data – 19th November 2024

All Students

Trip Group	Numbers in Cohort	At least 1 Trip		At least 2 Trips		At least 3 Trips		At least 4 Trips	
		No. of Students	% of students	No. of Students	% of students	No. of Students	% of students	No. of Students	% of students
Year 7 trips	134	126	94.03	34	25.37	1	0.75	0	0.00
Year 8 trips	160	159	99.38	110	68.75	69	43.13	25	15.63
Year 9 trips	161	156	96.89	153	95.03	149	92.55	145	90.06
Year 10 trips	147	147	100.00	140	95.24	138	93.88	137	93.20
Year 11 trips	142	130	91.55	128	90.14	123	86.62	118	83.10
All Trips	744	718	96.51	565	75.94	480	64.52	425	57.12

Pupil Premium Students

Trip Group	Numbers in Cohort	At least 1 Trip		At least 2 Trips		At least 3 Trips		At least 4 Trips	
		No. of PP Students	% of PP students	No. of PP Students	% of PP students	No. of PP Students	% of PP students	No. of PP Students	% of PP students
Year 7 trips	67	62	92.54	16	23.88	1	1.49	0	0.00
Year 8 trips	69	68	98.55	45	65.22	45	65.22	19	27.54
Year 9 trips	76	75	98.68	75	98.68	72	94.74	68	89.47
Year 10 trips	82	82	100.00	77	93.90	77	93.90	76	92.68
Year 11 trips	68	62	91.18	60	88.24	59	86.76	59	86.76
All Trips	362	349	96.41	273	75.41	254	70.17	222	61.33

PE

The PE department is proud of the extensive extra-curricular clubs, enrichment, and fixtures delivered throughout the autumn term. We now offer Volleyball and Dance lunch time clubs alongside KS3 and KS4 social football clubs at lunch time. The PE department mostly offer after school clubs and since September, students in KS3 and KS4 have the opportunity to attend Netball, Badminton, Fitness, Futsal, Football, Basketball and Dance clubs delivered by a range of staff from 3.10pm to 4.10pm. Alongside our clubs, PE deliver a range of sporting opportunities against schools within the District, County and Nationally.

Boys Football

Mr Cairns' team have played 3 friendly games in preparation for their Quarter final of the Chester Cup against Christleton High School. They won 5-2 against Bishops High School (George Shannon x 2, Jake Rudd x 2 Nico Moore). We beat Abbey Gate 4-1 (Shannon x 2, Rudd and Gregory). We beat Catholic High School 6-1; George Shannon scored 5 and Tommy Neil with one. Year 7 Boys b team finished 5th in the Chester and District 7 a side b tournament, drew 1 and lost 4. The 5 a side team played well indoors but failed to reach the semis on both occasions.

Mr Bradford's Year 8 Boys Football team have only played one competitive match and that was a 0-0



draw against Chester Catholic High School. In the 7 a side B Chester tournament, they drew 2 games 0-0 and lost 2 games in close matches.

Mr Forbes' Year 9 Boys Football team lost 4-3 in a very entertaining game in Round 1 of 2 of the Cheshire Cup (Zak Jackson and Mateusz Sadowski x 2). In Round 1, the team won 4-0 against Whitby High School (Feild, Ravenscroft, Garland, and Richardson). In Round 1 of the National Cup, we beat Helsby 1-0 thanks to Ashton Dry. In Round 2, we came from 4-1 down to draw 4-4 against Neston High School (Ethan Feild x 3 and Jack Hornsby) but lost 8-7 on pens. In the B National Cup, we lost 7-1 against Sandbach High School with Alfie Richardson scoring. We won one, drew one, and lost one at the Year 9 b 7 aside Futsal tournament at Abbey Gate College. They will give it everything in the Chester Cup after Christmas.



Year 10 Boys Football lost 2-0 to Christleton High School in Round 1 of the Chester Cup, Leighton was player of the match. We won 5-3 against Chester Catholic High with Jake Rogers x 2, Caden Allman x 2 and Alfie Moores on the scoresheet. We did lose 3-0 to Great Sankey in Cheshire Cup round 1.

