Cygnet Schools Newsletter

Issue: Autumn Term : November 2026

USEFUL LINKS

Forestwood School	Phoenix School

HEADTEACHER UPDATE - Looking Ahead: Our Priorities for 2026-27



Wendy Webster
Head Teacher, Forestwood School

At Cygnet Schools, our vision remains simple: **"Learning to be all that you can be."** This year we are continuing to build on our strengths as we provide personalised education that supports both recovery and achievement.
A key priority at Forestwood School is our work towards becoming a **Trauma-Informed Accredited School**, alongside colleagues from Forestwood Hospital. This will further strengthen our shared understanding of how experiences, emotions and mental health can affect learning, ensuring that every young person feels safe, supported and ready to succeed. Louise Hardwick has just completed her Trauma Informed Lead qualification and is ready to take us forward towards accreditation. We are also expanding opportunities beyond the classroom. Students will benefit from a growing range of **creative, arts and social activities**, including drama, reading for pleasure initiatives and enrichment clubs designed to build confidence, friendships and new interests. Preparing young people for the future remains at the heart of our work. By helping students explore their interests, skills and ambitions, we aim to ensure they feel confident about the next stage of their journey.

National SEND & Mental Health Update: What's Changing for You?

Big changes are taking shape across England to improve how schools and health services support young people aged 11–18. Under the government's 2026 Schools White Paper, *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, education and mental health teams are working much more closely together so you get the right help faster.

Here is what is happening nationally right now:

Joined-Up Care: *Mental Health Support Teams* are expanding across 6 in 10 schools, alongside new community *Young Futures Hubs* linking education and CAMHS.
Specialists On-Site: Through the new *"Experts at Hand"* service, schools are getting direct access to educational psychologists and therapists, cutting down long waits for paperwork.
Calmer Spaces: New funding is helping secondary schools and colleges build dedicated inclusion bases for sensory breaks and emotional regulation.
Your Rights Protected: While digital *Individual Support Plans (ISPs)* are being planned alongside an updated style of EHCP, nothing changes overnight. Your current EHCP, CAMHS care, and transition support towards 18 remain fully protected.

Have Your Say!
What helps you feel most supported between school and CAMHS, and what could work better? Share your ideas with staff in your school—your voice shapes how we support you!

FOCUS ON: Careers education, information, advice and guidance

Building Confidence and Planning for the Future: Careers at Cygnet Schools

At Cygnet Schools, careers education is a vital part of how we support every student across all key stages. Thinking about the future builds hope, boosts confidence, and plays a key role in planning for a positive discharge. Following updated statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), we have expanded our careers programme to ensure it meets national standards while staying tailored to the unique needs of our learners.

Smooth Transitions and Personalised Support

Since the start of September, our new admission system has allowed us to gather careers information as soon as a young person arrives. This helps us put the right support in place quickly. When a student is ready to move on, we pass this information directly to their next school, college, or training provider to ensure a smooth transition back into the community.

The school education teams and our Careers Advisors work closely together, using data to identify students who are in need of targeted support or who are at risk of not participating in further studies after year 11 and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). Targeted students receive additional support to explore career options and pathways (Apprenticeships, College etc.) and help making applications and preparing for interviews.

Exploring Technical Routes and Apprenticeships

We are committed to showing students all the pathways open to them, including technical education and apprenticeships. We now host at least two specialist talks each year, and we were thrilled to welcome Sheffield College back to Phoenix school recently as part of this commitment.

Exploring Careers in the Health and Care sector

Many of our young people want to work in the mental health industry in order to share their experiences and support others. Staff within our hospitals provide sessions to explore this workplace, and routes into a range of care industry jobs. They explore the skills and talents needed to be successful in this type of role, as well as the academic qualifications and career progression opportunities.

Careers Across the Curriculum

Learning about the world of work happens both inside and outside the classroom:

- **In Every Subject:** Teachers highlight how classroom lessons link to real-world jobs and transferable skills, supported by themed events like the European Day of Languages.
  PSHE and Drop-Down Days: Every student starts their PSHE learning with a personalised careers module. We also weave careers into drop-down days and national events like National Apprenticeship Week. Forestwood School hosts an annual Careers Fair in June. This event attracts representatives from a wide range of industries including finance; Police and fire services; local colleges and universities; Engineering firms; Animal groomers and internal representatives for roles such as Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, and Social work.
- **Hands-On Work Experience:** We have renewed our partnership with Careers Seekers Direct's *'Let's Do Business'* programme, connecting students with a wide variety of employers.

