

6 February 2026

“Nobody phrases it this way, but I think that artificial intelligence is almost a humanities discipline. It’s really an attempt to understand human intelligence and human cognition.”

Sebastian Thrun

Dear Parent/Carer,

Technological advances are something that we are always looking at in education. We need to ask what it means for us now, and what it will mean for our students in the future, to ensure that we shape a curriculum which best prepares our students for life beyond school.

I recently read Yuval Noah Harari’s *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* which raised some interesting points. This newsletter looks at our school through this lens and highlights the importance of what we do as technology develops.

Harari explains that AI is changing the world faster than education can keep up. Machines can already store and analyse more information than humans, which is why he says, *“In a world deluged by irrelevant information, clarity is power.”*

This means education should focus less on memorising facts and more on thinking clearly and critically.

He also argues that constant change is unavoidable. Many future jobs don’t even exist yet, so the most important skill we can learn is how to adapt. As Harari puts it, *“The most important skill will be the ability to deal with change.”*

Harari reminds us that although AI can be intelligent, it is not human. It can solve problems, but it doesn’t have emotions, values, or moral judgement. That makes human skills like empathy, creativity, and self-awareness more important than ever.

Finally, he warns that in a world run by algorithms, knowing yourself matters. *“If you don’t know what you want, someone else will decide for you.”*

The message to young people is clear: education isn’t just about knowledge anymore — it’s about learning how to think, adapt, and stay human in the age of AI.

On the theme of ‘*staying human*’, our students in Year 7 had a special extended assembly this morning entitled ‘**Why Queue?**’ This focused on our **Respect** value and taught students about sustainable travel, ensuring safety, security and protection of our environments - from personal, to local. to global.

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Jake in Year 7 said - "It was great! It was really funny and I learnt a lot about climate change." and Lily said - "It was amazing and I learnt a lot about how to save the environment and travel to school safely"



Art also cannot replace our creative and physical needs. In P.E. we regularly celebrate the success of our students, and this term has been no different:

Sporting Success

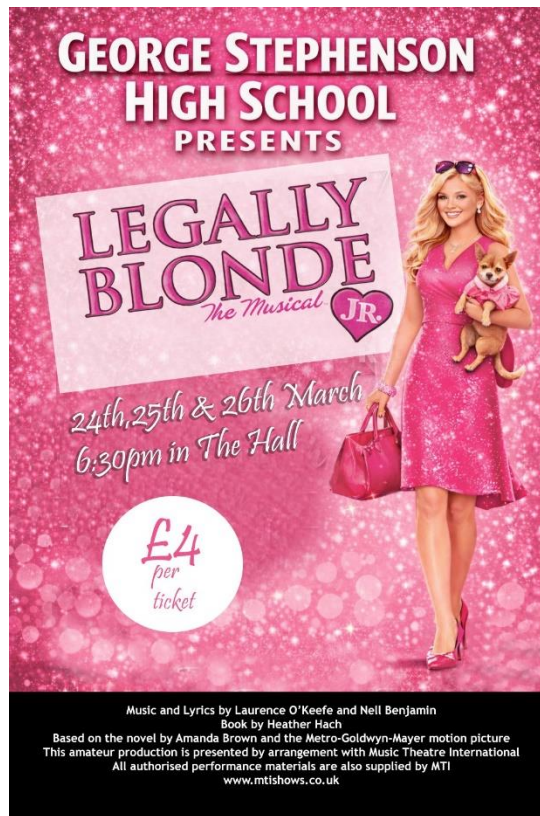
- **Key Stage 4 Basketball** have been competing very well in the CVL at Saint Thomas More, the students involved: Reuben, Vihaan, Connor, Sam and Hayden have all proudly represented the school.
- **Netball** - Years 7, 8 and 9 have been doing really well in the Netball Central Venue League and scored a record number of goals!
- **Cross Country** - Isla (Y8) & Adam (Y10) competed in the Northumberland Schools Cross Country Competition at Temple Park, South Shields - a fantastic achievement!
- **Year 8 Football** - A brilliant last-minute winner from goalkeeper Austin sent GSHS into the next round of the County Cup, defeating Walbottle Academy 3-2.

Extra-Curricular Activities this half term:

- Monday - Boys football at KYPC
- Wednesday - Trampolining and Badminton at the Lakeside
- Thursday - Girls Football at Lakeside

In valuing the creative arena, we have a range of opportunities for our students to show off their talents:

- Wednesday 11th February - Middle and Secondary Choir Showcase at Whitley Bay Playhouse
- Tuesday 10th March - Dance Festival at the Whitley Bay Playhouse
- Tuesday 24th, Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26th March - our fantastic school Production of *Legally Blonde*. Performances start at 6:30pm and tickets are £4. Please be aware that these shows do sell out.