Mr Sabri's Year 11 team got to Round 2 of the ESFA National Small Schools Cup. They lost in Round 2 of the ESFA Cup after losing a close game 3-1 to Liverpool College (Cai Williams) but beat West Derby School 3-1 in the 1st Round (Brooklyn Manda, Denis, Jake Cooney). In the B team National Cup, we lost 2-0 against Wade Deacon. We have Ellesmere Port Catholic High in Cheshire Cup.

Girls Football

The U15 Girls football team lost 5-1 against Queens Park High School in Round 1 of the Chester Cup, Miley Tudor scoring against a good team. U13 Girls' football team lost 4-0 against Upton High School in Round 1 of the Chester Cup scoring the goal from a corner! The Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 have had Chester and district 7 a side tournaments coming up.



Basketball

The Year 10/11 Boys Basketball team lost a close game to Kings High School 36-12 in an end to end game with Fabian scoring 8 points. The Year 9/8 team lost 56-11 to Wirral Grammar with Harrison Aitken scoring 9 points. The Year 8/9 boys and Year 7 team have more games after Christmas.



Netball

The Year 9 and 10 girls' teams have performed well in the Small School League round robin matches against Catholic, Queens Park, Bishops, and Abbey Gate schools. The Year 7 and Year 8 teams lost to Abbey Gate College in their first game but beat Queens Park and won against Catholic High in the SSL with improved performances. They played further games and Year 8 never lost a game, Year 7 showing plenty of potential.



Volleyball

The Year 11 team beat Catholic High School 3-2, first to 15 points in 6v6 Volleyball games and both teams used video footage to support practical examination PE assessment. Lennon Smith served well and Fabian was strong at the net.

Cross Country

During the final week of October half term, all of Year 7 and Year 8 students took part in the Blacon High School cross country, which was a 2k course around Blacon High School fields. The top 20 runners boys and girls all scored points for their tutor groups which will go towards our summer sports day points.



Top 3 results are below:

Year 7 x:

- 1st Levi Mackin and Beverley Manda
- 2nd George Shannon and Olive Houston
- 3rd Ethan Lightfoot and Lexi Jones

Year 7 y:

- 1st Tommy Neil and Kayla Tyrell
- 2nd George Kidd and Lola Berry
- 3rd Noah Artell and Aamerie Edwards

Year 8 x:

- 1st Cameron Griffiths and Ella Ortega
- 2nd Charlie Mackin and Isabella Broadhurst
- 3rd Harrison Aitken and Vesta Trinkunaite

Year 8 y:

- 1st Reece Oldfield and April Eden
- 2nd Jacob Markert and Abbie Phillips
- 3rd Joshua Gardner and Sophie Owen

Year 8 student William Smallwood represented Blacon High School at the West Cheshire cross country event and finished 2nd and was presented with a medal for his efforts.

Blacon Sports Village Sports

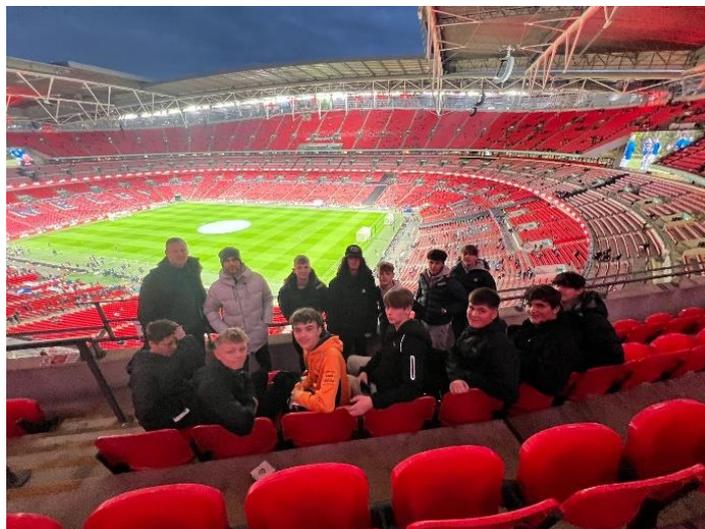
BEV Football, Tag Rugby and Basketball tournaments have all been a huge success at Blacon High School up to now with all of our feeder primary schools participating. KS4 leaders have supported Mr Forbes with scoring and refereeing of the successful events with over 50 future sports stars competing in a friendly environment.