- **Real Interview Practice:** At Phoenix School, the Occupational Health teams prioritise interview experiences for our young people, and students at both schools continue to sit on interview panels when we recruit new staff into our schools.

- **Business Enterprise Opportunities:** Students at Forestwood School run a mini enterprise twice a year in which the young people work with the creative team to produce items for sale at the Christmas Fair and the Careers fair. This involves looking at products, analysing customer profiles, make costing and profit calculations, producing goods for sale, and creating a pop up shop. Part of the income generated goes to a charity (Young Minds) and the balance goes towards buying resources for the next sale or buying something that will benefit the young people in school.

Looking Ahead

As the world of work evolves, we will keep updating our study programmes to help students build their skills, resilience, and self-belief. We are working to expand our network of local employers so that more young people can take part in face-to-face Q&A sessions.

Through personalised learning and strong community links, we are proud to help every learner take confident, informed steps toward their future.

Meet Your Careers Advisor:

Forestwood School:



Sara Cookney

Sara has been working for the school since 2023 and visits for a day every half term. She provides one-to one guidance appointment for every student and delivers impartial, quality advice to support the achievement of career aspirations. During September and October 40 students were offered 1:1 independent careers advice. All students who accepted this support were provided with a personal report from Sarah giving details of the discussion and what they needed to do next. Every Post 16 student completed a careers questionnaire within the first lesson of a sequence of careers education classes, and Sara uses these to help her to research and plan the careers advice session for each student.

Meet Your Careers Advisor:

Phoenix School:



Susan Stewart

Susan joined us in October and has made an excellent start introducing herself to all the young people and completing careers interviews. Susan adapts her approach to each person, whether they already have a clear education or career pathway in mind or are still exploring their options. Her fresh insight into local education opportunities has been helpful. She has worked with students to identify their strengths and consider how these might inform their next steps in education and their careers. For students who were unable to take part, Susan gathered information and suggested options that teachers could discuss with them when they are ready to engage. She plans to develop the use of the VR headset to deliver careers education, following a session that was well received by young people last year.

FOCUS ON: A Creative Curriculum at Forestwood School

Words, Wonders and Creativity

During the October half-term break, our English Teacher and Art Therapist teamed up to run a special two-day Poetry and Art Therapy Workshop. The sessions gave young people a relaxed space to explore creative self-expression through writing, reflection and art.

Using natural, sensory and everyday found objects for inspiration, students wrote expressive poems packed with imagery, metaphor and personal meaning. They then brought these ideas to life through thoughtful pieces of artwork, finding new ways to share their thoughts and feelings.

The group produced some truly inspiring work, and everyone who took part shared how much they enjoyed the experience.

It was a great reminder of how **creativity can help us connect, reflect and discover new ways to express who we are.**



Taking Centre Stage at Forestwood!

Our new Drama Workshops are a fantastic addition to the Friday Creative Options programme at Forestwood, generating plenty of enthusiasm from students.

Working with Laura, a professional actor, young people have been exploring scripts inspired by their favourite TV programmes while building skills in characterisation, performance and storytelling. Through rehearsal and group discussion, they are learning how to look closely at a character's thoughts and motivations, bringing scenes to life with growing confidence and creativity.

Adding to the fun is our brand-new costume box, giving everyone the chance to fully step into their roles during performances.



The workshops also support students working towards an Arts Award, encouraging them to shape and refine their own creative ideas. As part of this journey, the group will explore how music, sound effects and other theatrical elements can make their performances even more engaging.

We are thrilled to see so many students getting involved, learning new skills and expressing themselves through drama. We look forward to sharing more of their creative achievements and celebrating their progress as the year goes on.

Well done to everyone involved for bringing such **energy, imagination and enthusiasm** to the stage!

FOCUS ON: A Creative Curriculum at Phoenix School

Lights, Camera, Animation!

Our young people at Phoenix School recently enjoyed a fantastic animation workshop led by **Let's Animate**, specialists in bringing stories and ideas to life through the magic of animation.

Using LEGO® models and stop-motion techniques, students explored how characters, settings and storylines are created. They designed their own scenes, developed imaginative story ideas, captured hundreds of individual images and then edited them together to produce their very own animated films.

The workshop sparked plenty of creativity, with students showing great imagination, patience and determination as they worked to bring their ideas to life on screen. It was wonderful to see everyone so focused and engaged, taking ownership of their projects while also encouraging and supporting their peers along the way.

The day was a huge success, and we are incredibly proud of the enthusiasm, teamwork and resilience shown by all involved. We can't wait to see what creative projects our young people tackle next!



