

Alumni



2023-2025

Learn to succeed



An introduction...

Dear Reader,

Welcome to our brochure which celebrates the incredible journeys of Penwortham Priory Academy alumni.

This edition brings together in one place, a selection of the articles from the past three years as they appeared in our weekly newsletters.

We've gathered inspiring stories from former pupils who have gone on to achieve success in a wide range of fields – from education and engineering to sport, the arts, and beyond. These stories are a powerful reminder of the lasting impact of a Priory education and the diverse paths our pupils take after leaving us.

Our alumni are an important part of the Priory family. Their experiences not only showcase what's possible but also provide invaluable guidance and inspiration for our current pupils. That's why we'd love to hear from more of you. If you're a former pupil (or staff), please consider joining our alumni network and sharing your story.

Whether you've pursued a unique career, overcome challenges, or simply want to reconnect, your insights can help shape the aspirations of the next generation.

You can join our alumni community by visiting www.priory.lancs.sch.uk/alumni or emailing us at alumni@priory.lancs.sch.uk. By staying connected, you'll have the chance to attend events, provide careers inspiration, and contribute to a growing archive of Priory memories.

Thank you to everyone who has already shared their journey with us. We hope you enjoy reading these stories.

Once a Priory pupil, always part of the Priory family.



Mr Matt Eastham, Principal
Penwortham Priory Academy

Happy Anniversary Priory!

September 1953 - September 2023

In the Autumn term 70 years ago Penwortham County Secondary School, as it was known then, welcomed its first full cohort of pupils.

To commemorate the occasion, the whole school is pictured in this celebratory photo which was taken on Sports Day back in July 2023.

We're all in there - staff too!



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Penwortham Priory Academy Flash Back

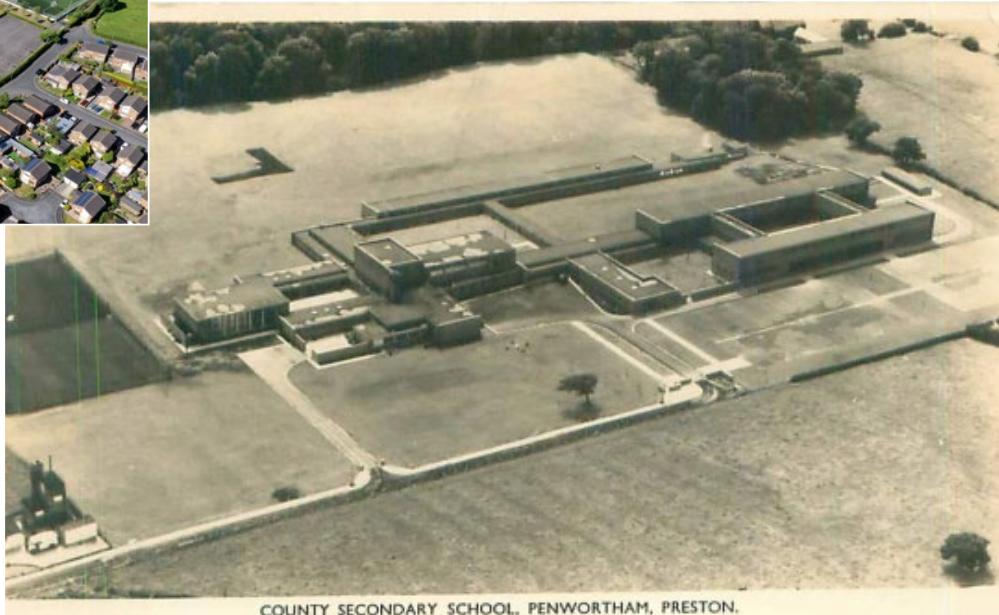


We found the archive photo below shared on social media.



Taken, we believe, in the very early years of the 1950s, when the school was known as Penwortham County Secondary School.

It's a far cry from how it looks now, with many additional buildings and the housing opposite.



COUNTY SECONDARY SCHOOL, PENWORTHAM, PRESTON.

From Pupil to Teacher: Mr Walsh

Mr Walsh has turned from a Priory pupil into a Priory teacher – and loves it!

History teacher Mr Walsh left Priory as a pupil in 2006 and has returned as part of his PGCE until December.

“I actually thought it would be weird coming back to the school I used to go to but Priory has changed so much that is hasn’t been like that at all.

“My inspiration to be a teacher came from English teacher Mr Wall and my best memories of Priory are of the teachers.

“There aren’t many left from when I was here although Mr Watters popped in this week and Mr Eastham was the PE teacher when I was at school.

“I am enjoying my role here. I studied History at Oxford University and then travelled, teaching English as a second language in Russia and Japan. I think it was then I knew that I definitely wanted to be a teacher.



“I am currently doing my PGCE at Cardinal Newman College and I will teach A-Level History there from January although I am still deciding what level I want to teach at.”

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Class of 2006: Jordan North

JORDAN JOINS CAPITAL RADIO TO HOST BREAKFAST SHOW STARTING APRIL 2024

Capital announced last week that broadcaster and radio presenter, Jordan North, will become the new host of Capital Radio's flagship Breakfast Show.

Priory's Class of 2006 celebrity returned to Priory in 2018 to deliver an inspirational speech to the outgoing Year 11 pupils. Jordan never forgot his roots and often mentions his favourite teacher (Mrs Crank) in his shows.

Jordan started his DJ radio broadcasting career in Preston, with early stints at Rock FM, and departs from Radio 1 after a decade.

The news was broadcast live on air, where outgoing host Roman Kemp introduced Jordan to the Capital Breakfast audience.



1% Club Answer: Twice

Spotted!

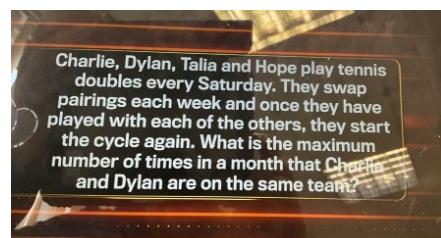
Class of 2019: Mohammed 'Nawwy' Ali

Mohammed was spotted on ITV's Saturday night game show, the 1% Club, where contestants answer questions about logic and common sense to win £100,000. See episode broadcast 17 February.



Presenter Lee Mack had a jibe at two contestants with famous names, including Mohammed who joked that the boxer was actually his great uncle!

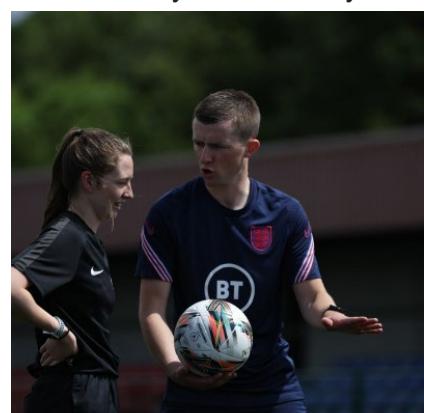
Unfortunately the former Priory pupil, with siblings in Year 9 and Year 11, didn't win the big money although did well, going out at 30% with this question...



