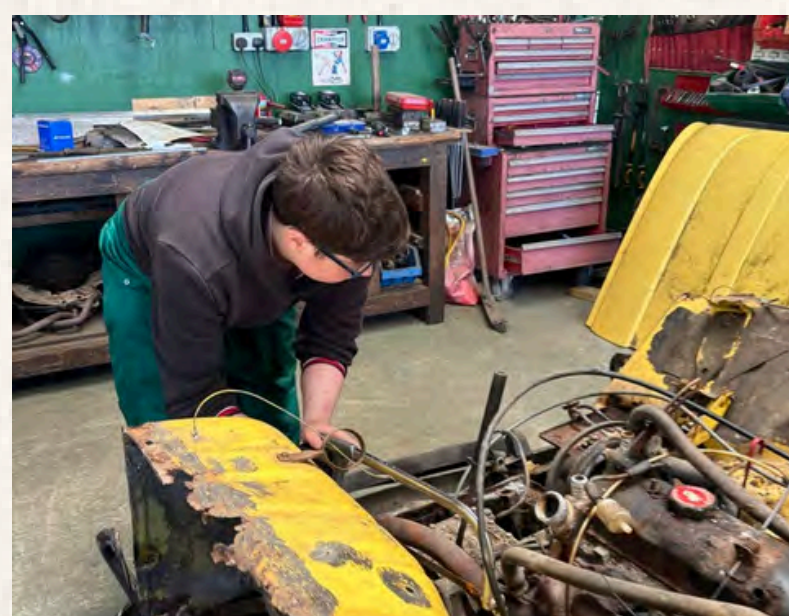




Orchard Round-Up

FRESH FROM THE FARM



A LITTLE NOTE FROM EMILY MAYNE

Head of Centre

Welcome to our latest edition of the Orchard Therapeutic Farm newsletter!

It has been another busy and exciting term across the provision, and we are delighted to share some of the fantastic things that have been happening. From new developments in our Post-16 area to the continued growth and achievements of our young people across all key stages, there is a real sense of progress and positivity throughout the provision.

At Orchard Therapeutic Farm, we are passionate about creating an environment where every young person feels safe, supported, and inspired to succeed. This term, we have continued to build on this through a mix of engaging learning opportunities, therapeutic support, and experiences that help prepare our young people for life beyond the classroom.

We are particularly excited about the progress of our new Post-16 facilities, which will open up even more opportunities for practical learning and independence. Alongside this, the introduction of new curriculum elements and the ongoing development of our Thrive approach are helping our young people to grow in confidence, resilience, and self-awareness.

There has also been a strong focus on preparing young people for their next steps, whether that's moving between key stages or planning for college and future careers. It's always fantastic to see our young people gaining confidence and starting to think about what comes next.

As always, I would like to say a huge thank you to our staff for their dedication and care, and to our families for your continued support. It truly makes a difference.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and celebrating the successes of our Orchard Farm community.

Emily

ORCHARD THERAPEUTIC BARN & OUTREACH

From barn expansion to cultural discovery,
a term of growth and exploration



It has been an exciting start to 2026 across our Barn and Outreach provision at Orchard Therapeutic Farm.

Following a successful first term in our original barn, Blackberry Barn, we are delighted to have opened our second space, Loganberry Barn. This expansion allows us to offer dedicated primary and secondary environments, supporting learners with a clear focus on our core values of exploration, engagement and empowerment.

Our Outreach students continue to show remarkable progress. Through a range of experiences, including science experiments, cooking, library visits and outdoor learning, pupils are becoming more regulated, expressive and resilient, showing a growing willingness to try new things.

Barn cross-curricular theme: A journey through Japan

This term, pupils explored the landscapes, culture, arts and science of Japan through a rich cross-curricular programme.

In art, students experimented with Sumi-e ink painting, manga illustration and work inspired by artists such as Hokusai, Hiroshige, Yayoi Kusama and Takashi Murakami. They developed skills in brush control, observational drawing and explored Japanese design principles such as wabi-sabi.

The kitchen brought a new set of skills and flavours. Students made dorayaki pancakes, cherry blossom cupcakes, Japanese-style Swiss rolls and sushi. These sessions supported sequencing, teamwork, safe kitchen practice and an understanding of chemical changes in cooking.

In geography, pupils explored Japan on the world map, learning about its islands, major cities and the differences between rural and urban life. They also studied volcanoes and mountain ranges, including Mount Fuji, alongside regional traditions and population patterns. This helped develop map skills, global awareness and geographical vocabulary.

In science, learners compared the climates of the UK and Japan, explored states of matter, volcano reactions and materials. They also investigated engineering challenges, including designing earthquake-resistant structures using straws. These activities encouraged observation, problem-solving and independent enquiry.

A term of creativity and discovery

Across the Barns and Outreach provision, pupils have developed creativity, confidence and self-expression. Each learner has grown in patience and resilience at their own pace, while expanding their cultural awareness and strengthening teamwork.

It has been a joyful and enriching term, and we look forward to taking our learners on another journey to a new country next term.





ORCHARD THERAPEUTIC POST-16 PATHWAYS

From new spaces to next steps, supporting independence and transition

We are pleased to share some exciting updates from our Post-16 provision as we continue to strengthen both the educational and therapeutic support available to our young people.

New Facilities Coming Soon

We are delighted with the progress being made on our new professional kitchen and dedicated Post-16 learning area, which are due to be completed in time for the summer term.

These new facilities are being designed to significantly enhance our vocational and independence-focused curriculum. The professional kitchen will provide students with hands-on opportunities to develop practical life skills such as food preparation, hygiene, budgeting, and teamwork, while also supporting pathways into catering and hospitality-based qualifications.

