

Our ref: MMC/NWI

19 December 2025

Dear Parents and Carers

As the festive season arrives, Sir Thomas Wharton Academy has truly embodied the spirit of Christmas – celebrating togetherness, kindness and community at every opportunity. This final newsletter of the year highlights not only the exceptional learning that continues across the academy, but also the incredible generosity, empathy and pride shown by our students and staff. From welcoming our youngest community members to sharing moments with our older residents, the academy has once again demonstrated the powerful role it plays at the heart of the community. These experiences create lifelong memories for our young people and remind us all of the values that matter most at Christmas.

Throughout the final weeks of term, students have enjoyed a range of festive activities including a year 7 pantomime trip, Breakfast with Santa for local families, a Festive Afternoon Tea for community pensioners and the much-loved Family Christmas Dinner, where students and staff came together as one academy family.

High standards of teaching and learning have continued alongside the celebrations. Year 11 students received their trial exam results and are already working purposefully to close gaps ahead of their next assessments. Engagement with independent learning platforms has been exceptional, with students placing the academy in the top 1% nationally for Tassomai usage and completing thousands of hours of personalised learning on Sparx.

Teaching and Learning

Year 11 Trial Exam Results Day

On Thursday 18 December, year 11 students received their trial examination results in a special assembly to celebrate students' achievements and the progress they have made since year 10. Students have already commenced the closing the gap process in lessons and are eagerly responding to their feedback to close gaps in knowledge and refine the skills that will be essential in the summer examinations. The next trial examinations will take place in February in the two weeks following half term.

Tassomai

Students' investment in Tassomai has been a real strength in 2025, as we have consistently been in the top 1% of national performance, with year 11 quizzing for 222 hours last week and answering almost 65,000 questions, while year 10 have quizzed for 110 hours and completed 31,000 questions. Weekly leaderboards are updated each week on the STWAchieve Instagram account.

We look forward to seeing this continue in 2026!

Sparx

As an academy, we have completed over 3,900 hours of personalised learning, answered a half a million questions correctly and over 230 students have improved their times table fluency this year. We thank every parent for their support and encouragement in completing Sparx mathematics tasks.



Year 11 students will have access to their Tassomai weekly goals over the holidays and will receive a holiday exam preparation pack. These will be detailed in a separate letter.

For year groups 7 to 10, no compulsory tasks will be set. The revision tasks to help with student's next assessment is on their Sparx account. Every child should aim to complete 100% of their fluency tasks to be ready for their next assessment.

Personal Development

Festive Singing Competition

Our Singing Club entered an online competition last week and we are so happy to announce that they came first out of the whole country!

All the students involved performed amazingly, having given up their lunch times to practice - showing incredible dedication to representing the academy. Well done to all of them - we are very proud!

National UK Bebras Challenge

Students in years 7 to 9 have participated in the National UK Bebras Challenge organised by the Raspberry Pi Foundation. This assessment was themed around problem solving and computational thinking. Students completed a 45-minute test, which involved interactive tasks, designed to encourage logical thinking and problem-solving skills. 24 of our students received the gold award, which means that they have performed in the top 10% of the entire country. Well done to all participating students for this fantastic achievement!

Careers

This week, students who were successful in gaining a place with the Access to Sheffield programme in collaboration with Sheffield University, along with their parents and carers, were invited to attend the Access to Sheffield launch event. The seminar was a great opportunity for both students and their parents and carers to become informed about what the programme has ahead of them.

As our sixth form students' progress with making their post 18 decision, we had HeppSY deliver an informative lecture on student life and what to expect. Students are now more knowledgeable on how to study, what support is available, important considerations, such as accommodations, rural and inner-city campuses, as well as hearing from a recent student at Leeds university.

Events

Year 7 Pantomime



What a fantastic afternoon we had on Tuesday 16 December at the Cinderella pantomime at CAST with over 250 year 7 students and staff. There were special guest appearances from our very own Mr Smith, Mr Ferguson, Miss Wybrant and Mr McDonald who were all brought on to the stage for a cameo performance and our students sang their hearts out, clapped and cheered as a great audience.

This was a great opportunity for our students to experience the range of jobs available in theatre from front of house staff, performer, lighting or sound technicians as well as set and costume designers. What a wonderful way to start the festive season!

Festive Afternoon Tea Party



On Tuesday 16 December, we invited 60 of our local community old age pensioners into the academy to celebrate Christmas with us with food and festivities from our year 10 music cohort - our students did us proud singing, playing instruments and even hosting a quiz!

We love being able to give back to our community with events like this and it was a privilege for us to see everyone enjoying themselves.

Breakfast with Santa

This week, Sir Thomas Wharton Academy has played host to over 300 local children under the age of 5 and their parents and carers, who have joined us for our annual Breakfast with Santa over five festive events, which were free of charge to the families in our community.



The festive events saw the youngsters enjoying story time with Santa on his sleigh before tucking into breakfast and being gifted a book for them to take home and enjoy.



In all of these sessions, our students were fantastic- the award winning singers welcomed the children in and then our students served both the little ones and staff. The make-up elective students also painted the children's faces.

Family Christmas Dinner



Every year, Sir Thomas Wharton Academy celebrates the last day of term in style with a free Christmas dinner for all students and staff, followed by a range of other House and Tutor Time festivities, earning house points and winning prizes. Today, 1,100 students and 100 staff sat together, as a family, to share in the Christmas spirit, which included the Christmas dinner, VIP guests, crackers, genuine conversation and live music. At Sir Thomas Wharton Academy, we believe these types of experiences are vital in terms of building true culture, community and character and creating positive school memories which last a lifetime.



House Updates

This week, we have seen Wentworth storm back into the lead with over 18,000 house points. They are being closely followed by all three houses who are fighting to earn a place on our end of year house trip to Alton Towers.

Our final festive challenge of the year was for students of each house to design tree decorations. The cultural traditions for how four countries decorate their trees had been allocated as follows:

Cusworth – Ukraine – Spider webs
Brodsworth – Australia – Seashells



Wentworth – Japan – Origami
Chatsworth – Denmark – Paper hearts

Students demonstrated their creativity with a number of decorations which they had designed and have brought our house Christmas trees to life!

Attendance

We have gifted several attendance rewards over this final week – winners include:

- The tutor group with the highest attendance receiving a special lunch: 7B1
- 100% attendance prize draw winner selecting a 50-inch TV: Daniel
- 97% attendance prize draw winner selecting the second 50-inch TV: Hollie
- Most improved attendance draw receiving a £50 shopping voucher: Phoebe H
- Students who have been in attendance every day of the final week receiving a £50 shopping voucher:
 - Year 7: Olly P
 - Year 8: Jacob P
 - Year 9: Sophia T
 - Year 10: Riley C
 - Year 11: Lily C
- House Prize receiving 1,000 house points: Wentworth

As the term comes to a close, the academy looks forward to welcoming students back on Monday 5 January and wishes all families a joyful Christmas filled with special memories.

Yours sincerely

Mr M McDonald
Principal

