

# THE EPOCHS



# BEACON

The weekly round up of school life

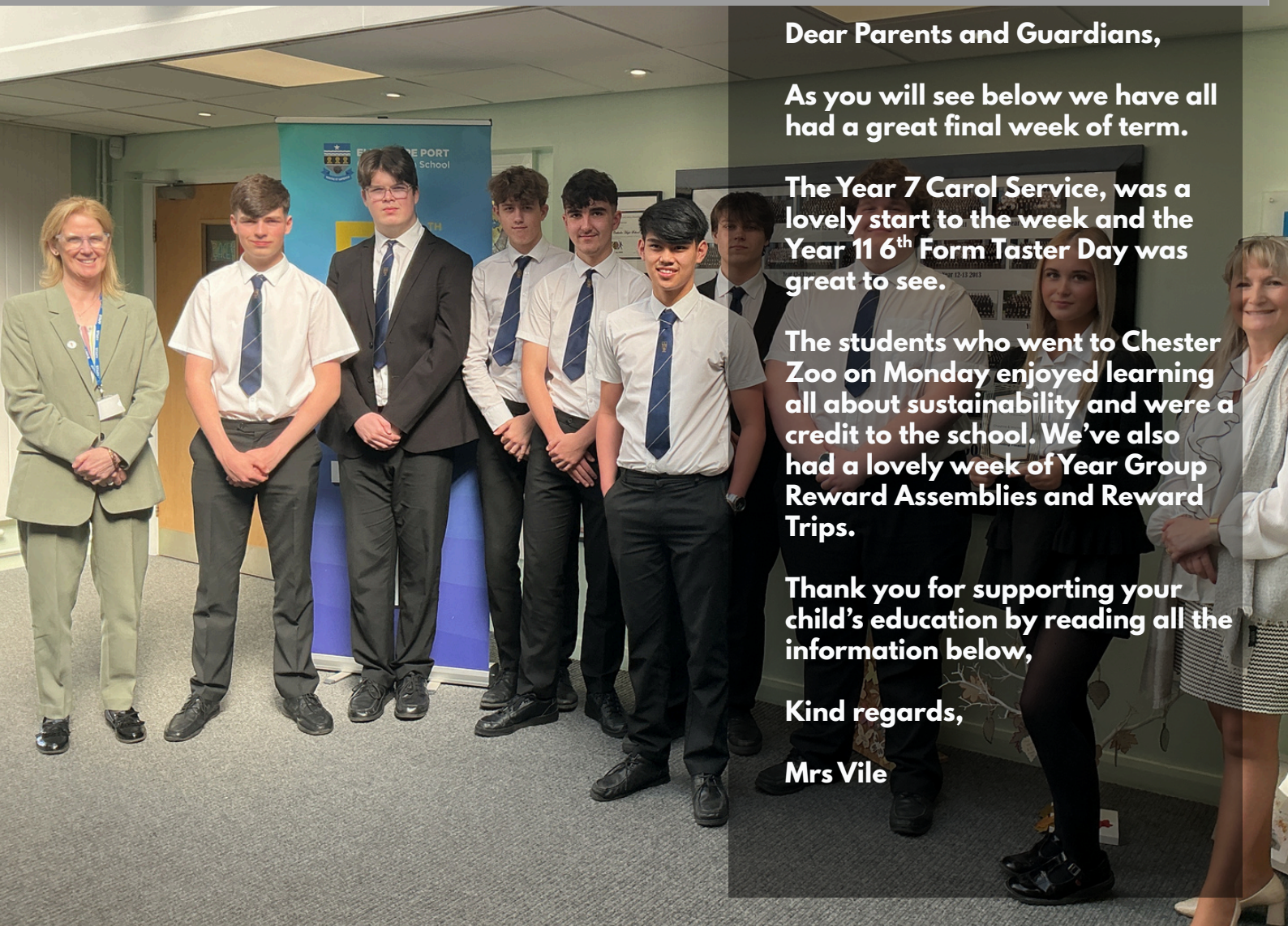


**READY - RESPECTFUL - SAFE - KIND**



"I Have Come So That They May Have Life And Have It To The Full" - John 10:10

# HEADTEACHER MESSAGE



Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you will see below we have all had a great final week of term.