The new Post-16 area will offer:

- A purpose-built learning environment tailored to older learners
- Space for small group teaching and 1:1 mentoring in the catering environment
- A more independent and college-style setting, helping students prepare for next steps
- Opportunities for vocational learning, functional skills, and personal development to be delivered in a more flexible and appropriate environment

This development reflects our commitment to creating a real-world, skills-based learning experience that prepares students for adulthood, further education, and employment. We are looking forward to integrating these facilities fully into the curriculum and seeing the positive impact on student engagement and independence.

Preparing for College Transitions

As part of our ongoing focus on preparing students for life beyond our provision, we have organised an upcoming college trip next half term to Abingdon and Witney College.

This visit is a key element of our structured transition programme and is designed to provide students with meaningful, first-hand experience of a further education setting. During the visit, students will have the opportunity to:

- Take part in a guided tour of the campus, including classrooms and specialist facilities
- Explore a range of course options and vocational pathways
- Meet college staff and ask questions about expectations, routines, and support available
- Develop confidence in navigating a new environment

In preparation for the visit, students will engage in pre-visit sessions focusing on transition readiness, including discussing expectations, identifying any concerns, and developing questions to ask on the day. Following the visit, reflection activities will support students to evaluate their options and begin planning their next steps.

This experience is particularly valuable in reducing anxiety around transition and ensuring that each young person feels informed, confident, and supported as they move towards college or further training.

ORCHARD THERAPEUTIC POST-16 PATHWAYS

From new spaces to next steps, supporting independence and transition (continued)



PSHE now in place

This half term, we have introduced PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic education) into our Post-16 timetable as a core element of our personal development offer.

The PSHE curriculum has been carefully adapted to meet the needs of Post-16 learners and focuses on preparing students for the realities of adult life. Sessions are delivered in an engaging and discussion-based format, encouraging students to share views, ask questions, and develop their understanding of key topics.

Current areas of focus include:

- Independent living skills, such as budgeting, managing bills, and making informed choices
- Health and wellbeing, including mental health awareness, healthy lifestyles, and accessing support
- Relationships and communication, focusing on boundaries, respect, and appropriate social interactions
- Employability skills, such as workplace expectations, teamwork, and professional behaviour
- Citizenship and community awareness, helping students understand their role in society

Students have responded positively to these sessions, demonstrating increasing confidence in discussing important topics and applying their learning to real-life situations. PSHE is already playing a key role in supporting students to become more independent, informed, and prepared for adulthood.

Thrive sessions introduced

Thrive sessions have been embedded into our Post-16 provision this half term, forming a key part of our therapeutic and pastoral support.

Thrive is a trauma-informed, relationship-based approach that helps young people understand and regulate emotions, build positive relationships and develop confidence for adulthood. Sessions are adapted to be age-appropriate and relevant as students prepare for greater independence.

Sessions include:

- Targeted group and 1:1 support tailored to individual need
- Activities focused on emotional regulation and coping strategies
- Opportunities to develop communication and social skills
- Exploration of self-esteem, identity and resilience
- Practical support for transition into college, work and community settings

Staff use Thrive assessments to personalise support, allowing each student to progress at their own pace in a calm and consistent environment.

We are already seeing positive engagement, with students showing increased confidence, improved self-awareness and a growing ability to manage emotions.

The introduction of Thrive strengthens our commitment to a holistic, student-centred approach, supporting each young person both academically and emotionally.

Art

Exploring monochrome, photography and new ways of seeing the world

This term in Art, pupils have been exploring the world of monochromatic painting, using a single colour and transforming it through carefully mixed tints and shades. This focused approach has helped students develop both their technical skills and their confidence as young artists.

They began by learning how monochrome works, using one base colour and adjusting it with white to create tints and black to form shades. Working within a limited palette encouraged a deeper understanding of contrast, tone and visual impact.

Through practical experimentation, students explored how to control colour mixing and apply it with precision. They developed confidence in handling brushes, creating smooth transitions and working with intention.

The unit focused on shape-based compositions, combining geometric and organic forms. With only one colour family to work with, pupils discovered how to create interest through overlapping shapes, changes in scale and the use of light and dark to create balance and movement. The results were striking, expressive and full of individuality.

Alongside this, the department launched a new Photography Unit, introducing students to digital photography, composition, lighting and visual storytelling. Learners are exploring a range of styles, from portrait and landscape to macro and documentary, while also developing skills in editing and presenting their work. The unit encourages creative expression while building technical confidence and a new way of seeing the world.

Across the department, students have shown focus, creativity and growing confidence. It has been a term of exploration, expression and new perspectives.



Woodwork

Woodwork students create Easter Bunny sculptures this half term

This half term, our woodwork group has been developing practical skills through a hands-on Easter project, crafting bunny sculptures from plywood.

Learners began by marking out their designs before carefully cutting each shape using coping saws. This required patience, precision and growing confidence in handling tools safely and effectively. Once cut, edges were smoothed and each piece was mounted onto a wooden base to create a stable, freestanding sculpture.

The final stage brought a splash of colour, as students used acrylic paints to bring their bunnies to life. From bold patterns to soft pastels, each piece reflects the individuality and creativity of its maker.

The finished sculptures look fantastic, and students should be proud of the craftsmanship, care and imagination shown throughout the process.

Thrive

Confidence, collaboration and resilience in action

In our primary Thrive group, the focus this term has been on developing teamwork, understanding rules and building self-confidence. Through a range of practical activities, children have explored why rules matter and how following instructions helps everyone work together successfully.

For example, during group building tasks, they listened carefully, followed step-by-step guidance and supported one another to complete shared challenges. These experiences helped them understand how clear rules and instructions create fairness, safety and cooperation within a group.

To build confidence, the children have also worked on a research and presentation project titled What the Farm Needs. The group identified a sensory room as a valuable addition and began researching what it might include. They explored different resources, considered equipment and costs, and shared their findings through presentations, explaining their ideas and how these could benefit others.