(answer below)

Class of 2012: Ed Duckworth

Ed was the referee during the Accrington Stanley v AFC Wimbledon match on Tuesday, 13 February. This is Ed's first year as referee in the English Football League.



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Class of 1980-1985

Thanks to the Lancashire Evening Post, quite a few blasts from the past have cropped up over the summer break.

For the Priory parents and grandparents amongst you, read on!

Top: The Mayor of Penwortham, Cllr Dorothy Marsden pictured with Rebecca Brownjohn, Michelle Forrest and Linda Jackson following their win in a litter campaign poster competition.

Bottom: Headteacher, Mr Pearce, collects the keys to Priory's new minibus from Peter Healey of Bradshaws Motor House. Pictured alongside are Mr David Saul (PTA Chairman), Canon David Rees, Mr Mike Slater (PTA Secretary).



Class of 1995-1999

Robert Atkins MP and South Ribble's Mayor, Cllr Jim Breakell unveil the plaque to kick off a new sporting era for Penwortham Priory Academy.

Spot the celebrity face to be

- Former Liberty X

singer Jessica Taylor wearing the WD bib. Class of 1996 Jessica, is now married to former England cricketer Kevin Pietersen.



The U13s hockey team after thrashing Garstang High School 3-0 in the Preston & District Hockey Tournament.



A sixth successive victory for Priory in the South Ribble gymnastics competition.



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Class of 1970 Go Back To School

Former Head Girl Janet Edwards and Sports Captain John Bennett, the Class of 1970, visited Priory as part of our 70th anniversary celebrations as well as to meet the new Head Prefects.

Janet is believed to be one of the first pupils from Priory to go to university and enjoyed a successful career as a midwife. She stayed in touch with John, who was Sports Captain for Croft House and went on to be a Geography teacher, inspired by his teacher at Priory.

Janet (nee Clough), now 69, said: "Priory has changed a lot but there are some things which are still the same such as the same reception.

"I remember one of my jobs as Head Girl was to follow our then Headteacher Mr Summers, in his black gown, onto the stage for assemblies. We had to stand there while he spoke.

"I also remember organising the collection for the Poppy Appeal and, as prefects, we also had to stop pupils coming through the main entrance at break and lunch time but we were allowed to!

"I went onto Liverpool University to study Geography, inspired by our then Geography teacher Ernest Reynolds, his blackboard skills were incredible.



"I remember, pupils who wanted to go to university went to Penwortham Girls or Hutton Grammar School. I had done my O'Levels, as they were then, and I went to Penwortham Girls to talk about wanting to do three A-Levels as I wanted to go to university. I wanted to do History, Geography and Literature. As I had come from Priory, they didn't think I was capable of doing three but I stood my ground and did all three!"

John said: "As Sports Captain, I had to organise all the team events and internal competitions. I was inspired by Mr Reynolds as I went on to be a Geography teacher at St Albans, now Albany High, and Stanley High School in Southport.

"I remember a trip to Hothersall Lodge at Priory and also not taking time over my homework and Mr Reynolds saying: "That was not worth wetting your pen for." I wasn't the most studious!

"Priory has changed beyond recognition but in a good way. My children came here and they have gone into the police and teaching."

Janet added: "It's superb that children in South Ribble have the chance to come to such a vibrant school."

Both had a tour around the school with our current Head Prefects Martha, Alex, Lewis and Cameron and laughed about the how punishments had changed.

John said: "We used to get the slipper if we had done something wrong and the girls were rapped on their knuckles with a ruler or had to write lines."



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Janet had presented the school with her yellow summer dress, lovingly made by her mum.

"You could buy them but we didn't have a lot of money so my mum made it from a pattern and there was also a straw boater to go with it."

Following on from the visit, Janet wrote,

"Thank you for inviting John and I to come to Priory to meet the new head prefects. I was very impressed with Martha, Lewis, Alex and Cameron; they showed a genuine interest in our experiences and engaged with us one hundred per cent. Their enthusiasm for the school was very apparent hence needing more time to show us all areas that they were so proud of. Without being patronising they showed maturity and respect .

"I was a little apprehensive ahead of the visit as to how they would find two individuals from a different era approaching their seventieth birthdays, my apprehension was unfounded!"

We would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to the Head Boy of Class of 1970, Trevor Rainford, who sadly passed away earlier this year.



Alex looking over the Admissions Book with John.



Summer uniform, Penwortham County Secondary School, 1970, kindly donated to the school by Janet.

Mr Watters' Prepares For Retirement

In June 2023, we had a whistle stop visit from two pupils from Class of 2006.

Gemma Evered (nee Knapp) had travelled up from Southampton and met up with former classmate, Tommy Llewelyn, to say hello to their former Geography teacher before starts his retirement.

The pair had time to pose with Mr Watters next to the 70th anniversary time capsule which has been dedicated to him for his 29 years service to the school.



Mrs Simpson's Long Service Award Takes Her Back To Former Pupil



Mrs Simpson was bowled over by her long service award – as it was a necklace made in the design of a bowler hat!

Learning Support Assistant Mrs Simpson chose the design which was made by former Priory pupil Guy Wakeling. Mrs Simpson has been at Priory since September 2002 – 21 years.



"I am a Preston North End fan and because of the gentry connection, I decided on a necklace with a bowler hat. I go to every home game and will treat myself to a half season ticket at Christmas!"

"I knew Guy's dad Peter when he was a boxing coach and he was a bespoke jeweller. Guy has carried it on.

"Guy wasn't at Priory when I was here but obviously I knew of him and it's nice to have the Priory connection.

"I have a number of pieces from them and the necklace is beautiful."

Mrs Simpson admitted: "I was a nurse before I came to Priory and I didn't expect to be here over 20 years but I have really enjoyed it.

"I live in Longton so I cycle to work every day in all weathers, it's four miles there and back so it keeps me fit.

"Priory has changed such a lot building-wise with the old B Block demolished and all the new buildings which have been introduced over the last ten years especially.

"I have been a Learning Support Assistant and a Cover Supervisor here and I guess my role has evolved as I have been here.



"I have enjoyed every single minute of it. Helping children has been a complete joy to me."

Guy Wakeling is a bespoke jewellery designer, based in Longton, with over 25 years' experience of making unique pieces of handmade jewellery. Visit him at 91 Liverpool Road, Penwortham, PR1 0QB or go to www.guywakelingjewellery.co.uk

CLASS OF 2014

Morgan Hompson Smith

Footballer Morgan, who left Priory ten years ago, was signed by Bury FC earlier this month.