FOCUS ON: Mathematics at Forestwood & Phoenix Schools

Making Maths Matter: A Week of Learning and Achievement

Maths Week at Forestwood School was a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the importance of mathematics and show our students how maths skills are used every day in the world around them.



John Morrison - Maths Teacher & Data and Digital Learning Lead

One of the highlights of the week was our exciting **Times Tables Rock Stars competition**, which brought out the competitive spirit in our young people. Most students took part, answering an incredible **5,000+ questions** across the week. Some students even continued practicing outside of lesson times to boost their scores and improve their multiplication fluency. The competition not only strengthened maths skills, but also encouraged students to remain focused and engaged with a task for extended periods.

The overall winner received a **£10 One4all voucher**, while the top four students were rewarded with **double reward points** for the week. Congratulations to everyone who took part!

Alongside the competition, students enjoyed a series of **daily maths puzzles**, which were available to all and provided an extra opportunity to challenge their problem-solving skills throughout the week.

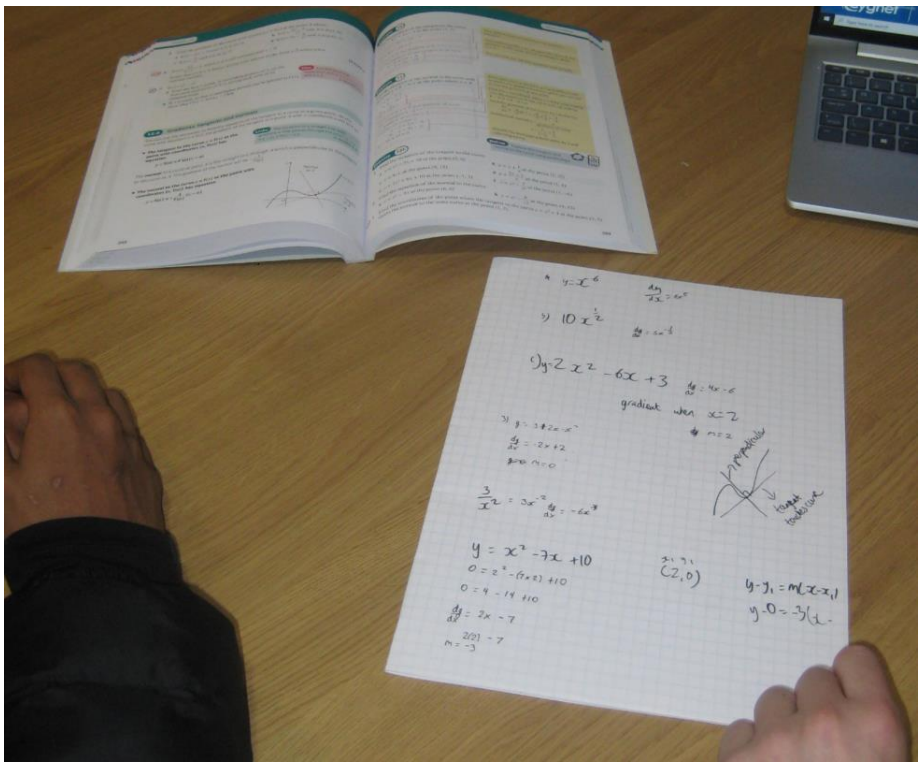
Students also explored a wide range of **careers that rely on strong maths skills**, helping them to see the valuable role mathematics plays in future education and employment opportunities. Across the curriculum, teachers incorporated maths-related themes and activities into their lessons, demonstrating how maths connects with subjects as diverse as science, art, technology and everyday life.

Maths Week was a wonderful reminder that mathematics is far more than a classroom subject. It is a skill that supports learning, problem-solving and success in every aspect of life. Well done to everyone who joined in and helped make the week such a success! We are incredibly proud of the enthusiasm, perseverance and positive attitude shown by our students throughout the week.

Maths Step by Step to Success

It has been a busy and focused term in the maths department at Phoenix School. A huge well done to the two students who recently sat their Functional Skills exams. Completing formal assessments takes real determination, and we are very proud of their hard work.

Alongside this, several of our students are working steadily towards their Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications, as well as preparing for upcoming GCSEs and A-Levels. Whether tackling complex algebra or mastering everyday numeracy, students have shown great resilience in keeping up with their studies.



Many students who come to our school have missed lots of their previous learning so the manipulatives have been out to help students build a concrete understanding of numbers. Practical activities have been incorporated into the curriculum and students been enjoying a card sort to help them learn their number bonds to 10.

We have also seen plenty of healthy competition on *Times Tables Rock Stars*, which has been a fantastic way for everyone to build speed, confidence, and mental maths fluency.