These activities have supported the development of key skills, including communication, listening, teamwork, problem-solving, creativity and the confidence to express ideas. Throughout the project, children have shown growing independence and pride in their work, while recognising how their contributions can positively shape their environment.

In our Secondary Thrive sessions, the focus has been on building self-confidence and developing the resilience to keep going after mistakes or setbacks. This has been explored through practical team challenges, including marshmallow and spaghetti tower builds and a collaborative escape room.

These tasks encouraged students to think creatively, communicate effectively and support one another when things did not go to plan. Rather than viewing mistakes as failures, they have begun to see them as opportunities to adapt and try again. Through these experiences, we have seen confidence grow alongside interpersonal skills, as learners develop teamwork, perseverance and problem-solving abilities.



PSHE

From healthy routines to career pathways

Year 12 students have been exploring *Living in the Wider World: Work, Careers and Employment*. They have discussed post-18 pathways, including university, apprenticeships and employment, while developing key skills such as CV writing, applications and interview techniques. They have also explored workplace expectations, including professional behaviour, teamwork and communication, alongside topics such as workplace rights, equality and discrimination. Students have reflected on their strengths and future goals, helping them think more clearly about their next steps beyond school.

In primary PSHE, pupils have been learning how to stay healthy, safe and positive in their everyday lives. Across the year groups, children have explored healthy routines such as sleep, nutrition and physical activity, as well as recognising and managing different emotions.

They have also been developing their understanding of friendships, respect and how to recognise and report unkind behaviour. Alongside this, pupils have learned how to stay safe both offline and online, including identifying trusted adults and knowing what to do in an emergency.

Secondary students have focused on building independence and developing essential life skills. This term has included exploring self-awareness, emotional wellbeing, healthy lifestyles and personal safety.

Students have been learning strategies to manage feelings such as stress and frustration, understanding the changes that come with puberty, and recognising healthy and unhealthy relationships. They have also explored online safety, peer influence and how to make safe, informed choices, while continuing to build confidence in planning for their future and understanding their role within the wider community.

Animal Care

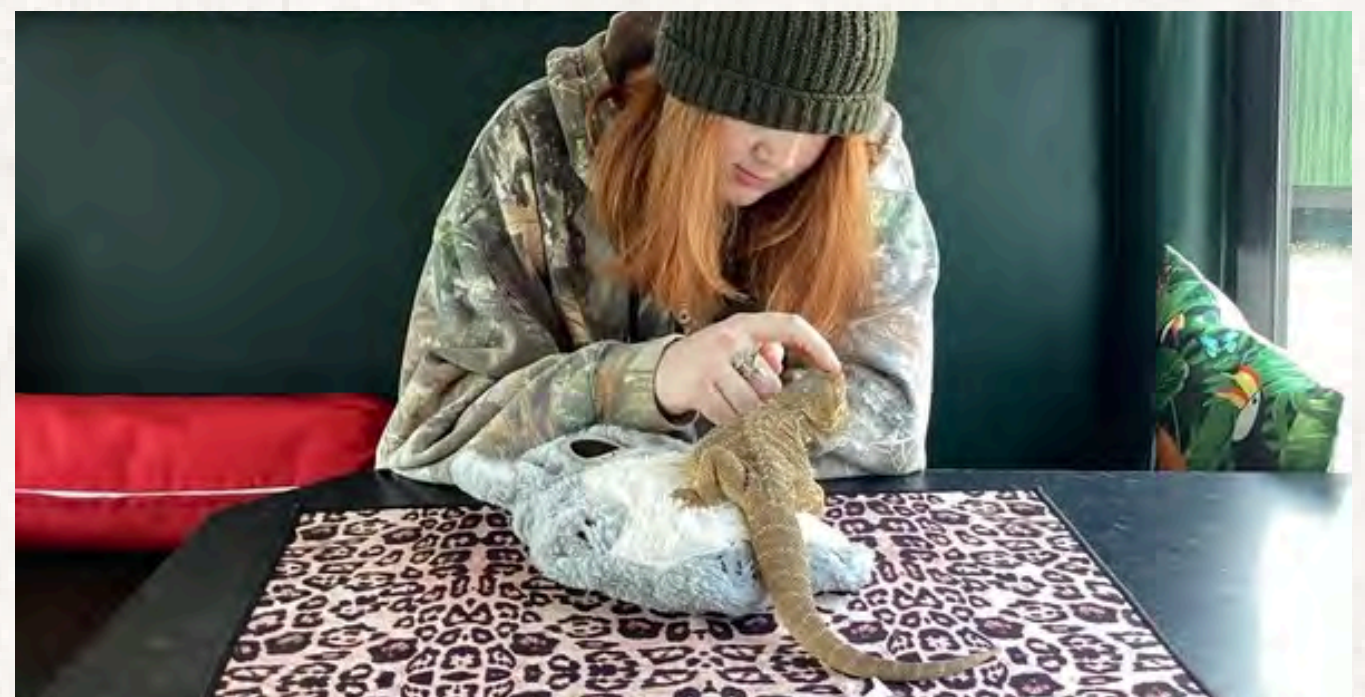
Moving, monitoring and managing animal wellbeing on the farm

The arrival of some sunshine has meant that, this half term, our animals have finally been able to get outside into the fresh air. When the weather has allowed, students have been safely moving animals around the site, from indoor pens to outdoor paddocks. Occasionally, Hairy Mary has required a little redirection, as she can lose her way along the journey.

Alongside their usual farm duties, learners have been carrying out daily animal health and environment checks, exploring what a happy, healthy animal looks like and identifying any hazards or concerns within their pens.

There has also been some sadness on the farm this term, as we have lost a few of our much-loved animals. While it is painful to say goodbye, our students have shown real emotional resilience and have deepened their understanding of the signs and symptoms of poor health.

Animal Care Level 1 students have been working hard on their unit focused on preparing, cleaning and maintaining animal accommodation, while ASDAN students have been exploring health and safety on the farm. Next term, Level 1 learners will focus on farm animal health, and ASDAN students will move on to animal care, including training.