The versatile midfielder has impressed during his time at Longridge Town FC and heads over to Bury for the 24/25 season.

Morgan started out at Harrogate before playing for Southport in National League North. Following his time at Haig Avenue, he went onto play for FC United of Manchester, City of Liverpool and Bootle before joining Longridge in October 2022.

Having Morgan on board, Bury Manager, Dave McNabb said, "Morgan is a masterful technician capable of playing in midfield or anywhere behind the striker. He has an unbelievable left foot, his movement, vision and range of passing is a joy to behold.

"I think he's matured as a player massively over the last year or two and that will allow him to fulfil his huge potential. A player whose ability should be playing at a much higher level."



Class of 1983

If you were in 3T between 1982 and 1983, then this was your lesson periods and classrooms. It makes a very puzzling, yet interesting read.

If you want to step back in time with other past pupils and former classmates, then join our Facebook group exclusively for alumni. Go to our main page and click 'visit group'. You will then be asked to confirm the year you left us before we can let you in.

Look out for details of our biennial alumni coffee mornings. You're all invited!



Alumni Return For Coffee, Pastries and Reminiscence

We held our Alumni Coffee Morning and it was lovely to watch as some former pupils were reunited their 'old' school friends.

Gary Jackson (Class of 1966) caught up with Ian Heyes (Class of 1968) as the pair last saw each other at school.

Ian said: "I haven't seen Gary since I was at school and I recognised him immediately! I love coming back, I came back to the 50th and 60th anniversary events.

"From school, I remember I used to water the plants of Mrs Caine, who was my form tutor in C13. The prefects used to let me in to do it in the winter! I continued my love of plants as I have a nursery. I was also cross country captain."

Gary said: "It's my first time back in 58 years. I was a bit nervous walking down the corridor to the meeting room as it used to be the staff room! I wasn't very academic or sporty and so there were good times and bad times I guess.

"I was a fitter machinist and then I joined the prison service and I have lived in Penwortham all my life. I saw Ian and remembered him straight away."

Brian Drury (Class of 1963) enjoyed Science and French when he was at school.

"Science was my best subject and I did not enjoy French, learning it academically, but I do pick up languages quickly! When I left school, I was a Data Systems Engineer and now I am the Ecumenical Leader for the Baptist Churches in Lancashire, so I travel around meeting other denominational leaders. It's a bishop's role really.

"I remember at school a group of us wanted to do weightlifting so we started a weightlifting club under Mr Bray, the PE teacher. I kept at it and it helped me as my first job was digging the roads!"

Susan Watson (nee Ramsay), Gillian Gilbert (nee Baker) and Vanessa Hodson (nee Hill) are all Class of 1980 and have stayed friends.

Gillian said: "The school is completely different now, it's a lot more modern. I was a legal secretary in London for 20-odd years and worked at UCLan as well before I retired."

Susan said: "I worked at the water board, lived in Spain and worked in travel for a lot of years. A number of us have kept in touch and recently Gillian, myself, Helen Hobson and Valerie





Bamber (their maiden names) went on a cruise for our 60th birthdays. We also meet every Thursday for a quiz!"



Geoff Rowbotham was Head Boy in 1974 - and admitted he was shocked that it was 50 years since he last walked into school.

"I haven't been back just because, after Priory, I went to Hutton Grammar School and then we moved to Lincolnshire. I was in management at Marks & Spencer's for 24 years and set up my own business consultancy, working with the NHS.



Vera Shacklady (Class of 1959) said: "I came here and so did my children and grandchildren so they kept up the Priory tradition. I have been back for presentations and to pick them up.



"School has changed a lot. I remember being happy when I had to do a week's housekeeping in the flat at school – washing, ironing, cleaning and making food for the teachers. They were basics which are still needed but not taught today.

"My dream career was a nurse in the RAF but I had to leave school as my dad was ill and I had to work on the family farm. I met my husband there so things have a way of working out."



Pam and Michael Woods (Class of 1974) met at school and will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary this year.



"Our two girls came here," said Pam, who became a midwife.

Michael said: "I enjoyed sport and practical lessons here, I ended up being an engineer before I became a Church of England vicar and have just retired."

Margaret Johnson and Pat Lee (Class of 1967) are good friends and meet up with other former classmates.

Pat said: "We met at primary school and stayed friends through high school. Then a number of us went different ways but we came back together through Facebook around five years ago and it's like we were never separated!"

Margaret went on to teach business studies – she excelled at shorthand and typing at school – while Pat worked in social work.

Pat added: "It's nice to come back, education has changed a lot and it's good to see. Here they really take a holistic approach and look after the whole child, which is to be commended."

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While pupils visited from many years ago, there were some Class of 2023 returning.

Jack Norton is at Runshaw College studying travel and tourism, Courtney Moorby wants to be a criminal psychologist while Sam Wright is at Myerscough College studying Agricultural Engineering.

"I enjoy coming back," said Sam.

Principal Mr Eastham said: "I am grateful to everyone who comes to these Alumni events, it's wonderful and really important that everyone who is a former Penwortham pupil feels the connection to the school as they are part of it, no matter when they left us.

"It's a powerful message to our current pupils that it's their school for life. It's the same site, it's in the same place, but we continue to evolve over time."



Tracking Down The Head Boy/Girl

Were you, or do you know, a Head Girl or Head Boy from the past?

We know we have many parents and grandparents who are 'past-Priory-pupils' and therefore we're asking for your help.

Each year we aim to track down a couple of these former Head pupils celebrating a milestone anniversary since leaving us (ie, 50, 40, 25 years since etc) and invite them to meet our new quartet of Head Prefects as they take up their role in September.

If this was you, or you are in touch with someone who was, please contact our Alumni Liaison, Mrs Yates, via email alumni@priory.lancs.sch.uk

Past prefects who have returned for such occasion have thoroughly enjoyed their visit and we're always delighted to reacquaint ourselves with Priory royalty. Fingers crossed we can track them down and keep the tradition going!

Mrs Yates
Communications &
Marketing Manager

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Class of 2022 have now completed their Further Education and two former pupils have got in touch to thank their teachers for going that extra mile to help them reach their next goal to fulfil their career ambition.



Class of 2022: Rhianne Leach

Class of 2022 pupil Rhianne Leach has successfully secured a place on the prestigious BAE Systems Aerospace Engineering Degree Apprenticeship Programme.

Rhianne wanted to thank Priory Teacher of Design Technology and Engineering Mrs Shaw for starting her on the path to her dream of becoming a Chief Engineer by helping her with the NCFE Level 1/2 Technical Award in Engineering at school.

