

# Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2026

## A Moment of Reflection



As we move into March, the lighter mornings and the first signs of spring bring with them a renewed sense of hope and possibility. This season always reminds us that growth, both personal and collective, often begins quietly, long before we fully see its blossoms. In school, we feel

this shift in the atmosphere: a sense of energy, purpose, and anticipation for all that lies ahead in the term.

At the heart of our work is John 10:10: *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

This message is deeply reflected in our commitment to rigour, joy, and flourishing across the school. Rigour is not simply about challenge - it is about enabling every young person to stretch, aspire, and discover what they are capable of. Joy is found in relationships, learning, and community. And flourishing, rooted in our faith values, is the full expression of a life lived with integrity, compassion, and purpose.

These qualities have been especially visible over the last two weeks as our Year 11 and Year 13 students sit their mock examinations. We could not be more proud of the effort, maturity, and resilience they have shown. Their commitment reflects the very best of our school - determination grounded in faith, supported by staff who believe in them, and carried by a culture that celebrates hard work and hope. As we look ahead to spring, we pray that each student continues to grow in confidence, character, and the fullness of life that our mission calls us to nurture.

**Mr A. Brown**  
**Headteacher**

## From Form Rooms to Future Changes: Shaping DCS Together

This week at DCS, our Form Representatives and Year Representatives stepped into leadership in a big way.

Across year groups, students met with their Heads of Year to discuss key questions around uniform and rewards. These weren't quick chats or tick-box exercises. They were thoughtful, honest conversations where students reflected on what they value, what works well, and what could make our school even stronger.

Form reps gathered views from their tutor groups and brought them forward. Year reps then began shaping that feedback, ready for our upcoming Student Council meeting with SLT in two weeks' time. This is student leadership in action: structured, purposeful and rooted in respect.

### Why does this matter?

Because at DCS, we don't just talk about Fellowship, Aspiration, Integrity, Tenacity and Humility — we practise them. Students showed fellowship by representing others fairly. They demonstrated integrity by giving honest, constructive feedback. They showed aspiration by suggesting ideas to improve our school community. And tenacity? That's in the commitment to follow ideas through to the next stage.

When students are trusted to lead, they rise to it. And when we listen carefully, our whole community grows stronger.

The next step? Our Year Representatives will be meeting with the Senior Leadership Team to turn these discussions into meaningful action.

Watch this space!





# FAITH values in Action



## Lent: Drawing Closer to God

As we journey through Lent this term, Year 11 students, Benny and Will, shared what this season truly means to them, beyond simply 'giving something up'.



Lent is the 40 day period leading up to Easter and a time of reflection and spiritual preparation for Christians.

For Benny and Will, Lent is not about routine but about relationship with God. *"It's all personal,"* they explained. *"There isn't one thing that you should give up. It's about asking yourself what might be separating you from God."* Rather than following a fixed rule, they described Lent as recognising the things that quietly take centre stage in our lives and choosing to step back from them. *"It's about cutting out the middleman,"* Benny said. *"Instead of turning to something else first, you turn to God."*

They both spoke about fasting not as punishment, but as discipline: a way of strengthening the spirit in response to Jesus' sacrifice. Benny reflected, *"When I fast, I feel like I can hear God's voice more clearly. When I'm reading the Bible, I understand it with more clarity. It puts my attention on God."* And that shift in attention, they said, changes everything. *"If my attention is on God,"* he continued, *"it changes my actions too. It changes how I treat people."*

Will described Lent using a powerful image, that of a cupboard left unopened. *"Sometimes in life,"* he said, *"you just put things away instead of facing them. You close the door on them. But they're still there."* Lent, for him, is a time of opening that cupboard and sorting through what has been ignored. *"It's like clearing out the clutter. Sometimes you can feel distant from God, not because you've stopped believing, but because life happens. Fasting helps to bring you back to God."* He spoke honestly about how forgiveness can be immediate, but feeling restored can take longer. *"God forgives straight away. But sometimes it takes us longer to feel aligned again. Fasting helps me get back to that place where I don't feel distant. Where I don't doubt. Where I feel connected again."*

Both students emphasised that Lent is not about perfection. It is about intention and community. *"It brings that spirit of everyone together,"* they explained. *"You feel welcomed. You feel like you're part of something."*

When asked what Lent might offer not only Christians but also those who are questioning, curious, agnostic or simply exploring, Benny's answer was thoughtful: *"It opens you up to a more personal relationship with God. It becomes more real. You're removing distractions. You're making space."*

Listening to Benny and Will speak about their faith was genuinely moving. Their reflections remind us that faith is not simply inherited or assumed; it is explored, wrestled with, and returned to. Lent, as they describe it, is not about losing something. It is about gaining clarity, alignment and closeness.