Bushcraft

From daffodils to tree felling, learning through nature and discovery

This term in Bushcraft, we have been celebrating the first signs of spring while taking a closer, more scientific look at the plants and nature around us.

Using magnifying glasses, learners explored the reproductive parts of daffodils and discovered the differences between plants fertilised by wind and those pollinated by insects. They were introduced to the pH scale, using universal indicator paper to test different liquids around the farm to see whether they were acidic or alkaline. We can confirm that both the pond and the animals' water are a healthy, neutral pH of 7.

Students have also been learning how to use WildID fold-out guides from the Field Studies Council to identify plants and trees. Along the way, they discovered that hawthorn is sometimes referred to as "bread and cheese" due to its edible leaves and berries. Time has also been spent in the copse, where learners have explored habitats, spotting mice, snails and ladybirds. They have worked together using saws and ropes to safely fell dead trees, developing teamwork, practical skills and confidence.

Timber!

Careers & Work Experience

Lively discussions, creative thinking and meaningful progress

Recently, learners have been exploring interviews; what they are, why they are used and how they vary depending on the role. They have matched different interview types to their purposes and considered interviews from both the employer and employee perspective.

Each learner has also researched a job they may wish to pursue in the future, helping them understand what employers look for, what the role involves and how to prepare for an interview. Practising real interview questions will follow. We have also explored common interview myths and facts, clearing up misunderstandings along the way.

A highlight has been our creative scenarios, including the question, "If you had a superpower in an interview, what would it be and why?", which sparked imaginative responses.

Alongside this, some learners have been gaining hands-on experience in the coffee shop, developing communication, teamwork and customer service skills.

We have also introduced basket-making as part of our Enterprise activities, giving learners the chance to be creative while exploring how enterprise skills link to the world of work.



Catering

Exploring pasta and colourful creations

This term in Cooking, pupils have been getting hands-on with the world of pasta. They explored a variety of types, including penne, fusilli, farfalle, spaghetti and macaroni, while comparing textures and shapes such as smooth and ridged, long and short, and straight and twisted.

They also experimented with colour in cooking, using vegetable-based pastas and natural ingredients such as spinach, tomato and beetroot to create vibrant dishes. Throughout the sessions, pupils practised safe food preparation, followed recipes with increasing independence and enjoyed tasting their creations at the end.



Gardening

From mice mishaps to new life, hands-on learning in the garden

This term, we have finally been able to begin seed sowing in earnest. Learners have been developing their understanding of different techniques and tools, depending on seed size, and even had some extra practice sowing peas and sweetcorn after our first batch was claimed by mice.

Seeing new shoots and seedlings emerge is always an exciting time. Learning to grow their own food helps students build independence, grow in confidence and understand where food comes from, while developing practical skills they can carry forward.

We have continued to build key knowledge, including the different ways we can mulch beds and why this is important. Learners have also created bird feeders to support local wildlife through the colder, wetter weather, and have introduced a new mini wildlife pond to encourage more biodiversity into the garden. They have created a beautiful habitat, and we are hopeful that frogs may soon make an appearance.

Next term will focus on caring for seedlings as they develop into strong, healthy plants, alongside enjoying the therapeutic benefits of being outdoors and spending time in nature as the weather improves.

Life skills

Planning a journey and using public transport

In Life Skills, pupils have been developing confidence in navigating their local community. They learned how to read and use bus timetables, using online journey planners, printed schedules and bus stop information to understand routes, timings and key travel details.

As part of this, pupils planned a journey from Chalgrove to Oxford, considering where to catch the bus, how to recognise stops and how to stay safe while travelling.

The group then put their planning into practice with a visit to Oxford. Pupils explored the city, spotted landmarks and discussed the differences between rural and urban environments.

The trip finished with a shared lunch, where pupils practised ordering food, using table manners, making choices and paying for a meal. The experience supported the development of confidence, independence and practical life skills in a real-world setting.



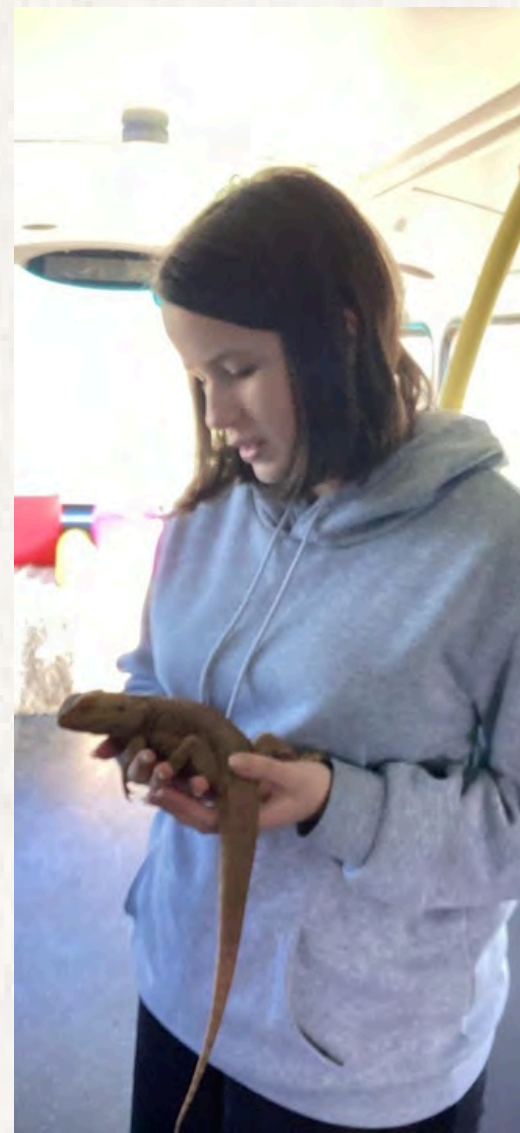
Reptiles

From Classroom to Crocodiles: Exploring Reptiles in Action

This half term, our young learners explored a wide range of reptiles and other animals, including the variety of morphs, or different colours and patterns, found within species. They were introduced to the differences between venomous, poisonous and constrictor animals, helping them understand how reptiles defend themselves and capture prey. Alongside this, pupils investigated reptile diets and nutrition, learning how different species require specific foods to stay healthy.