"I wanted to take the Engineering course at Priory, however I was limited by the number of subjects I could take. I had to prioritise the subjects I needed for college.

"Mrs Shaw made sure I could take the engineering qualification in my own time, two nights a week after school and in my lunch break. I sat my exam at the same time as everyone else and received a Level 2 Distinction *.

"The support I was given by Mrs Shaw provided me with the foundation that I am now building upon and helped to spark my ambition within the subject.



"I always wanted to do something STEM related, having always had an interest in physics and maths. It was only when I went to look around universities that I saw these subjects being applied and how worthwhile and useful it was. I saw how engineering looks in the real world and decided that it was the path that I wanted to follow.

"I will be completing industry placements alongside university study in order to obtain my Bachelors Degree in Aerospace Engineering. It's the next step towards my dream of becoming a Chief Engineer.

"But ultimately, the first step was the work that Mrs Shaw helped me to complete throughout my earlier studies."

Rhianne went to Lancaster University School of Mathematics (LUSoM), and applied for the extremely competitive BAE Systems' position.

"It was an extremely long process. There was the initial application, then an AI screened interview followed by an extensive personality test and gamification. The final step was a two hour in person interview with two Engineers.

"Overall, BAE Systems nationally receives 20,000 applications for all their apprenticeship positions, for which there are 600 available across all the sectors.

"I received a phone call just before starting my A-Levels to say that I had been selected for one of the 30 places on the Aerospace Scheme. I start in September and will be initially based at the Samlesbury site.

"The chance to travel around the world really excites me. I am aware of many people who have travelled to Japan, Germany and many more countries that the company works with. There are some truly amazing opportunities that this degree apprenticeship will open up for me."



Class of 2022: Hannah Yates



Class of 2022 pupil Hannah has thanked Priory for helping her pursue her dream career in Japanese.

Hannah became fascinated with learning Japanese while watching animated cartoons and wanted to watch without subtitles.

When she came to Priory she wanted to study Japanese language but obviously it's not on the curriculum.

However, Priory found a way to help Hannah with the support of Head of Languages, Mrs Scully – and she will now study Japanese at university.

Mrs Yates said: "Hannah had been learning the language by herself at home. Mrs Scully was able to guide her through the curriculum but we also needed someone to help her with the spoken language so we put an appeal out on social media to see if there was anyone local who could help.



"Mrs Small, who is a Japanese national living in the area, came forward and she came into school every Wednesday lunch-time and helped Hannah with her GCSE."

Hannah spent Monday and Wednesday studying Japanese in school, out of lesson time, as well as studying it independently.

While in Year 11 Hannah took the Japanese foundation level and got a Grade 5 – the highest she could achieve on that paper. She kept up her learning with Mrs Small independently, alongside studying A Levels, and last year came back to Priory to sit a higher level GCSE, this time achieving a Grade 8.

Hannah now has an unconditional offer from UCLan, as well as York St John, to study TESOL with Japanese - teaching English as a second language in Japan. She will go out there on placement in the third year to teach.

Hannah said: "I love Japan as it's such a different culture and it's so interesting learning about the history of Japan. It is a tough language to learn but it is worth the effort.

"Without Priory, and the support I received from Mrs Scully and Mrs Small, I wouldn't be where I am now. I didn't take French and I would have probably opted to study something more mainstream at higher level. Having the opportunity to do this has definitely changed my life choices for the better."

Mrs Small still comes into Priory, offering an extra-curricular lunch time club in Japanese language and culture for all pupils every Wednesday.



When Class of 1974 Head Boy Returned To School

Our 1974 Head Boy Geoff Rowbotham came back to Priory to welcome in the new Head Prefects and give a few words of advice.

Oliver, Chittara, Daniel and Navah all underwent a tough application process, including a speech on why they wanted the role, to become Priory's Head Prefects for 2024/5.

Chittara said: "I have always wanted to be a Head Prefect, ever since I was young. I came to Priory in Year 10 and was proud I had the opportunity to be part of the leadership team. I am enthusiastic about it."

Navah said: "It was nerve-racking giving a speech but I applied to build my confidence and giving the speech did this. I was surprised when I was appointed and really happy."

Oliver said: "I applied because I thought it would be an accomplishment but it was terrifying doing the speech! I am looking forward to each event we attend."



Daniel added: "When I gave my speech my main mission was to stand out and not just make a list of achievements as anyone can do that. I want to be mature and responsible and a good role model overall."

Geoff left Priory 50 years ago and went onto work in management at Marks & Spencers and then setting up his own consultancy business working with the NHS.

"It doesn't feel like 50 years ago," said Geoff. "I was excited to come back and meet the new senior prefects, to have a chat and share our thoughts and views of the roles."

"I don't think the role has actually changed that much. You still need the same skills to be a Head Prefect and this role will help develop their leadership and team building skills which are so important today on top of academic work."

"They all deserve a big pat on the back."

The Head Prefect team's first task will begin next Thursday evening when, alongside Mr Eastham, they will welcome prospective families for the school's Open Evening.



CLASS OF 2018

Josh Traynor

Josh, who left Priory six years ago with high ambitions, has won the pool U23 World Championships.

The World Eightball Pool Federation (WEFP) Championships were held at Blackpool in June. Josh came away with two titles – the Under 23s World Champion and the Under 23s England Team World Champion.

Josh competed as a team of four to take away the England team world champions title. He then went on to play in the singles events which tested him at the 'very highest level', winning his last 32 matches. Josh played against 'one of the best players in the world' who played 'almost perfect' pool – Karl Sutton.



Josh said: "I was absolutely made up to get that far and play a player like Karl deep into the tournament."



He added: "It has been an ambition and dream of mine ever since I picked up a cue. I sacrificed a lot to achieve this and it really does show that if you put your mind to something and have the right support and people around you then you can be successful."

Back in 2018 Josh said he put a lot of his success down to his time at Priory as Principal Mr Eastham gave him time off to practice and attend tournaments.



"They were really good with me, they let me have days off and supported my dream. I really appreciated it all," said Josh.

Class of 2024: Troy Caunce

Troy, who left Priory this summer, recently represented England in the 2024 World Junior-B Curling Championships



Held in Lohja, Finland, earlier this month, the team did fantastically well, qualifying for the quarter finals. They played their hearts out against Japan and narrowly missed out on a win which would have taken them into the semis.



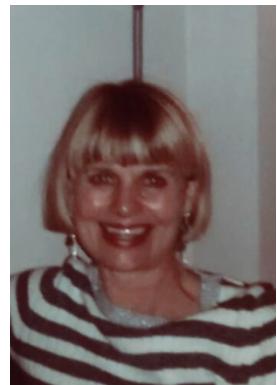
The team finished in 5th place overall out of 21 countries including China, Japan, Switzerland and Korea which were particularly strong teams.