The Year 7 Carol Service, was a lovely start to the week and the Year 11 6<sup>th</sup> Form Taster Day was great to see.

The students who went to Chester Zoo on Monday enjoyed learning all about sustainability and were a credit to the school. We've also had a lovely week of Year Group Reward Assemblies and Reward Trips.

Thank you for supporting your child's education by reading all the information below,

Kind regards,

Mrs Vile



Secondary School of the Year  
**WINNER**

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School

# Farewell and thank you to staff leaving

As we reach the end of term, we want to express our heartfelt thanks to the colleagues who are moving on to new chapters. Miss C Allman, Mr C Jones, Mr G Powell and Mr L Howard.

'We can also confirm that Mrs Caroline Vile will be leaving her post as Head Teacher at Ellesmere Port Catholic High School from 31 December 2025.

The Governing Body has started the recruitment process for a new Head Teacher. We will be looking for a strong candidate to take over the position.

We wish Caroline well in the future.'

We would like to thank all those staff leaving us for their dedication, kindness, and hard work, and for their lasting impact on our school community. We are grateful for everything they have contributed and they will be truly missed. We wish them every success and happiness in the future.

# GOODBYE

&

# GOOD

# LUCK

# Christmas Wishes

The gift of Christmas  
Loving God, thank you for the gift of Christmas.  
It doesn't come wrapped like other presents,  
it's deeper and warmer and brighter.  
It is more personal, more challenging, more beautiful.  
It is a mystery, a birth, a hope.  
Thank you.  
Help us to receive Christmas in our hearts  
and to share it with others.  
In Jesus' name.  
Amen.



Merry Christmas

From All at EPCHS



# EVERY MINUTE MATTERS

Punctuality and attendance matters at EPOCHS

To make the best start to the day, students should arrive on site by 8:40am.

Every minute really does make a difference – to learning, confidence and success.

Thank you for supporting positive routines, strong punctuality and excellent attendance at EPOCHS.

## EVERY MINUTE MATTERS

5 MINUTES  
LATE

3.4 DAYS MISSED — 98.4% ATTENDANCE

10 MINUTES  
LATE

6.9 DAYS MISSED — 97.6% ATTENDANCE

15 MINUTES  
LATE

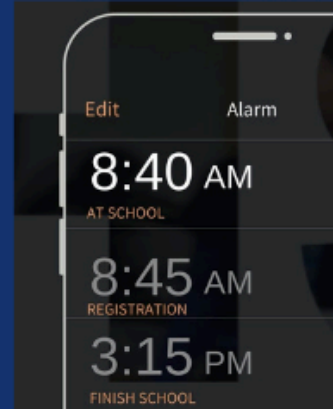
10.3 DAYS MISSED — 94.6% ATTENDANCE

20 MINUTES  
LATE

: 13.8 DAYS MISSED — 92.9% ATTENDANCE

30 MINUTES  
LATE

20.7 DAYS MISSED — 89.2% ATTENDANCE



**DID YOU KNOW THAT ARRIVING JUST A FEW MINUTES LATE EACH DAY CAN HAVE A BIG IMPACT ON YOUR OVERALL ATTENDANCE?**



# *Dignity of the human person*

**We believe that every person has inherent dignity, and every life is sacred. The innate dignity of each person is the foundation and inspiration of our vision for a just and compassionate world. We see the image of God in every person, no matter their circumstance.**



**Dignity of  
the  
Human Person**

# YEAR 7 CAROL SERVICE



Year 7 enjoyed a beautiful Carol Service yesterday, coming together in faith to celebrate the joy of the season through prayer, reflection and song. Led by Angela, our Chaplain, it was a truly uplifting and prayerful celebration.