Crocodiles of the World

As part of their learning, pupils enjoyed an exciting trip to Crocodiles of the World, where they explored a range of crocodiles, snakes and lizards up close. They watched live feeding sessions and learned about each species' habitat, behaviour and dietary needs, bringing their classroom learning to life in a fun and engaging way.



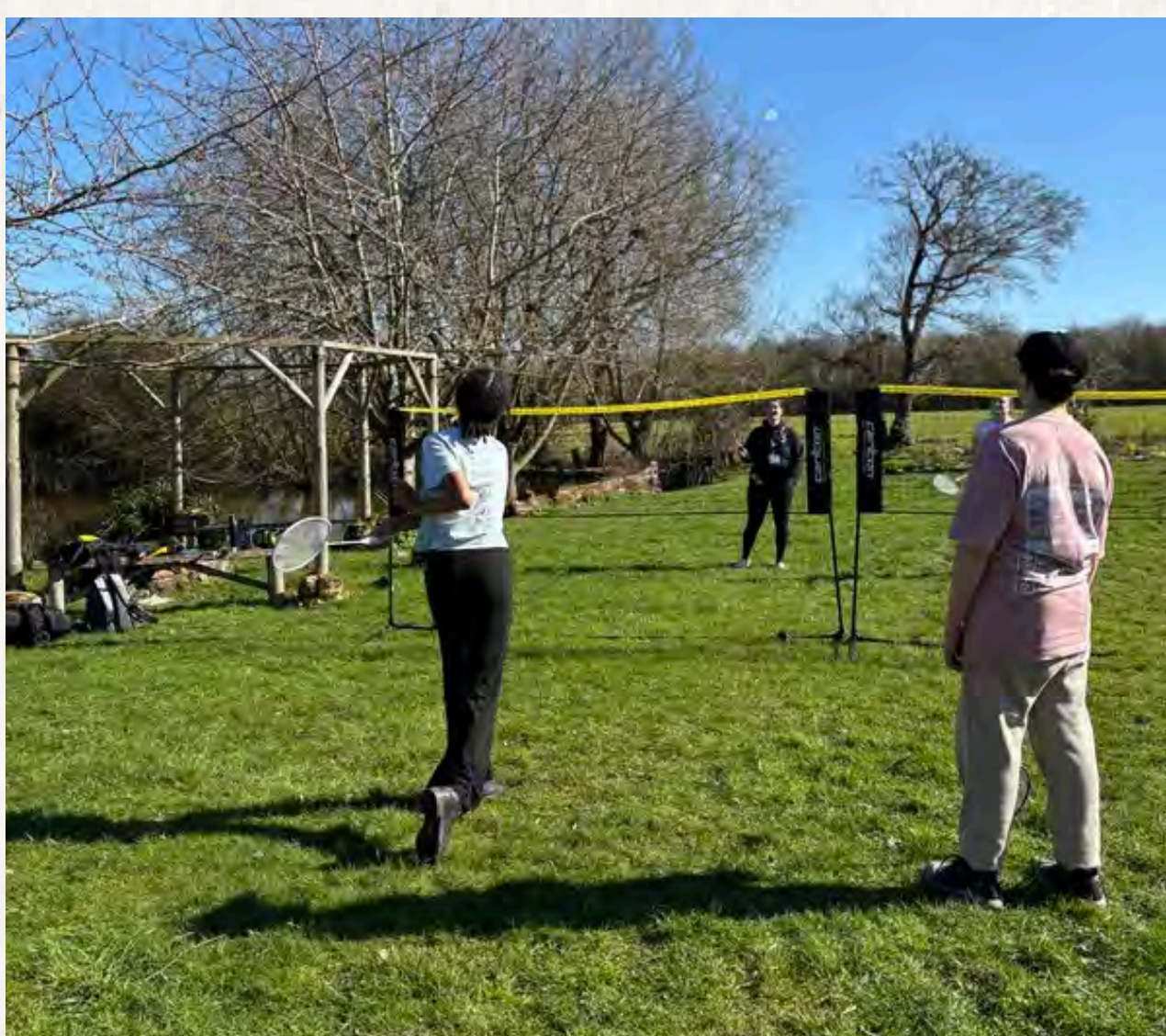
Sports

Building confidence, teamwork and self-improvement through sport

This half term, our young people have thrown themselves into the Taking Part in Sport unit, combining hands-on participation with research and reflection.

From learning the rules and structure of their chosen sports to understanding the importance of health and safety, young people quickly developed confidence both on and off the pitch. They designed and led their own warm-ups, building awareness of how to properly prepare the body, while also demonstrating sustained participation through teamwork, resilience, and commitment during practical sessions.

Beyond performance, our young people took time to evaluate their own strengths and areas for development, creating improvement targets to support their progress. This well-rounded approach has not only strengthened their sporting ability but also developed key skills in communication, analysis, and independent learning, making it a highly engaging and successful term for all involved.



Trades

New tutor, new skills, real results in the workshop

This term in Trades, the focus has been woodworking, with students putting in fantastic effort across a number of projects. The standout for many has been the epoxy river cutting board, a beautiful and practical piece that has taken real dedication over several weeks.