## Ramadan: A Month of Gratitude, Discipline and Community

Alongside learning about Lent this term, we also spoke with Fatima in Year 8 about Ramadan and what this important month means to her and others.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is observed because it is the month in which the Qur'an was first revealed. For Muslims, it is a sacred time of reflection, gratitude and spiritual growth. It is marked by fasting from dawn until sunset, alongside increased prayer and time spent with family and community.

For Fatima, Ramadan is deeply personal. *"It's about showing gratitude for our blessings,"* she explained, *"and thinking about people who are less fortunate."*

*"We usually break our fast with dates,"* Fatima shared. *"Often in odd numbers, like one or three, then we pray and have a family dinner together."* For Fatima, that evening meal is one of the most special parts of Ramadan. *"My dad works long hours, so we don't always get to eat together. But in Ramadan, we all sit down together every night. I really love that."* Family meals often include rice dishes and fruit chaat — a fruit salad mixed with spices. *"It has to have spices!"* she added with a smile.

After the final prayer of the day, many attend prayers at the mosque, where sections of the Qur'an are recited. Over the month, many aim to complete the entire Qur'an. Fatima has set herself a goal this year. *"I want to finish reading the whole Qur'an. I'm on the tenth section out of thirty."* The final days of Ramadan are especially meaningful, leading to the celebration of Eid. *"It's a time to celebrate what you've achieved,"* she said. *"You gather with your community, you hug people, and children often receive money or gifts."* One of her favourite traditions is wearing new clothes for Eid. *"It feels like a fresh start. Like you can become a better Muslim."*

Listening to Fatima reflect on Ramadan reminds us of the gratitude, discipline and sense of renewal that faith can inspire.



# DCS School: KS3 and KS4

## FAITH in Focus: Collective Worship this Month



Our focus for Collective Worship last term was Integrity, based on Proverbs 10, Verse 9: "Whoever walks in integrity, walks securely".

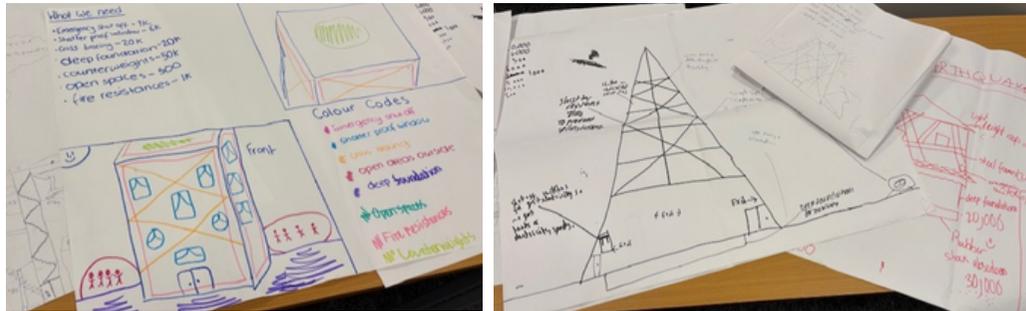
In both whole school collective worship, and our FAITH in Focus moments during tutor groups, students looked at what it means to them to act with integrity, both in and out of school. They also considered the concept that "integrity is doing the right thing when no-one is watching".

Towards the end of last half term, we discussed Lent throughout the school, which remembers the Gospel accounts of Jesus fasting in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights, and how this is observed in today's society.

This coincides with the month of Ramadan – and we are supporting a number of our students who are fasting during this time. Spaces for males and females are available to students who would like to use these during lunch times for prayers. Thanks to Mr Khan (Computing Teacher) or Ms Rashid (Science Teacher) for offering their rooms as prayer spaces.