Alumni: Susan Cheesbrough

Class of 1976

Who knew that we had a British gymnastics champion among us! Susan made it to the Olympics in 1976 and 1980, and even appeared in the original series of the *Gladiators*.

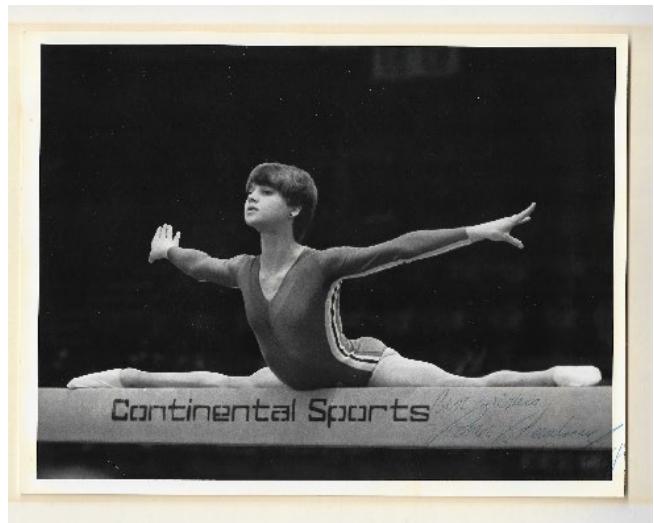
This signed photo was found in our archives earlier this month, following a visit from 1974's Head Boy.



After a posting the photo in our alumni Facebook group it seems many of our former pupils recall her for her unmatched talent in the gym. One former pupil said, *"I was friends with her sister, Catherine. I can remember Susan trying to teach me asymmetric bars - which they had in their back garden in New Longton. It was a disaster. I was useless! Catherine was a good gymnast too, but Susan was amazing."*

Another said, *"She was the same year as I was, nobody could match her at PE etc, we didn't stand a chance."*

Her PE teacher back then, Miss Slater (who later became Mrs Rhodes) is still a friend of the school, and through our contacts, we are hoping to track her down. It would be fantastic to get Susan into school to speak with some of our budding gym stars. We may even have a bit of a reunion with her, Mrs Rhodes and the rest of the 1976 class. Wouldn't that make a nice story!



Here she is in action, plus little bit of her bio >>

www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9hM0v7JPrk | www.gymnasticshistory.co.uk/susan-cheesbrough/

Class of 2023 / 2024:

Charlie Clark & Mason McKay

Well done to Charlie Clarke and Mason McKay who have helped Fylde FC through to the 4th round of the FA Youth Cup after beating Leyton Orient in London on Monday, 9 December.



Both former Priory pupils played a pivotal role in the cup run with Charlie scoring the winning penalty in Round 2 and Mason scoring the second goal in the 4th round for a 2-1 win.

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Alumni: Class of 1990-1999

Pupils of the 1990s are going to love the Lancashire Evening Post after they shared 25 photos from the decade on their social media this week.

If you're a parent and were a pupil with us back then, we'll be sharing all of them on our Facebook group which has been set up especially for our alumni. Here are a few of the best...



All former pupils and staff are invited to join our Facebook group at www.facebook.com/groups/penworthamprioryalumni. Just add the year you left us and we'll let you in!



Caption: Eddie Edwards and the Tic Toc Truck were visiting Penwortham Priory High School near Preston. The pupils on the picture are from left Joanne Carter, Diane Shannon, Tanya Rowbotham and Susanna Mercer.



Caption: Penwortham Priory High School pupils Ian Tallo and Nicole Sargeant study the book written by teachers Maureen Harrison and Sharon Kippax



Caption: Teacher at Priory High School, Penwortham Mike Lazareth gets his own back for 22 years of torture by bringing his horsebox to school on his last day... in truth he brought the horsebox along to spare his car from dirty tricks.



Caption: Sajid Varda alias Mat from Byker Grove shows off his Noel Gallagher impersonation to the pupils of Priory High School, Penwortham, Preston.



Caption: Harry Gaze, 13, and Catherine Pye, 13, get to grips with Paul Heathcote's cooking lesson at Priory High school, in Penwortham, Preston.

Long-Serving Former Food Tech Teacher & Head Girl Return to Open Priory's New Food Service Outlet

It's December 2024 and Priory's Pod has officially opened for pupils and the community.

The food service Pod is located between the Science Department and the Technology Block and is used by pupils as well as now being open to the public who use the Priory facilities out of school hours.

The Pod was officially opened by former Food Technology teacher Miss Lewis-Lavender who was at Priory from 1980 before she retired in 2019.

Former Head Girl Emma Rooke, who left Priory in 2014, was also invited to cut the ribbon who, under Miss Lewis-Lavender's tutelage, won a number of chef competitions and has gone on to have a successful career in the world of catering.

Also in attendance were trustees, representatives from builders Austin Watson Ltd, staff and pupils.



Vice Principal Mrs Cowell said: "The food service Pod is more than just an outdoor cafeteria - it is a practical solution to enhance our facilities and offers a welcoming space for everyone to enjoy.

"The Pod will provide students and staff with access to delicious hot snacks and drinks throughout the week. But its purpose extends beyond the school day; on evenings and weekends it will also serve members of the public, creating a space where the community can connect and share a little warmth and hospitality.

Continued...



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"As well as convenience, this food service Pod symbolises our commitment to improving the school experience for everyone. It will be a place to pause, refuel, and connect, whether during a busy school day, attending an event or using our sports facilities outside school hours."



since I was here."

Miss Rooke said: "I am always glad to come back to Priory. There have been such massive changes at the school since I left and it's exciting to see it as it is.

"To have a facility like this would have been amazing in my school days.

"Lunch and breaks are a massive part of school life. It's a time to spend with friends, and areas like this will certainly aid that."

Steve Peters from Austin Watson said: "It took around four-five weeks to build the Pod over summer and these facilities are getting more popular in schools, having nice seating and eating areas which are more like a café than a canteen."



Strategic Estates Development Manager Mr Bolton added: "We had the idea of a Pod and then researched to see which companies offered these types of facilities that could give us the flexibility that we required. We decided upon purchasing the pod unit and equipment from Bournville Catering, who are experts in this field.



"It's been very popular with pupils and has been set up as a 'grab and go,' so pupils can get something to eat on their way to play sports at break or lunch.



"Street food is popular with the younger generation and then at weekends and evenings the community can get a warm drink and food while they are watching or taking part in sport.

"It will bring revenue back into the school that we can reinvest with more facilities like this."

Year 11 Emily said: "I like the Pod, it's accessible and just easier to get something to eat. The Bistro can get over-crowded so this makes it a lot easier, especially if you are heading off to the 3G."