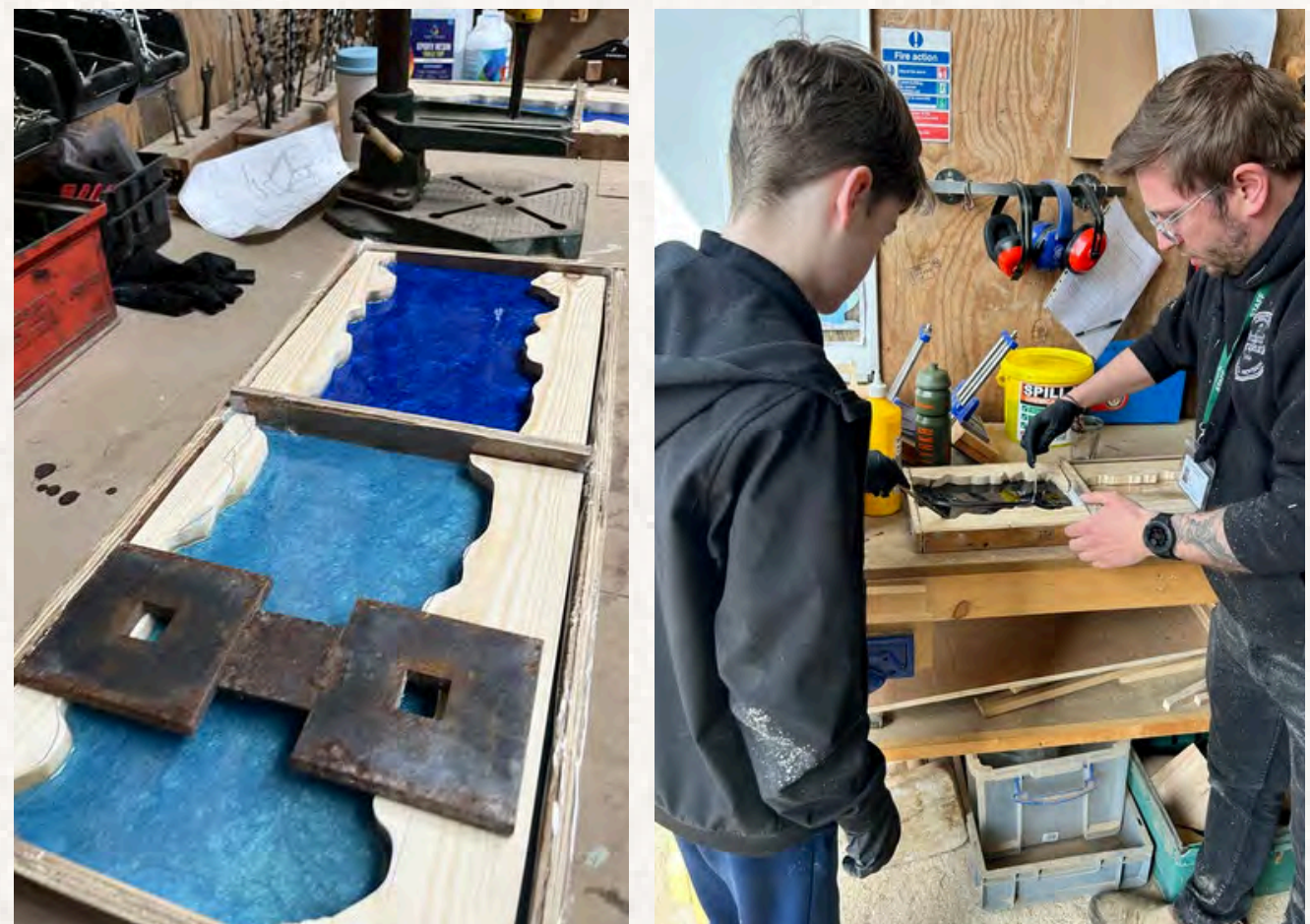
Students worked through every stage of the process:

- Designing their own unique board shape
- Building the wooden mould and frame
- Mixing and pouring coloured epoxy resin to create the river effect
- Sanding and finishing to achieve a smooth, polished result

It has been a multi-step challenge that has built patience, precision and pride in their work. The finished boards are durable, high-quality pieces that students will be proud to take home and use.

Here are some progress photos from the workshop, showing the boards at different stages. These are not the final, fully cured and polished results, which look even better once completed.

Throughout the term, students have developed strong skills in design, woodworking, resin work and finishing. It has been great to see their confidence and creativity grow with each stage. A really rewarding half term for the whole group.