## Year 8 Engineers Take on Earthquakes!

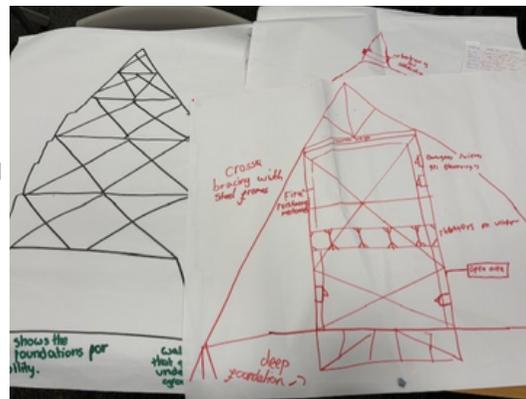
Our Year 8 geographers have been tackling the challenge of earthquakes as part of their study of natural hazards, moving beyond case studies to think like engineers. After learning how tectonic plates shift and release energy, they explored how seismic waves affect buildings and why structure matters. They investigated which shapes are most stable, discovering how triangles distribute force effectively and why wider bases help lower a building's centre of gravity.



Using this knowledge, students designed their own earthquake resistant buildings, carefully considering counterbalances and shock absorbers to support tall structures.

They examined how features such as tuned mass dampers and flexible foundations can reduce movement and absorb shock.

The result was a brilliant blend of geography, science, and creativity, showing how understanding our dynamic planet helps us design safer, smarter places to live.



## Shortlisted Pupils in Derby Book Festival Competition

We are thrilled to announce that four talented young writers at DCS have been shortlisted in the Derby Book Festival's Flash Fiction Competition. Each of their stories beautifully reflects the theme of "Hope," showcasing the power of imagination and resilience.

The shortlisted entries include:

- Adakaraa: A woman fighting for her country, leaving behind her children in the hopes of securing a better future for her family.
- Candice: A simple act of kindness on a bus that inspires feelings of joy and optimism for the days ahead.
- Favour: A lighthouse's unwavering beam, cutting through the darkness to guide sailors to safety, symbolising the importance of hope in times of uncertainty.
- Nicole: A depiction of nature's rebirth, as flowers bloom and spring arrives, washing away the cold and bringing a fresh start.

The judges will meet to determine the winners and runners-up, with notifications expected before March 30, 2026.

Congratulations to all the finalists for their creativity and hard work. Keep shining brightly with your stories!

For more information about the competition and Derby Book Festival, visit Derby Book Festival's Flash Fiction Competition.



# DCS School: KS3 and KS4

## Champions Dethroned: DCS Storm into Semi Finals

After an intensely contested round of heats at the University of Derby, DCS Debating Society delivered a phenomenal performance, defeating Allestree Woodlands, the unbeaten reigning champions, to secure their place in the semi finals.

In one of the highest scoring debates in the competition's history, our students argued with clarity, confidence and precision, ultimately prevailing against formidable opposition. Their victory now sets up a semi final clash with Littleover School on 4 March.

The motion for the next round is: This House believes that monuments to controversial historical figures should remain. DCS will be opposing the motion, a challenging and thought provoking stance that will demand careful reasoning, historical awareness and persuasive delivery.

We are incredibly proud of every student involved for their preparation, teamwork and intellectual courage. Thank you to Mr Keene, Ms Brown and Mr Griffiths for accompanying and supporting the team on their journey to the knock out stages.

Good luck to the team as they prepare for the semi final. We cannot wait to see them take to the floor again.



## From Classroom to Gallery: Year 10 Shine at QUAD

Year 10 students have recently taken part in a 2-day workshop at the Quad museum and Art gallery. Students had the chance to view the current exhibitions and work alongside local photographer and university lecturer.

Across the two workshops, students learnt how to take a series of different portraits, experimenting with lighting and composition and drawing with light. The students produced some fantastic work which they will include in their portfolios.

The staff at the gallery and the photographer commented on the fantastic behaviour and talent of our students. They were that impressed, they would love to exhibit some of the students work in the gallery. Watch this space!