Year 11 AJ added: "The Pod is great, it eases congestion at the Bistro and it's really convenient if you are coming from Tech or Art."

Miss Lewis-Lavender and Miss Rooke then judged a cake decorating competition with Year 11 Jolie crowned the winner.

Jolie said: "I was surprised. I take GCSE Food Tech and we decorated the cakes in our lesson so it took about an hour. Food Tech is my favourite subject."



The cake decorating competition winners were:
1st Jolie T (Year 11), 2nd Isla S (Year 7),
3rd Abbie S (Year 11)

The cakes that were entered into the competition were later sold at lunchtime and £73 was raised for Derian House Children's Hospice.



Thank you for
your support.



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Alumni Returns to Give Oxbridge Talk to Priory's 'Able and Ambitious' Pupils

Abi Lakeland - Class of 2017

A selection of Year 10 and 11 pupils were told to dream big by Class of 2017 pupil Abi Lakeland who went onto study English at Cambridge University.

Abi, now a teacher herself, admitted she didn't even know about Cambridge University until it was mentioned in an assembly while she was at Priory.

Abi was the first person in her family to go to university, where she studied English, especially inspired by her English teacher Miss Thornton.

"I left Priory in 2017 and attended Cambridge University to study English and achieved a First Class Honours," said Abi.

"I'm an English teacher myself, based down South. I remember, it was an assembly I attended at Priory in Year 10/11 that first made me aware Oxbridge even existed – neither of my parents attended university.

"It was magical, magnificent and marvellous to return to Priory to talk to the pupils.

"I just told them you have to dream big and you can achieve your dreams. You go to a great school and can go onto a great university.

"Cambridge was a magical experience, it is a difficult, challenging environment but you do get your rewards.

"I loved my time at Priory. Art teacher Miss Smith was awesome; Miss Thornton inspired me; Mr Kenrick was my maths teacher and I would never have passed maths without his help and Miss Summers in history was awesome. It's great to come back as the school hasn't changed much."



Mr Taylor, who manages our 'Able and Ambitious' programme, said: "The Oxbridge visit came about when former pupil Abi got in touch with me saying she wanted to give something back to school because of what school had given her.

"She was the first member of her family to attend university and it just so happens it was Cambridge University which was superb for Abi.

"Abi talked about potential courses Oxbridge offers, life at an Oxbridge university, life in the cities and what's on offer for students there.

"We initially went with a cohort of 15 'Able and Ambitious' pupils to attend it but we opened it up to everyone in Year 10 & 11 and had a great response."

"Around 50 pupils got the chance to take in this key information from someone who has lived the life at Cambridge.

"It's also offering the ambition, giving our pupils something they haven't thought about. It's hoped this will inspire them to stretch themselves beyond what they thought they could initially do."

"These talks are all about opening doors and offering opportunities our pupils maybe wouldn't have thought of before."



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Class of 1998 - Miss Gregson (ICT & Computing Teacher)

Miss Gregson is a former Priory pupil and now is a teacher here, looking to transform lives as Mr Watters changed hers!

Miss Gregson was part of Class of 1998 and acknowledges that Priory's transformation from then to now is unrecognisable. She said she was definitely a student who had a lot going on outside of school but Mr Watters, her Head of Year and long-serving Geography teacher who retired in summer 2023, had a big say in changing her life.

Miss Gregson said: "Mr Watters told me that I wasn't leaving school without any GCSEs! I have never forgotten him saying 'no one knocks on your door and gives you a good life, you have to go out and get it'. I didn't particularly enjoy the time spent catching up on coursework, but had no idea at the time the impact of having GCSEs would have on my life."

After leaving Priory, Miss Gregson has had a varied career. "Initially I trained as a secretary at Runshaw College and did office work for over a decade, working in Children's Services, amongst other places.

"I did a degree in Computer Science while working full-time and actually completed my dissertation in Australia where I was travelling at the time".



She said, "Taking myself out of my comfort zone has definitely been a common theme in my life and one that I hope to share with students at Priory.

"I came back to the UK and, while working in Children's Services, took the opportunity of volunteering at two youth groups. I loved it and went on to complete my PGCE at Edge Hill University.

"I met my partner whilst I was working on a cruise ship in the Caribbean and have never looked back. We now have two beautiful boys who definitely keep us busy. Being a mum helps me provide a healthy work-life balance.

"I knew we needed to be closer to my support network in Preston towards the end of my second maternity leave, as I had been teaching down in Somerset. My best friend sent me the job advert for Priory, that they were looking for a Computing, Business and IT teacher - and I applied. To be back at Priory as a teacher just blows my mind!

"As a young person, it is really easy to say the things you are going to do in life. As an adult, you realise that opportunities come your way and it is your choice whether you take them. As it turns out, Mr Watters' advice all those years ago, has actually been very relevant in my life.

"There are some fantastic opportunities on offer for young people today, especially women. Mrs Qadri and I are both so excited about the new ventures we are working on for our pupils. We both want to inspire them to get involved with STEM-related careers and we thrive on providing an environment where they can explore this."

Miss Gregson
Teacher of Computing, ICT and
Business & Enterprise



Class of 2024 -

India Pilkington & Lewis Tabarn

As we continue to celebrate the achievements of our former pupils, we're shining a spotlight on Lewis and India, who joined an inspiring theatrical project in Blackpool after moving on from Priory last summer.

Two drama tutors have established the Theatre Collective, a free college aimed at aspiring actors aged 16 to 19. With the intention of nurturing talent from the North, they are providing invaluable opportunities in Blackpool, demonstrating that it is possible to pursue a career in the creative arts without the high costs typically associated with moving to London.

In a BBC news report about the college, India expressed her excitement about the initiative, stating, "It feels good to know there is somewhere you can do what you want to do, and you don't have to spend so much money to just achieve what you want."



BLACKPOOL THEATRE COLLECTIVE

India and Lewis recently showcased their skills by performing a special tribute to Agatha Christie's iconic play, 'The Mousetrap,' at St Martin's Theatre in London. They also got to meet historian Lucy Worsley, who is the author's biographer, along with other celebrities who were in the audience enjoying the performance.

We look forward to witnessing their continued success. You can view the full BBC article here >>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cm2dnn85gkro>



Class of 2012

Prom at Barton Grange Hotel

Emma Sumner, Kieran Ford, Rhianna McDonnell and Jodie Cartwright.

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Class of 2001 Priory Uniform

Look what turned up during a recent loft clear-out - original Priory uniform and those infamous planners from 2001!

One of our lovely teachers (and proud alumna) brought it in to school after it was rediscovered amongst her late mum's keepsakes. We're thrilled to add it to our growing archive of school history and we're sure it'll spark a few memories (and maybe a few fashion flashbacks!) for some of our alumni parents.