Engineering

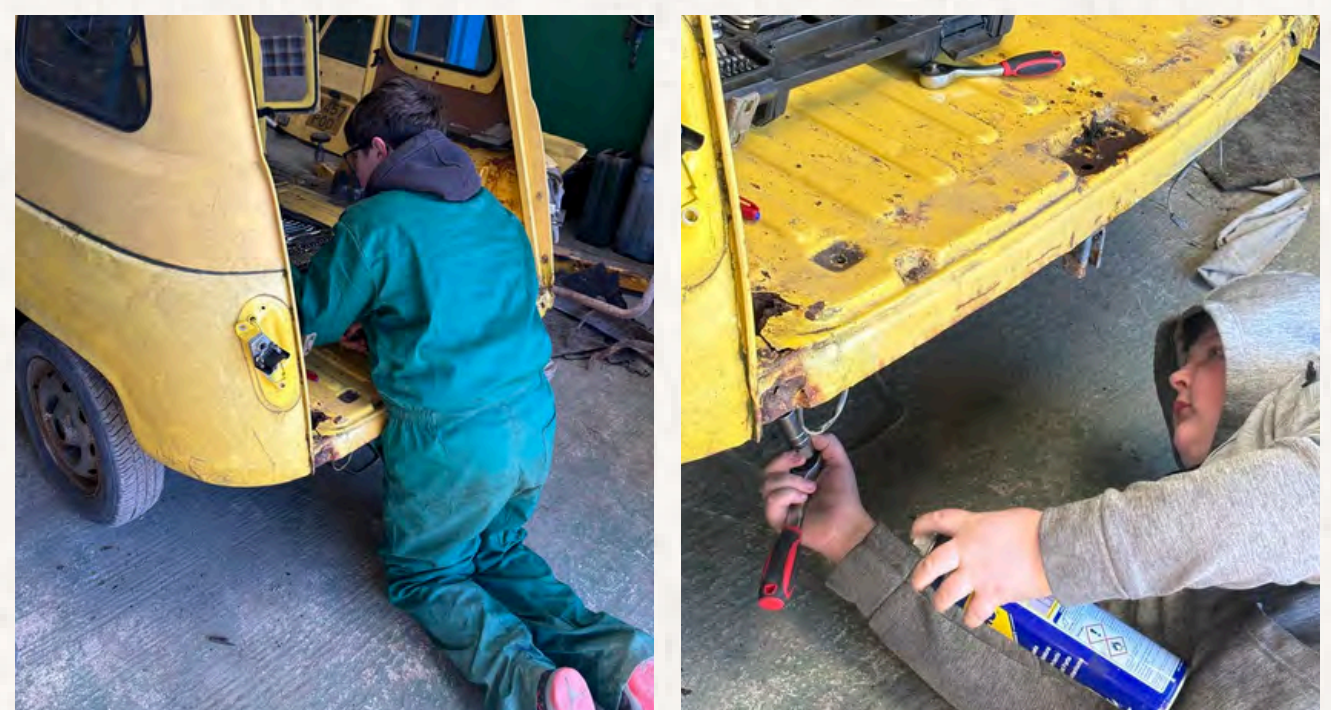
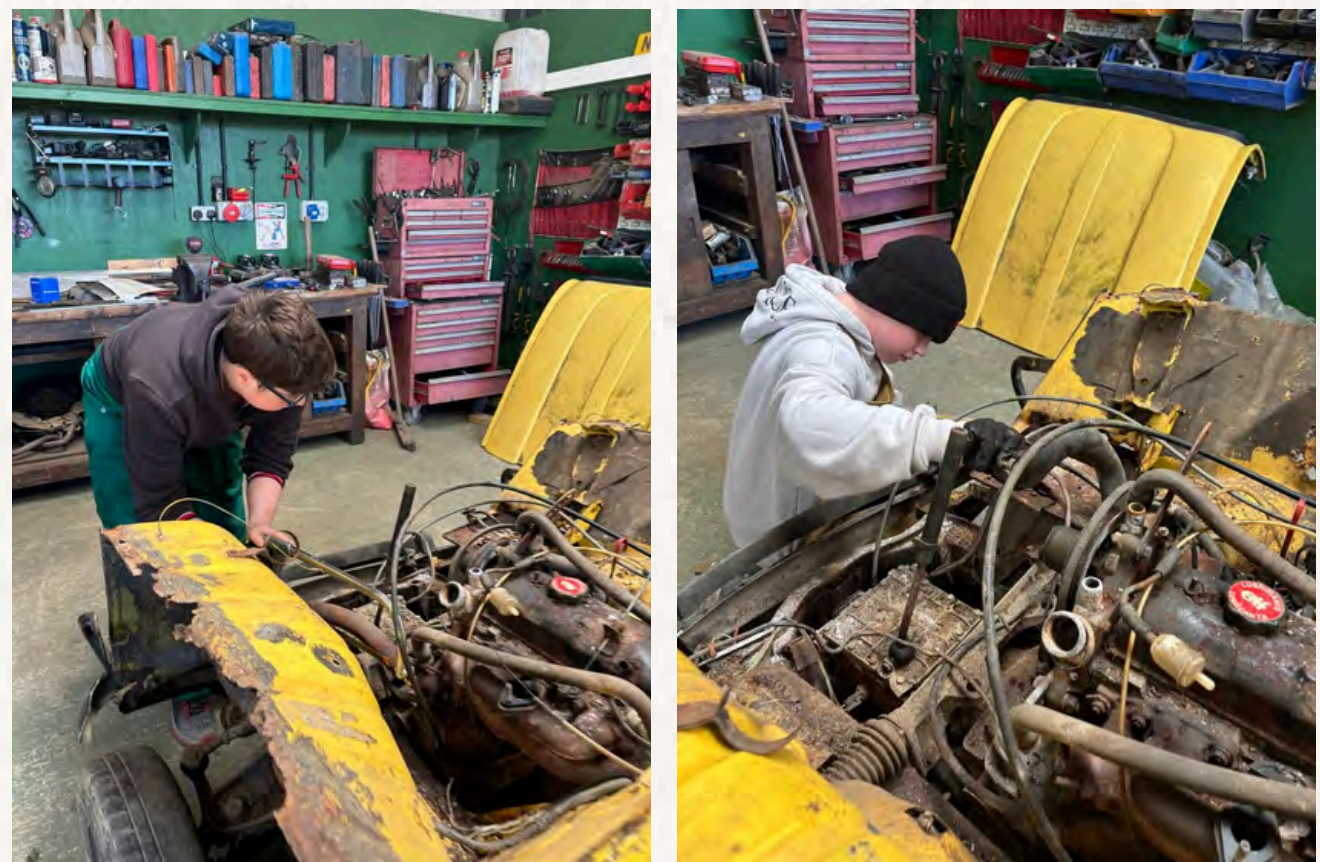
Building Skills Through Repairs, Projects and Team Challenges

This term, our Engineering groups have been busy shaping both their workshop space and their projects. Pupils shared a range of ideas about how the workshop should look, including suggestions for a dance floor. After a few laughs, we agreed to save the space for future tech projects instead.

We've made great progress with hands-on work. The Orchard buggy is now running reliably again, and pupils have fully engaged in dismantling our classic car project, identifying parts that need replacing in preparation for restoration next term. We also explored essential practical skills such as PPE selection, correct tool use and maintaining a tidy workspace.