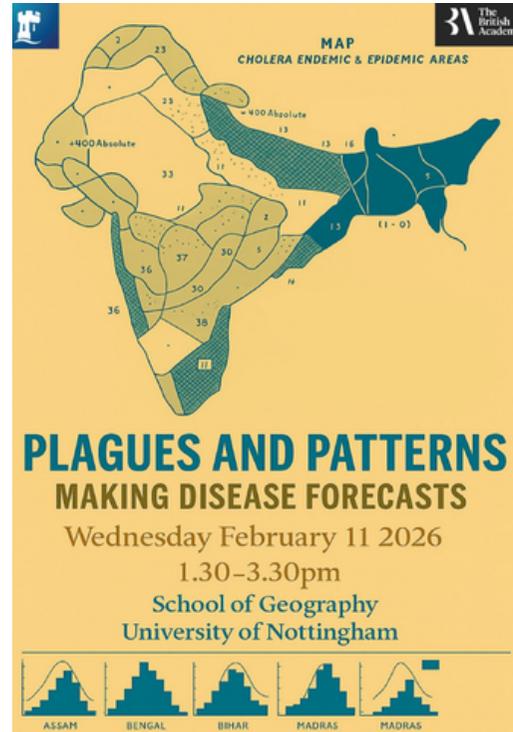


# DCS Sixth Form

## Year 12 Map the Spread of Disease at Nottingham

Year 12 recently visited the University of Nottingham to take part in a fascinating workshop on mapping disease. Students explored how geographers use data, spatial analysis, and mapping technology to track the spread of illnesses and identify patterns. It was a brilliant opportunity to see how geography connects directly to real world challenges in public health.

Professor Fell, who led the session, was particularly impressed with the level of engagement and thoughtful contributions from our students. Their curiosity and willingness to grapple with complex data reflected both academic rigour and genuine interest in the subject, making it a fantastic experience for everyone involved.



## University of Derby Taster Session in History

The History department were invited to a bespoke university taster session at the University of Derby in February.

Students were given a sample lecture by Dr Ruth Larsen who then explained exactly what it would be like to study History at university. Students were then given a tour of the university's world class facilities including the library and lecture theatres.

For many of our Year 12 Historians this was their visit to a university and many of them were so impressed that they have decided to apply to study there.

We would like to offer our thanks to Dr Ruth, the University of Derby and the History department for providing another opportunity for our students to consider their future options.



# Connecting with Parents & Carers



We recently launched a brand new initiative which aims to build a closer connection and more effective communication between school and parents/carers.

We held our first meeting last half term, and the discussions included:

- Communication between school and home
- Monthly newsletter
- ClassCharts

One of the issues raised was that feedback for students from teachers could not be seen on the ClassCharts Parent App. This has now been amended so all positive comments from staff on ClassCharts are available for students and parents/carers to view. ClassCharts is a great way to stay informed about how your child is doing in school. For a reminder of your account login for ClassCharts, please contact [info@derbycathedralschool.org.uk](mailto:info@derbycathedralschool.org.uk).

All parents and carers are warmly invited to the half-termly meetings, so please come along if you can, we'd love to see you – and the more input we have, the more effective the group will be. If you would like to be added to the group – or if you can't make it, but would like to offer some input - please email Mrs Hay – [j.hay@derbycathedralschool.org.uk](mailto:j.hay@derbycathedralschool.org.uk).

The next opportunity for parents/carers to provide input is on **Monday 9th March, 3.30pm in the Main Hall with Mr Brown**, discussing proposed changes to the timings of the school day.

# Mental Health Week - This is My Place

## February 9th-13th

Students at DCS marked Children's Mental Health Week, exploring this year's theme: This Is My Place.

In Collective Worship, we discussed how our mental health shapes how we think, feel, and cope with the everyday pressures of life. Students reflected on the reality that 1 in 5 young people will experience a mental health problem and that mental health challenges can affect anyone, regardless of background.

We explored what belonging truly means: emotional safety, participation, recognition, and being part of a community that makes space for us as we are .

Students considered why belonging matters. When young people feel connected and valued, they grow in confidence, resilience and self-esteem.



**How can we help ourselves to feel that we belong?**

- Be authentic.** Rather than trying to 'fit in', focus on being your true self. Belonging comes from being accepted for who you are.
- Practice self-compassion.** When you make a mistake or feel like you've failed, be kind to yourself. This helps build resilience and reminds you that your worth isn't about being perfect.
- Follow your interests.** Join clubs or groups you enjoy. Whether it's sport, video games, music, or art, shared interests is a great way to connect with others.
- Embrace your uniqueness.** Think about your strengths and qualities. Don't be afraid to be different. Feeling comfortable with what makes you unique is key to building self-confidence.
- Listen to yourself.** Pay attention to your feelings and try to understand what you need. For example, if you're feeling lonely, listen to this and think about what might help you feel more connected.
- Talk with and be with trusted people, to support you.** This can help you feel a greater sense of belonging and support you when you don't feel this way.