Dance

Mrs Joynson has excellent numbers to Year 7 and 8 Dance Club and is looking to carry out a school performance before and after Christmas. Mrs Joynson has started to teach AQA GCSE Examination Dance to Year 9 on a Monday and Tuesday after school. The students are really engaged with the new course.

Enrichment

Enrichment trips have taken place; Year 11 watched England v Greece at Wembley in the Nations League with Mr Sabri and Mr Forbes. Mr Cairns and Miss Sutton took Year 10 boys and girls to watch Everton v Southampton in the last ever League Cup game at Goodison Park.



Pastoral Updates for the Autumn Term

Year 7

<p>Teens to Toddlers Initiative</p>	<p>The Teens and Toddlers programme helps young people improve their wellbeing and school engagement in order to succeed at school and in life, through the experience of mentoring nursery children. We have invested to offer this opportunity to 10 students in Year 7 who have some barriers</p>
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	<p>to accessing or thriving within education. These include: LAC, SEND, Risk of school refusal, mental health and wellbeing etc.</p> <p>Students are attending Lache Primary School every Friday for 2 hours for 16 weeks. The students will become a mentor and role model to a child in the nursery, supporting their learning and development. In addition to this, they will take part in reflective group learning sessions which include specialised coaching to boost their self-confidence and raise aspirations. At the end of the qualification, students will achieve a national qualification in Interpersonal Skills (NCFE Level 1). The feedback has been extremely positive from students and from the course provider. We have also seen increased attendance and improved behaviour in some of the students involved.</p>
<p>Blacon High School Upstanders Campaign</p> 	<p>In Year 7, we have worked hard with students to see the importance of being kind to one another and to understand the impact of negative behaviour on people’s health and wellbeing. A number of assemblies have been delivered linked to this topic and we have launched our ‘Blacon High School Upstanders Group’. This involves 10 Year 7 students who have applied to become anti bullying ambassadors. They all wear a badge so they are recognisable to everyone else in the year group. They will also run support sessions for Year 7 students on a Monday and Friday in the library. They have worked together and designed a range of events / activities to raise awareness, spread kindness and to be a source of support to any students who feel they are being picked on or bullied in some way.</p>
<p>Times Tables Rock Stars</p> 	<p>Research suggests that being able to recall times tables fluently is helpful when it comes to other maths activities. Having a secure grasp of the basics of maths, including the fluent recall of times tables, is crucial for children’s success in moving on to more complex topics as they progress through school. Because of this, school have invested in providing access to TTRS for all of our students in Year 7, which many have already used in Primary school. This is an app that all the students need to download and they can actively practice their ability to recall their times tables. We are in the process of running baseline tests and then will be running a range of tutor group ‘battles’ to encourage students to compete against each other to increase engagement. We will then run additional testing throughout the year to assess the impact of the initiative.</p>
	<p>Blacon High has been selected as 1 of 4 schools in Cheshire West and Chester to be part of the pilot scheme for supporting students with the transition from primary to secondary school. As part of this we have access to a nurse who comes to school for 1 full day a week, offering 30 minute appointments to individual students, and group sessions at break and lunch. Our nurse is Anna Dawson and she has already created excellent relationships with our students. We are able to refer to her for a variety of</p>

	<p>issues. Some of these issues have included anxiety, difficulty in making friends, health conditions, issues with sleep and issues around eating a healthy and balanced diet.</p> <p>The group sessions are also well attended and she encourages our students to participate in activities to help them reflect and think about how to create positive and meaningful relationships during their school life. This is a 16 week initiative and we are very grateful to be involved.</p>
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Year 8

Year 8 students Maja Tomala and Indie Moscrop won first and third prizes respectively in the Art competition with the Trinity Church in October. The work was exhibited in the church and the students each won a prize and certificate.

Year 8 students all took part in the Liverpool Outreach Maths event in November as part of our Learning outside of the Classroom programme. Students put their skills into practice in an exciting dragon relay race with a nail biting finish!

Year 8 choir students also played an active part in the recent celebration evening, performing in front of parents carers and teaching staff.

Year 9

Congratulations to Ethan Feild, Stanley Dowridge and Myles McElmeel have all successfully made it into Chester Schools Boys in football.

The girl dance troop Silhouette had a number of year 9s in it with Aalayah Jones leading the troop to Team of the year and Junior Leader of the year going to Caitlin Aitken.

