

PURCELL PARENT NEWSLETTER

5th December 2025

Dear Parents,

Every time I sit down to write the last Parent Newsletter before Christmas (as this one is) I can't quite believe a) that it's come around again so alarmingly quickly and b) that we've accomplished so much between September and now. Both are as true today as they have been in any previous year. Likewise, I always seem to write about the astonishing amount of high quality activity that has been undertaken, the general happiness around the place and incredible commitment and dedication of our students and staff. And all are as true today as they have been in any previous year! Maybe it's a sign that I've been here too long.....!!

But in all seriousness, it has been an extraordinarily productive term with so many events both in and out of school, many of which have had a lasting and positive impact on the communities we've performed to or engaged with. It really is the most enormous privilege (and humbling experience) to see how our students make such enormous strides from term to term, whether this is musical, academic or personal. I think we can all be justly proud of everything they have achieved this term!

But the term is not yet over and we are going out with a bang! As I am sure you will be aware, we are holding our first Giving-Day and 24-hour continuous concert from 10am on December 11th until 10am on December 12th. All the details are in a paragraph below, but I would strongly encourage you to share the details far and wide and not to be shy of asking people to help by donating. Every penny donated will go directly towards supporting the work we do here. Making a donation will not only represent an investment in the future of music, but will provide significant encouragement to all of us when it gets to 2am on Friday morning! The students are really excited about it and I hope that you will tune in and follow us along.

Thank you for all your support this term.

Wishing you a very happy Christmas break when it comes.

Arrangements for last day of term, Friday 12th December

On the last day of term please access and depart the School site using the rear gate on Bushey Mill Lane. A grab-and-go sandwich lunch will be available for students and parents in the Dining Hall from midday to 1pm on the last day of term and school closes at 3pm.

Giving Day - one week to go!

The programme has been announced, the students are rehearsing and we are just one week away from kicking off our 24-hour concert!

Our very first Giving Day, running from 11th-12th December (10am-10am), will showcase performances by students from all departments. **Please note that the performances will be live-streamed online as there is no space for an audience.** Do visit and share the link below to our Giving Day website – where you can download the full programme of performances - and encourage your friends and family to tune into the live stream. All donations welcome, big or small!

GIVING DAY WEBSITE

Thank you to all parents and guardians for supporting and accommodating this event. To view a 'one week to go' message from Paul, please [click here](#).

Mock Week

Mock exams for Years 11 and 13 will take place during the week beginning 12 January. These exams provide an important opportunity for students to experience full examination conditions and to prepare effectively for their final assessments in the summer.

In early January, Mrs Hodes, our Exams Officer, and Mr Long will deliver an assembly outlining expectations and sharing key information. Students will receive their individual exam timetables before the Christmas break.

To support effective preparation, all academic teachers have been asked to provide revision materials via Google Classroom for students to use over the holiday period. We encourage students to make good use of this time to revise and to seek support where needed.

We wish all our students the very best in their preparation and every success in their exams.

Safeguarding

As a school community, we're committed to ensuring our pupils are protected and educated about staying safe in the digital world. Next term, we'll be marking Safer Internet Day on the 10th of February 2026, exploring the theme 'Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI'.

AI has become increasingly prevalent in our daily lives and many students are already using it to assist in learning as well as creating amusing memes! However, it's also important to reflect on the wider problems around staying safe in the digital world. One of the most prevalent sources of risk online is through social media sites and apps.

You may be aware that Australia is currently implementing a ban on major social media sites for anyone under the age of 16. In the UK, the minimum age for joining social media sites is currently 13, which protects children from inappropriate content or unsafe contact with older social media users, who may be strangers, including other children and adults.

- **TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)** require users to be at least 13 years old
- **WhatsApp** accounts should not be used by those under 13
- **Roblox** has no minimum age, but parental consent is required for under 13s
- **Discord** does have an age requirement of 13 but in-game communication for most online games does not

These age restrictions exist to protect children from:

- Inappropriate and harmful content
- Contact with strangers who may wish to exploit them
- Exposure to cyberbullying and online harassment
- Content and advertising that isn't age-appropriate
- Pressure to share personal information

We do get requests from parents for support on how to guide children in this online world that many of us have much less experience in. You might want to consider the following suggestions.

Before allowing your child to use social media:

- Check they meet the minimum age requirement
- Discuss online safety with them
- Set up parental controls where available
- Agree on rules for their online activity
- Keep devices in communal areas where possible

If your child is already using social media:

- Review their privacy settings together
- Check who they're connected with online
- Have regular conversations about what they're seeing and experiencing
- Make sure they know how to report concerns

Online safety is a shared responsibility between school and home. Within school, we use filtering and monitoring packages to try and keep students safe online. All users of the school network sign the ICT Acceptable Use policy or, in the case of students, are signed by parents on their behalf. As part of that policy, users agree to abide by the rules set out for safety which includes not trying to bypass those security measures. Unfortunately, we've become aware that some children are using Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to bypass safety measures both at school and at home.

A VPN is software that disguises a device's location and can hide online activity. While VPNs have legitimate uses for adults (such as secure remote working), children are increasingly using them to:

- Bypass school and home internet filters designed to protect them
- Access age-restricted content and websites (for example pornography sites)
- Hide their online activity from parents and teachers
- Access social media and gaming platforms during restricted times
- Circumvent parental controls

You can read more about VPNs and steps you can take to support us on [this factsheet](#), as well as past factsheets on [the parent area of the school website](#).

If you have any concerns about your child's online activity, or if you'd like support with managing online safety at home, please don't hesitate to contact us. You can always email safeguarding@purcell-school.org at any time and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

Let's All Talk Mental Health

Please do take the time to read the communications sent out with this parent newsletter from Let's All Talk Mental Health as they contain useful advice for families.