If you've got any old photos, uniform items, or other Priory treasures gathering dust, we'd love to give them a good home. We promise to look after them forever - no PE kit left behind!

Contact Mrs Yates by email at j.yates@priory.lancs.sch.uk or pop into Reception during school hours. We'd love to see what you've got!



Now and Then

We're continuously developing our facilities at Priory to create inspiring learning spaces for our current and future generations of pupils.

On the left is a photo of the Art room in 2015, taken by Ms Smith who was the Lead Teacher of Art at that time. The photo on the right is as it is now - the Year 11's area of the Bistro. What a transformation!



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From Priory to the Olympics: Susan Cheesebrough's Inspiring Return

'Inspirational' was how our young pupils described the return of Olympic gymnast and former pupil Susan Cheesebrough to Priory.

Susan was part of the Class of 1976, then Penwortham Secondary Modern School, with several members of that year group also coming along to an enjoyable reunion, alongside former PE teacher Mrs Rhodes, then Miss Slater.

Susan found a love of gymnastics aged nine and represented Great Britain at the 1976 and 1980 Olympics. She met up with her former classmates last Friday and also watched a display put on by Priory's current gymnasts.

Susan, who is now a yoga and pilates teacher and a lifestyle coach, said: "I have been blessed in my life. I had a talent and used it. I was British champion and I got to spend a month in the USSR when I was 15 and travel around America as part of a professional tour. I have been lucky.

"It was sheer determination that I got to the Montreal Olympics in 1976 and everyone helped me on that journey, including my teachers and school friends.

"This is my first time back since I left school and it's lovely to come back. It's nice to meet up with Miss Slater again, she helped me a lot. There was also the deputy head teacher Mrs Lucas who supported me. Everyone at school encouraged me and believed in me."



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PE teacher Mrs Rhodes, then Miss Slater, said: "I recognised Susan had a talent and just encouraged her."

Sue Brown (nee Baines), who is a trustee at Priory, said: "I obviously come up to school a lot. I remember Susan and, in PE, she used to give demonstrations in gymnastics that we could never do!"

Wendy Fowler (nee Hull) was on her first return to Priory since 1976. "It's weird coming back, 49 years since we left! I remember Susan and I remember Miss Slater who was my form tutor."

Paul Fletcher, another class of 1976, said: "It's a bit strange coming back. I did get myself into a bit of trouble at school!"

Kathryn Shone (nee Dickinson) said: "It's so pretty with all the gardens. I liked high school – I think I laughed all the way through it. I have remained friends with people I met here and we still go out together."

Year 9 Millie, who attends the City Of Preston Gymnastics Club, said: "It was inspiring. I want to be a gymnast so to talk to her and listen to her telling us to follow our dreams was encouraging."

Year 8 gymnast Freya, who put on a show for Susan and the Class of 1976, said: "I was excited to meet her as I have never met an Olympic gymnast before."



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Priory's Head Girls of the Past Return to Welcome 2025-26 Head Prefects

1995 Head Girl Heather Taylor and 2005 Head Girl Hannah Humphris returned to Priory to welcome our current Head Prefects into their roles.

Kacper, Tarela, Yasmine and Hiylie are Priory's Head Prefects for the 2025/6 school year following hustings that were held at the end of the summer term. Candidates had to make a 3-5 minute speech on why they wanted to be a Head Prefect, what changes they would make in school and how they would implement them. It then went to a staff and Year 11 vote.

Heather, whose surname was Collins at school, said: "It's 30 years since I have been here properly although my mum, Margaret Collins, was the Head's PA so I did used to pop in every now and again.

"It's lovely to be back, it has changed such a lot. It's nice to have a look around

"When I was Head Girl, you didn't put in for it, you just got voted in by pupils and teachers. There wasn't a speech as I wouldn't have done it!

"I enjoyed Art and Maths but mostly PE with Miss Slater. I remember a snowball fight as well!

"I work in the NHS now."

Hannah was the first of the Rooke family to attend Priory, five sisters and a brother followed her.

"I did have to make a speech to be Head Girl! I got fantastic GCSE results and I went to college and university to do primary education with maths specialism. My favourite teacher was Mrs Butler who was my Head of Year and maths teacher.

"I worked in education for a while, actually in a secondary school even though I trained for primary school, but then myself and my husband set up a climbing and education business called Climbing Wall Training.

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"It's lovely to be back and see how the school has grown. The bones of it are still here from when I was here but it has moved on a lot."

Both spent time looking at memorabilia from 30 and 20 years ago with our new Head Prefects, talking about school uniform, trips to Russia and teachers.

Hiylié said: "It's lovely hearing them talking about their time at Priory, it's really interesting. I am excited to be a Head Prefect. I have a lot of ideas, I want more communication with pupils and staff."

"Looking ahead to the school year, my GCSEs are daunting but I am excited to be able to change things as a Head Prefect."



Tarela said: "When I talked to my Year 11 friends a lot spoke about wanting more food options so that's something I will look at."

Yasmine said: "I did not expect to get a Head Prefect role. I came to Priory from Hong Kong in Year 10 so I understand how alone you can feel when starting a new school so I want to use my experience to help others who maybe in the same situation. It is a real honour to be a Head Prefect."

"I have enjoyed meeting the former Head Girls. They have been telling me that their Food Tech room is now where the Bistro is and how much the school has changed."

Kacper, who was unfortunately absent for the photograph, is a Young Leader for Explorer Scouts out of school and has firm ideas for the changes he wants to make at Priory.

"I want to support younger pupils. It's important to me to help younger pupils through difficult times as I understand how painful it can be. I really want to make a difference in this area. I want the best for everyone."



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In Memory of: Mrs Rhodes (Miss Slater) PE Teacher & Head of Year 1971-2004



Heartfelt tributes have been paid to former teacher Kate Rhodes who spent more than 30 years at Priory.



Kate, who was Miss Slater when she started at Priory in 1971 before she retired as Mrs Rhodes in 2004, encouraged and inspired thousands of pupils over the years through her roles in the PE Department and as Head Of Year, which she was passionate about.

She worked alongside her husband Dave at Priory, he was a PE teacher from 1976-2010, and she was a popular and well-respected colleague through those years, showing support and dedication to everyone.

Kate passed away at her home on 1st September and everyone connected with Priory is heartbroken.

Principal Mr Eastham, who started his career at Priory in the PE department under Kate and Dave's guidance, said: "We are deeply saddened to share the news of the passing of Mrs Kate Rhodes, a much-loved former colleague and teacher who dedicated many years to our school community.

"Kate retired just over 20 years ago after a long and impactful career in our PE department and as a Head of Year, where she inspired countless students through her passion, integrity, and unwavering commitment.