We would also like to congratulate Oliver (Grade 1), Sylvie (Grade 3) and Kayla (Grade 4) who have recently passed their piano exams.



Oliver and Mr Wild



Although Harari suggests that remembering facts is becoming less important this is not something our pedagogy supports. Remembering information has been proven to help students with problem-solving and creativity, so a knowledge rich curriculum will always be at the heart of what we do.

An example at George Stephenson is the recent work in our Maths department where the impact is already being felt across all year groups. With new staff, refreshed curriculum approaches and a strong focus on building student confidence, Team Maths is driving forward with energy and ambition.

This year we have relaunched Year 11 Further Maths to challenge our most able students, while also introducing targeted after-school intervention sessions to ensure every student receives the support they need to succeed. We are also making maths more engaging and relevant, with Year 12 students taking part in practical and applied investigations that bring mathematical concepts to life.

Our ambition is clear: we want to develop confident, resilient learners who believe they can achieve in mathematics and beyond.

From an empathetic perspective, our students have had assemblies this week about the Holocaust, delivered by our Year 12 students who visited Auschwitz. Year 9 students had a collapsed timetable day last Friday with all activities across subjects focussed on this theme.

In Year 7 and 8 reading classes, students were read an extract from 'When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit' by Judith Kerr. The extract focused on two Jewish children leaving for an 'adventure' unaware of why they were leaving and being told to only pack one toy. They could not tell friends or teachers they were leaving, so the girl accepted a part in a school play knowing she wouldn't be there when it was performed, and her brother knew he would miss his best friend's birthday party.

Students were asked to write down how they would feel if this happened to them, and who they would miss if they had to leave. Each student wrote on a small 'flame' that were added to our HMD flame to display in the library.



From our community value, we work closely with other schools in the area. Please see the message from a student at Whitley Bay High School whose brother sadly passed away recently. She has written to her headteacher asking for support in sharing a petition which I said I would pass on.

Hello Mr Wilson,

My name is Jocelyn Black and I am a year 13 student. I don't know if you are aware, but my 12-year-old brother James Black passed away suddenly, after suffering a cardiac arrest at school (Marden Bridge Middle School) in October 2025. He was due to start here in September 2026.

I am emailing you regarding a petition that has been started and requires collecting signatures for a mandatory ECG scan of children aged 14. If it receives 10,000 signatures, the government will respond to this petition - and 100,000 signatures will mean it can be considered in parliament. I have attached the link for the petition for your information.

This ECG may have detected my brother's undiagnosed cardiac problem, and by introducing this screening it will undoubtedly protect children and prevent this tragedy and heartbreak from happening to many other families.

I would like to ask if you could potentially let members of staff know about this petition and encourage them to sign it, or even possibly put it in a newsletter or however information could be spread further afield.

I understand that you will be tremendously busy but I would be very grateful if you could inform people about this really important cause!

Thank you for your time,

Jocelyn Black

https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/750999?fbclid=IwZnRzaAPU1hpleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZAo2NjI4NTY4Mzc5AAEegEXBk74HemjT-JH2pVg78YMG3x_OW-DheSornI51BmrUZiYodo_LuUyaXsM_aem_K8F5xZ7r0EpC9RPQyFJTQA

Can you make a difference?

We currently have two vacancies for parent governors. [The application pack and form can be found here](#). If you would like to be part of a team committed to making a difference to the lives of young people in our school and community, please apply or email the school at enquiries@gshs.org.uk to find out more.

This has been a quite a long newsletter (thank you if you have got this far!), and there is still much more to share, so I will be sending an additional newsletter next week before half term.

Thank you again for your ongoing support.

Best wishes,



Mr. P. Douthwaite

Headteacher

Key dates and the half term ahead (Please check the school website for updates)

February

Year 12 and 13 Parents Evening – Thursday 5th February

Year 11 MFL speaking mock exams – Monday 9th – Friday 13th February

Iceland Trip Parents Meeting – Wednesday 11th February

School Closes for Half Term – Friday 13th February

Student support and safeguarding

Designated Safeguarding Leader: Mrs Louise Dunn

Deputy Safeguarding Leader: Mr Alex Lunn

SENDCo: Mrs Rebecca Bennett

Please remember that we are here to support you and your child at any time.

You can contact us via the main office (phone) or by email

For queries regarding attendance or absence, please email absence@gshs.org.uk