**How can we help others feel that they belong?**

- Talk to new people in clubs and classes. I always try to do this.
- Introduce them to fun activities where they can meet new people and find new interests.
- Talk to them, ask them what would make them feel like they belong. **Make sure your day doesn't revolve around everyone else belonging, though.**
- Be kinder and help them feel included.
- Being there to support someone so they don't feel like they're on their own.
- By supporting others and showing an interest, by being kind and not bullying others.
- Putting yourself in others' shoes.
- By asking people how they are and if they are okay.

At DCS, this theme connects directly to our **FAITH** values. Fellowship reminds us that nobody thrives alone. Integrity means being brave enough to be ourselves. Tenacity helps us through the difficult days. Humility calls us to notice those who feel unseen. Aspiration encourages every student to believe: this place is for me.

Mental health is part of our commitment to Joy and Rigour. Joy in creating a school community where students feel safe, known and valued. Rigour in teaching the language of wellbeing, encouraging resilience and signposting support when it is needed.

When a young person can genuinely say, "This is my place," their confidence grows, relationships strengthen, and learning flourishes.

# Notices and Reminders

WORLD  
**BOOK  
DAY**  
5 MARCH 2026

## **World Book Day 2026**

Every student in school has received a Book Token for World Book Day 2026. This gives them the opportunity to buy a free book in any participating shops!

More information about this can be found here:

<https://www.worldbookday.com/books-and-tokens/>



The LRC are running several competitions: to design the New Token for World Book Day 2027, as well as a 'Design Your Own Bookmark' competition with the top 3 winners receiving prizes! See Mrs Shale for more information



The **Carnegies 2026** Longlist books are also now available to borrow from the LRC!

## Spring Term

- Monday 5th January 2026 to Friday 13th February 2026
- Monday 23rd February 2026 to Friday 27th March 2026

## Summer Term

- Monday 13th April 2026 to Friday 22nd May 2026
- Monday 1st June 2026 to Thursday 23rd July 2026

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## Revision Podcast – Listen, Learn, Revise

Ms McGuinness and Year 11 students have launched a new revision podcast to support GCSE English. Each short episode focuses on key moments from texts and poems, including important extracts being read aloud and explained to help bring revision to life.

Scan the QR code or use the Vocaroo link to listen anytime — perfect for revising on the go, reinforcing key knowledge, or hearing the texts read clearly and confidently.



# 24/7 & Late Night Helplines

For young people



## YoungMinds

Are you a young person in crisis?

Text the YoungMinds Crisis Messenger for free 24/7 support if you are experiencing a mental health crisis.

text YM to 85258

YOUNGMINDS

## The Mix

Do you need help now?

Crisis messenger text service provides free, 24/7 crisis support

text THEMIX to 85258

THE MIX

## Papyrus

If you are having thoughts of suicide or are concerned for a young person who might be you can contact HOPELINEUK for confidential support and advice.

Call 0800 068 4141

9am – midnight every day of the year

## CALM

A helpline for people in the UK who are down or have hit a wall for any reason, who need to talk or find information and support.

Call 0800 58 58 58

5pm – midnight every day of the year

## Samaritans

Whatever you're going through, you can call anytime from any phone for FREE.

Call 116 123

YOUTH INSPIRED



DCS Safeguarding

Use the QR Codes to direct you to helpful information about Safeguarding and Mental Health support on our school website.



DCS Mental Health

# Safeguarding

Even though the mornings are getting lighter and spring is in the air, it can also be a challenging time for some in both personal and school life. It's important to look after yourself and be mindful of your wellbeing, both online and offline. If you're spending time online, remember to keep personal information private and think carefully before sharing images or messages. If you're meeting friends, let someone know where you're going and stay with people you trust.

Getting back into routines can feel overwhelming. Try to look after your physical and mental health by getting enough sleep, taking breaks from screens, eating regularly and giving yourself time to adjust. Small steps make a difference.

If you're feeling worried, anxious or overwhelmed, remember that you are not alone and support is available. You can speak to a trusted adult such as a parent, teacher or school counsellor. If you need someone to talk to, you can contact **Childline** at any time on **0800 1111** or visit **childline.org.uk** – the service is free, confidential and available 24/7. You can also text **SHOUT to 85258** for confidential support by text.

Your life is valuable, and asking for help is a sign of strength. If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts and speak to someone you trust.