Jaxon Thomas O Neill has had two boxing fights in Muay Thai.

Year 10

It's been a busy start of the year for Year 10 students, who are not only beginning their Key Stage 4 courses but also involving themselves in many extra-curricular activities both in and outside of school.

A number of our students are beginning their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh award. We have students involved in the Bank of America programme, and several students enjoyed the school trip to Belgium.

Along with this individuals have achieved the following:

- Hayden Griffiths, 10 Navy – won Online Chess Tournament – 19th October
- Jack Glover, 10 Navy – Qualified for the Cheshire Shooting Team – ACF
- Daniella Parry-Minshull, 10 Navy – Played her first guitar recital at the Rewards Evening
- Charlie Tushingham-Stanford, 10 Purple – Organised a group run for charity who ran 80km collectively and raised £400, and completed a mental Health First Aid Course
- Louie Walker, 10 Royal – won Golden Boot at Saughall Colts Football Club for his Goalkeeper training
- Nathan Fairbrother, 10 Royal – qualified for final of Fortnight tournament online

- Cheyenne Stapley, 10 Grey – Passed her 2 star First Aid Course
- Jordan Jones, 10 Gold – won Brio Leisure Youth Badminton Championships
- Zeke Whelan & Ashton Anderson, 10 Gold – earned places in the team of the week for Chester & District junior Football League
- Jake Jones, 10 Turquoise – awarded Player of the Season Award Football
- Dance Championship Winners – Eclipse Dance Troop 2024
 - Eclipse Year 10 Dancers were - Keira Waters, Gracie Pritchard, Bella Kelly-Owen, Darci Corfe, Ellie Green, Kelsey Thompson & Kaci Edwards

Year 11

Phoebe Bates, 11 Royal, represented her gymnastics club in October 2024, and became Welsh Champion in her 4-piece gymnastics competition.

Having qualified 1st in the North Area, Phoebe competed against the top 5 gymnasts in all 4 areas of Wales. Huge congratulations to Phoebe, we are so proud of your achievement.

Mollie O’Hanlon has been offered a conditional place at Everton Football College in September 2025 and we wish her every success.



Celebration Evening

We held a superb Celebration evening on 14th November to recognise attainment, progress and contribution to the wider school in our annual Celebration evening. Parents, students, staff and Governors enjoyed musical performances from our choir and band along with our guest speaker, Ellie Hassall, who was able to share her personal story of resilience, determination and achievement. We all enjoyed Ellie’s performance and hearing about her career in pharmacy alongside her career in musical theatre. We certainly felt like we were in the presence of a true star. Everyone was inspired by her message of always believing in your dreams. It was also wonderful to welcome back some of our former students, pictured receiving their awards, along with a video message from Annie Mae, one of our bursary students now studying A-Levels at St Peters in York. A truly special and memorable evening for all.



Eco Club: Nurturing Nature and Creativity through Wildlife Projects

Eco Club, a new lunchtime club that started this year, has quickly become a fantastic opportunity for students to engage with environmental conservation and develop a deeper appreciation for nature. Meeting once a fortnight, the students have been involved in creating toilet roll bird feeders and bug houses, providing valuable resources for local wildlife. These hands-on projects have not only allowed students to learn about the importance of biodiversity, but they've also sparked creativity and teamwork as they work together to design and build their structures. The Eco Club has become a fun and educational space where students can actively contribute to making a positive impact on the environment, while gaining a sense of pride in their work. It's been inspiring to see their enthusiasm and dedication to protecting and supporting local wildlife.



I am incredibly proud of all that has been achieved during the autumn term. Each day, it is wonderful to see just how many students strive to be the best version of themselves. May the true spirit of Christmas shine in your heart and light your path. Wishing you and your loved ones a very blessed and Merry Christmas. I wish all students, families, staff, and Governors all the best for the festive season and look forward to all that 2025 will bring.

Rachel Hudson
Headteacher
December 2024



BLACON HIGH SCHOOL

Christmas

DANCE MUSIC DRAMA
CELEBRATION

17 / 12 / 24 6-7pm

GARRET THEATRE, STORYHOUSE

TICKETS £4

TICKETS AVAILABLE VIA QR CODE

BLACON HIGH SCHOOL