"She was not only a trusted colleague but also a dear friend to so many, and her influence continues to be felt in the lives of those she came into contact with and worked alongside. Our thoughts are with her family and loved ones at this time."

Both Kate and Dave had been regular visitors back to Priory, opening our refurbished gym in September 2017 and, more recently in March, they both came back for our Class of 1976 reunion when Olympic gymnast Susan Cheesebrough returned to Priory.

Below image: Mrs Cooper, Mr Rhodes, Mr Eastham, Mr Watters and Mrs Rhodes at the 1998 Prom.

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Susan said: "I'm so sorry to hear Miss Slater (Mrs Rhodes) has passed away. Myself and my sisters Anne and Catherine send sincere condolences to her family and all the people who knew her, a very inspirational woman with a kind heart."

"Kate will be in our thoughts, I for one will remember her for the time she gave to me personally. Rest in peace lovely lady."

The outpouring of affection for Mrs Rhodes has been phenomenal with hundreds of comments on Facebook:

Vanessa Cole wrote: "Miss Slater was the epitome of what a teacher should be. Kind, fair, caring, stern if needed and the encouragement she gave on a daily basis shaped many a person."

Sharron Smith said: "A wonderful teacher, she inspired and encouraged my love of athletics back in the 80s."

Jane Heylar said: "Miss Slater was an excellent person, caring, supporting and real. I loved PE with her and being part of the netball team. 'Come on ladies!' I can hear her now."

Natalie Anne said: "Miss Slater was one of the reasons why I fell in love with sport and PE, she was always so supportive and positive. When at Uni in the 90s, I went back to do some shadowing of her for my course and she was so supportive."

Elaine Harrison added: "She was my Head of Year and had a perfect mix of caring, a great sense of humour but stern if needed. The 'Come on Ladies' shout to motivate us during cross country is ringing in my ears as I type."

Kate was a beloved wife of Dave, much-loved step-mum to Laura, mother-in-law to John, and a wonderful Grandma to Alfie and Daisy. She was also a dear sister to Val and a cherished cousin to Eileen.

The funeral will take place at Charnock Richard Crematorium on Tuesday, 16th September at 12.30pm. At Kate's request, those attending the celebration of her life are invited to wear colourful clothing. Family flowers only, please. Donations, if desired, will

be gratefully received in support of St Catherine's Hospice c/o the funeral director: Neal Buckley Funerals, 6 Liverpool Road, Penwortham, PR1 0AD. Tel: 01772 744700

Class of 2023: Katie Read



Celebrating A Level Results Day 2025

Congratulations to Katie who has secured an apprenticeship at local engineering company.

Katie joined Preston College from Penwortham Priory Academy in 2023 to study the T Level in Engineering (Design & Development).

Well done Katie!



Class of 2025: Umar Hansrot Leaver Secures Apprenticeship and National Award

We were delighted to hear from one of our Class of 2025 pupils who has shared some fantastic news about his next steps since leaving Priory.

Following a careers seminar hosted in school by the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) earlier this year, Umar successfully applied for and secured an apprenticeship with the government department. The visit back in March organised by Careers Adviser, Ms Smith, gave pupils a valuable insight into civil service careers and opened doors to real opportunities, including this one.

Umar wrote to thank the school for its encouragement and guidance, saying: *"I'd like to thank Priory for supporting me and motivating me to achieve this post, as well as my community for supporting me."*

In addition to the achievement, Umar has also been recognised after winning a national Volunteer Recognition Award. He recently attended a conference and will be heading to an event in London later this month to celebrate.

Principal, Mr Eastham added, "This is a fantastic achievement and a real testament to Umar's hard work, determination, and the positive attitude he always showed during his time at school. I'm so pleased that both Ms Smith and the school could play a part in supporting him on his journey".

We're incredibly proud of his success and grateful for his kind words. We wish Umar all the best in his apprenticeship and hope to welcome him back for a visit in the future!



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Former Pupil Officially Opens 'The Nest' - A Hub for SEND and Emotional Support

Class of 2025 Daniel McCall returned to Priory to officially open the new SEND and well-being facility, the Nest.

The Nest stands for Nurture, Encourage, Support and Talk and it's a room dedicated to supporting and developing the social and emotional needs of our young people.

Daniel, who took GCSE Art, donated one of his paintings to be displayed in the room.

ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) Mrs Eastham said: "We asked Daniel to paint a calming picture, including nature and tranquil colours, and what he produced was outstanding.

"We decorated the room thanks to a £3000 grant from the Crescent Purchasing Consortium and their 'Give Back' grant funding which included a new soft seating area as well as a new meeting table and chairs."

A range of people will use the Nest, including the school nurse every alternate Monday (Medical referrals via Mrs Holland plus lunchtime drop-ins); Compass Bloom, a mental health charity in school every Tuesday (Referrals via Mrs Willis, Family Support Manager); ELSA sessions which run every Wednesday (Referrals via Mrs Holland) and School Counsellor sessions will be held Thursdays and Fridays (Referrals via Mr Shipton).



SENCo Mrs Holland said: "This was a Head of Year room which was vacant on our pastoral corridor so it was ideal to transform it into the Nest."

"Before this, our SEND and well-being sessions could be held in any room on our corridor but now this is a dedicated place where pupils know where to come to."

Daniel said: "I worked on my painting on and off for four weeks. It's nice to see it in the room."

A Creative Legacy For Agnes With New House Designs for Priory

Class of 2025 Agnes has used her artistic talents to create new logos for our four Houses – and they look amazing!

Historically, the school has had creatures linked to its Houses - Calder Cats, Douglas Dragons, Hodder Hornets and Ribble Rhinos.

Last year, the decision was made to reintroduce these mascots, and pupils were invited to submit design ideas.

Following initial interest, Agnes who was in Year 11 at the time, was asked to create all four designs to ensure a consistent visual style. Her hand-drawn illustrations were met with enthusiasm and approved by pupils and staff alike.

Since this point Ms Smith, with her design background, and Mr Oakes with his graphics skills have been developing the logos further to suit a variety of applications such as House badges, pull-up banners and school merchandise.

Agnes, now studying at the Lancaster School of Maths, said: "They were having a badge competition as Ms Smith wanted them all looking modern.

"Humanities teacher Mrs Cauchi, a House Leader, asked me to update 'Douglas'. Then it was suggested I do them all!"

"I love art, although I don't really think I am that good at it, so I did them all by hand."

ICT Technician, Mr Oakes said, "They needed a few tweaks so they could be used on the digital signage and the school had them made into badges.



"I am really impressed with Agnes' design. They look so good."



Agnes concluded: "I am proud they will be used for years to come. It's a nice legacy."

Badges have been distributed to pupils and staff, and are now part of the school uniform.

Thank you to our Year 8 models - Emeli P, Luna C, James McK and Bobby W.



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