# EPCHS STUDENTS SELECTED FOR CHESHIRE COUNTY RUGBY U16S PLAYER DEVELOPMENT GROUP



We are delighted to share some fantastic sporting news.

Two of our students have been selected for the Cheshire County Rugby U16s Player Development Group — a brilliant achievement and the equivalent of the Sale Sharks PDG.

Our Year 11 student has earned selection for the second year in a row, while our Year 10 student has only been playing rugby for just over a year, making her progress and success especially impressive.

This is a wonderful example of the growing opportunities for girls in rugby, and we are incredibly proud of both students. Congratulations to them on their hard work and dedication.



# Christmas Jumper day



We had a fantastic time on Christmas Jumper day and raised lots of money for the Alfie Burke charity and future school activities.

A big THANK YOU to the 6<sup>th</sup> Form students for taking the lead on this and collecting the money.

# Chester Zoo SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT



Over the past two weeks, students from 8Y1 and 9X3 have participated in a Sustainability project in collaboration with Chester Zoo. They attended three lessons at school, led by Education Officer Jess, who highlighted the importance of building a sustainable society and its impact on our environment.

The program concluded with a visit to Chester Zoo on Monday, made possible through the zoo's generous funding of transport and admission costs for all students.



I would like to thank the staff who accompanied the students and commend the excellent feedback received regarding their conduct—they were a credit to the school.





I would like to share with you another lovely Spanish Christmas tradition: Los Reyes Magos (the Three Wise Men).

This week, students have been learning about a much-loved Christmas custom in Spain: writing a letter to the Three Kings. Traditionally, Spanish children write to Melchior, Gaspar and Balthazar to tell them about their year and ask for the presents they hope to receive. The Three Kings are believed to arrive on the night of 5th January, with gifts opened on 6th January, the day of Epiphany, which is a very special day in Spain known as Día de Reyes.

Although many families now also celebrate Father Christmas or Santa Claus, the tradition of writing to the Three Kings remains very popular. In class, students have really enjoyed writing their own letters in Spanish, practising new vocabulary while learning about Spanish culture.

It has been a fun and festive way to bring language learning and cultural understanding together.

¡Feliz Navidad! Miss Menéndez

# CHAPLAINCY *news*

On Sunday, the fourth week of Advent will begin. The theme is Love. The last purple candle will be lit and the white candle on the Advent wreath will be lit on Christmas Day.

THANKYOU TO EVERYONE WHO HAS  
RAISED MONEY FOR MALAWI. WE DO NOT  
HAVE A FINAL TOTAL YET BUT WE  
DEFINITELY HAVE ENOUGH FOR A BRAILLE  
MACHINE.



## WARM CLOTHES DONATIONS

Please remember that we are collecting for people in our community who need clothes. We especially need coats, shoes, blankets and toiletries. Try to have a sort out at the weekend and bring any donations to Angela in B11. They make an enormous difference to people. They are currently in need of woolly hats and gloves so if you have any, please pass to Angela in B11.

## COMMUNITY

There are lots of exciting events taking place in our local parishes. Please check out the website. Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church | Roman Catholic Churches of Ellesmere Port and Hootton (rcchep.co.uk) Please contact your Parish Priest if you would like more information on the Parish Sacramental programme.



AFTER CHRISTMAS, OUR SINGING  
GROUP WILL START AGAIN IN B11  
ON A TUESDAY LUNCHTIME. WE  
WILL BE LOOKING AT SONGS FROM  
THE SOUND OF MUSIC. PLEASE  
COME ALONG.

**ROSARY IS SAID EACH  
BREAKTIME IN B11.  
PLEASE JOIN US.**



## **ANNUAL SCHOOLS' CLIMBING COMPETITION**

On Thursday 11th December a group of intrepid Year 10 students went to the Climbing Hut to compete in the annual schools climbing competition. This is always a challenging competition and the students performed brilliantly on every wall. There were several competitions including individual male and female competitions as well as a team competition.