Two standout activities were the Egg Drop Challenge, where teams used limited materials to protect their egg from a height, with plenty of successful landings, and our bicycle repair sessions. During these sessions, pupils diagnosed punctures, removed wheels, repaired flat tyres and got bikes fully functional again.

It has been a positive and energetic term, with pupils showing teamwork, curiosity and growing confidence in the workshop. We look forward to developing the space further and continuing to involve pupils in shaping the projects we take on next.



Taxidermy

Next term, we are excited to introduce taxidermy sessions to our learning programme. These hands-on workshops will give our young learners the opportunity to explore a fascinating new skill set, including pinning insects, skinning and mounting small mammals, and understanding the safe use of specialist tools and chemicals.

Learners will also delve into preserving specimens and even crafting unique jewellery pieces, helping them build confidence, creativity, and careful, methodical working habits. We can't wait to see the incredible work they produce as they develop these new skills.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Term Dates 2026

Term 5:

Starts: Monday 13 April 2026

Ends : Friday 22 May 2026

Term 6:

Starts: Monday 1 June 2026

Ends: Friday 17 July 2026

End of Term Family Celebration BBQ:

3 July

Other Important Dates

Inset Day: Friday 27 March 2026

Bank Holiday: Monday 4 May 2026

Open Day: Tuesday 7 May

Half Term: 25 May - 1 June 2026

World Environment Day: 5 June 2026

- community litter pick



THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND COOPERATION.

Orchard Outstanding Awards

☆☆☆☆
CELEBRATING SUCCESSES



At the end of each half term, we come together in the Hitchcox Kitchen Tipi for a simple ceremony of recognition.

Guided by our values Explore, Engage and Empower, we pause to acknowledge growth, resilience and the journeys our young people are on. Here are just some of our awards from this half term...

Harry B

For improved attendance and engagement in sessions

Zara

For having the confidence to explore new cooking recipes this half term

Billy

For demonstrating growth in maturity and being a positive role model to others.

Tilley

For excellent focus, effort and commitment during our Animal Care Level 1 qualification.

Ruby

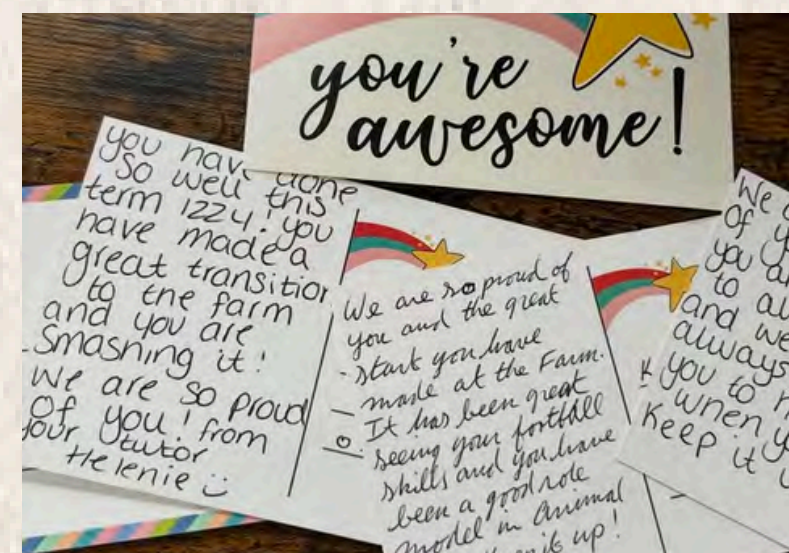
For her excellent engagement in her Art BTEC this half term.

Freya

For her hard work and determination sitting multiple exams and passing them this half term.

Kaiden

For empowering others around him and being a good role model to younger peers.



SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

FOR PARENTS & CARERS



Safeguarding... a shared responsibility

Safeguarding children and young people is a shared responsibility between families, schools, and the wider community. This newsletter provides important information about how we keep children safe, how parents can support safeguarding at home, and where to find help if you are worried about a child.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding means protecting children and young people from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It also means making sure they grow up in a safe environment where they feel supported and able to speak to trusted adults.

Schools and education providers follow safeguarding guidance such as Keeping Children Safe in Education, which sets out the responsibilities of staff and organisations to protect children.

Safeguarding includes protecting children from:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Online exploitation
- Bullying and peer-on-peer abuse
- Radicalisation and extremism

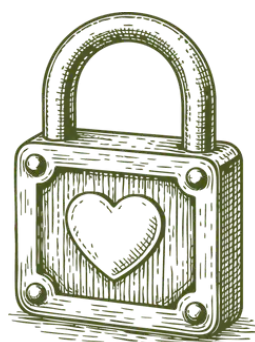


Signs a child may need support

Every child is different, but some behaviours may indicate that they need additional support or help.

These may include:

- Sudden changes in behaviour or mood
- Withdrawal from friends or activities
- Reluctance to attend school
- Unusual secrecy about online activity
- Signs of distress or anxiety



If you notice changes that concern you, it is important to talk with your child and seek support from the school or a professional.

Online safety at home



Many safeguarding concerns now relate to the internet, gaming platforms, and social media. Children may encounter inappropriate content or be contacted by people they do not know.

Parents can help keep children safe online by:

- Keeping computers or devices in shared family spaces
- Talking regularly with children about what they do online
- Setting parental controls and privacy settings
- Encouraging children to tell you if something online makes them uncomfortable

Useful guidance for families can be found through NSPCC, which provides advice on keeping children safe online.

USEFUL WEBSITES

- NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (Thinkuknow)** www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- UK Safer Internet Centre** saferinternet.org.uk
- Internet Matters** www.internetmatters.org
- Parent Zone (Parent Info)** parentinfo.org
- National Crime Agency - CEOP Safety Centre (report online abuse)** www.ceop.police.uk



If you have concerns about a young person contact our DSL- emily@hitchcoxgroup.co.uk