Out of a possible 150 points available for the 15 walls, One of our Year 10 students was one of only 3 students from all the schools involved to get a perfect score, making him joint winner of the Novice Male competition.



In addition to this individual success the team achieved an average score of 130.6 / 150 and were crowned Novice Champions for 2025, beating Calday Grange (2nd), and West Kirby Grammar (3rd) along with a host of other schools from across Cheshire and Wirral.

**A truly inspirational and outstanding result for the hard work of the students.**

# YEAR 12

## Young Enterprise Success at The Climbing Hut



Our Year 12 **Young Enterprise** team enjoyed a highly successful day trading at The Climbing Hut during the Indoor Christmas Market afternoon. Thanks to the continued support of their Business Advisor, Sam Oxford (pictured), the team were given the fantastic opportunity to run a stand and showcase their products to the public.

The team of three performed exceptionally well. They were proactive, confident and professional, engaging customers in conversation and clearly explaining their products. Their hard work paid off, with their products (the baby lithops) proving extremely popular and selling out within just a few hours of trading.

This event provided another invaluable real-world experience for the team, offering further insight into what it is really like to run and grow a business. Opportunities like this help develop key enterprise skills such as communication, resilience and adaptability.

Well done to the **Mindstones** team on a brilliant achievement, this was a fantastic example of young entrepreneurship in action!

Mrs Francoise Williams - A very proud teacher



# Staff Bake Off



This week our competitive spirit has been tested in the Great EPCHS Staff Bake Off, here are our winners!



# COMMUNITY NEWS

## National Online Safety

AI-powered toys can feel lifelike, but how do they listen, learn, and influence play? The latest #WakeUpWednesday guide explores the privacy, security, and developmental considerations – with practical tips to help set boundaries.

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit [nationalcollege.com](https://nationalcollege.com).

### What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI TOYS

This festive season, the newest toys on the shelves do not just blink or make noise; they listen. Many now come with artificial intelligence (AI), allowing them to talk, learn, and even respond to a child's emotions. These toys can be educational and engaging, but they also collect, store, and process information. This guide explains what that means for families and why it matters.

#### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

##### TOYS THAT LISTEN AND LEARN

When a toy uses AI, it collects data such as voice recordings, interactions, and background sounds. This information is sent to remote servers, where it is analysed to improve responses. Your child's voice becomes training data, which may be stored indefinitely or shared with third parties.

##### WEAK SECURITY PROTECTIONS

Some AI toys have poor password protection or open network connections. Others may have microphones or cameras that stay on, even when the toy appears to be off. This can lead to recordings being made without your knowledge, including conversations unrelated to play.

##### ARTIFICIAL VOICES, REAL INFLUENCE

For very young children, an AI companion may become one of the first voices they interact with regularly. How that voice shows humour, empathy, or authority can shape how a child learns to communicate. If the model is artificial, then part of what is learned is artificial as well.

##### PRESSURE TO KEEP ENGAGING

Some toys reward repeated use or track engagement, encouraging children to interact more. When children compare how their toys perform, it creates pressure to play more often. This increases the amount of data collected and can make learning feel like competition.

##### MARKETING THROUGH PLAY

Toys that learn a child's preferences may feed that data into future advertising. A toy that knows a child's favourite colour or hobby could help a company design more targeted marketing to that child and their family.

##### PLAYTIME AS DATA TRAINING

The information collected from children helps train AI systems. Their voice, emotional responses, and behaviour shape how machines 'understand' people. Play becomes part of a much larger system that influences how future technologies behave.

### Advice for Parents & Educators

#### START WITH A CONVERSATION

Talk to young people. Explain that some toys learn from what they say and do. Help them understand that even friendly technology should have boundaries, and to ask questions about it. Curiosity is healthy, blind trust is not.

#### SET LIMITS ON USE

Turn off Wi-Fi or Bluetooth when the toy is not in use. Check for updates regularly, as they can change privacy or safety settings. Treat connected toys like any smart device; they should be monitored, updated, and switched off when not in use.

#### MODEL DIGITAL AWARENESS

Children learn from adults. If they see you checking privacy settings, reading terms, and talking openly about online safety, they are more likely to do the same. Show them how to question technology in a healthy way.

#### RESEARCH BEFORE YOU BUY

Look for toys that work offline or store data locally. Check for a free or demo version so you can test how it behaves. Read privacy policies to understand what data is collected, where it goes, and whether it's shared with others.

#### REVIEW PRIVACY SETTINGS

Find out where the data is stored and who has access to it. Some companies sell or share data with advertisers. If the toy connects through an app, check what it requests access to and limit those permissions whenever possible.

#### BALANCE AI WITH REAL PLAY

AI toys can be fun and creative, but they are not a replacement for real human interaction. Encourage time away from technology with activities that foster emotional and social development. Use AI toys to support learning, not define it.

#### Meet Our Expert

Clara Hawking is Executive Director of Kompass Education. She advises governments, school trusts, and global organisations on AI governance and safeguarding, helping schools and families understand how technology shapes learning, wellbeing, and the digital future of children.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

X @wake\_up\_weds

f /www.thenationalcollege

ig @wake.up.wednesday

yt @wake.up.weds

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 17.12.2025





# Dear Parents, Guardians and Father Christmas/Santa,

## Has your little elf asked for an e-scooter or e-bike for Christmas?

The following is basic information on where e-bikes and e-scooters can be used within the law.

We want to make sure your Christmas presents end up in a pile like this...



...and not this



	E-Scooter *	E-Bike (pedals)	E-motorbike (no pedals)
What is it?	Any scooter powered by a battery.	A bicycle powered by a 250w max battery with pedals to propel (15.5mph)	A battery powered motorbike, moped or bike with no pedals to propel.
Under 16 in public	No *	14+ only	No
In a public area	No *	Yes, if compliant	Yes if taxed and insured
On private land - with the landowners permission	Yes	Yes	Yes
Can I use it on cycle paths?	No	Yes	No
Can I use it on the pavement?	No *	No	No
Can I use it on the road?	No	Yes	Yes
Is there a safety risk?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is there a fire risk?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Would it be seized?	Yes *	Yes, if not compliant	Yes if not taxed and insured
What can I get instead that is legal for public use?	Commuter or stunt scooter. These can be used in public areas such as parks, skate parks and pump tracks. Always wear safety equipment.	Consider a mountain bike. A great way to commute, offering independence and exercise, use in forests and on pump tracks. Always wear safety equipment and use a bike lock.	Age dependent, if over 14 then look at an e-bike, following our guidance and doing your own research. Head to a local private track for more information
Where can I use the legal scooter or bike?	Search for pump tracks to test your skill levels and look at skills training.	Local councils offer information online for the area and clubs for mountain biking and BMX.	Motorcross Clubs.

\*This does not include rental scheme e-scooters which are insured to be used by riders over 16 with a license. Refer to scheme

### No one wants to seize anyone's presents!



Cheshire Constabulary



## Stay safe and legal



# COMMUNITY NEWS

## HAF

# FREE WINTER HOLIDAY CLUBS

Funded by  Department for Education

CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS  
ACROSS WEST CHESHIRE



Cheshire West & Chester

**HAF**  
Holiday Activities & Food



KEEP UP WITH ALL THE HOLIDAY FUN ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES...

📍 Go\_cheshirewest and EdsentialUK 📱 Cheshire West and Chester Council and EdsentialUK #HAF2025  
If you would like help booking please call 07827 877820 or email HAF@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk



[www.edsential.com/haf](http://www.edsential.com/haf)

**BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL...**  
Please scan the QR code and contact the relevant provider using our interactive online map.



# NEWSLETTER

December 2025

🎄 [Your Christmas Parent Carer Forum News is Here! Click here](#) 🎄

# PARISH INFORMATION

## SCHOOLS MEDIA COMPETITION 2026

The Columbans are looking for students in Britain and Ireland (aged 13-18 inclusive, parental permission required) to submit an original piece of writing or an original image on the theme:

"BECOMING  
A REFUGEE  
IS NEVER A  
CHOICE, BUT  
HOW WE  
RESPOND IS."

(UN Secretary-General António Guterres)

Catholic Social Teaching calls us to 'welcome the stranger'. We invite young people to explore perceptions of people seeking sanctuary, considering practical examples of welcome and solidarity.

PRINT PRIZES  
1<sup>ST</sup> £300  
2<sup>ND</sup> £150 • 3<sup>RD</sup> £100

IMAGE PRIZES  
1<sup>ST</sup> £300  
2<sup>ND</sup> £150 • 3<sup>RD</sup> £100



COLUMBAN  
MISSIONARIES  
BRITAIN

COMPETITION LAUNCH:  
21<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025 - WORLD PEACE DAY  
DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES: 14<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2026  
WINNERS ANNOUNCED: 9<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2026

More details: [www.columbancompetition.com](http://www.columbancompetition.com)



The second is the **Columban Schools Media Competition.**

This year we are inviting entries from artists and writers inspired by the theme "Becoming a refugee is never a choice. But how we respond is."

More information here  
[Click here](#)

# TERM DATES 2025-26

Autumn 2025	Spring 2026	Summer 2026
<b>INSET: Monday 1<sup>st</sup> September</b> Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> September - Friday 24 <sup>th</sup> October	Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> January - Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> February	Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> April <b>BANK HOLIDAY: Mon 4<sup>th</sup> May</b> Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May
<b>HALF-TERM</b> Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> October - Friday 31 <sup>st</sup> October	<b>HALF-TERM</b> Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> February - Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> February	<b>HALF-TERM</b> Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> May - Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> May
Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> November Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> December <b>INSET: Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November</b>	Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> February - Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> April	Monday 1 <sup>st</sup> June - Friday 17 <sup>th</sup> July <b>INSET: Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July</b> - Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> July
<b>CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY</b> Monday 22 <sup>nd</sup> December - Friday 2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2026	<b>EASTER HOLIDAY</b> Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> April - Friday 17 <sup>th</sup> April (includes Easter Bank Holidays)	<b>SUMMER HOLIDAY</b> Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> July - Monday 31 <sup>st</sup> August
<b>Return to School : Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2026</b>		

**Inset Day - Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026**

# TERM DATES 2026-27

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School

## Term Dates 2026-27

### Autumn Term 2026

Inset Day	Tuesday 1st September 2026
School Opens	Wednesday 2nd September 2026
School Closes	Friday 23rd October 2026
<b>Half Term</b>	
School Opens	Monday 2nd November 2026
Inset Day	Friday 27th November 2026
School Closes	Friday 18th December 2026
<b>Christmas Holiday</b> <b>Monday 21st December – Friday 1st January 2027</b>	

### Spring Term 2027

School Opens	Monday 4th January 2027
School Closes	Friday 12th February 2027
<b>Half Term</b>	
School Opens	Monday 22nd February 2027
School Closes	Thursday 25th March 2027
<b>Easter Holiday</b> <b>Friday 26th March (Bank Holiday) – Friday 9th April</b>	

### Summer Term 2027

School Opens	Monday 12th April 2027
<b>Bank Holiday</b>	Monday 3rd May 2027
School Closes	Friday 28th May 2027
<b>Half Term</b>	
School Opens	
School Closes	Monday 7th June 2027
	Friday 16th July 2027
<b>Summer Holiday</b> <b>Monday 19th July – Tuesday 31st August</b>	

**Inset Days: Monday 19th July - Wednesday 21st July**

# CONTACT US

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School, Capenhurst Lane,

Whitby, Ellesmere Port CH65 7AQ

0151 355 2373

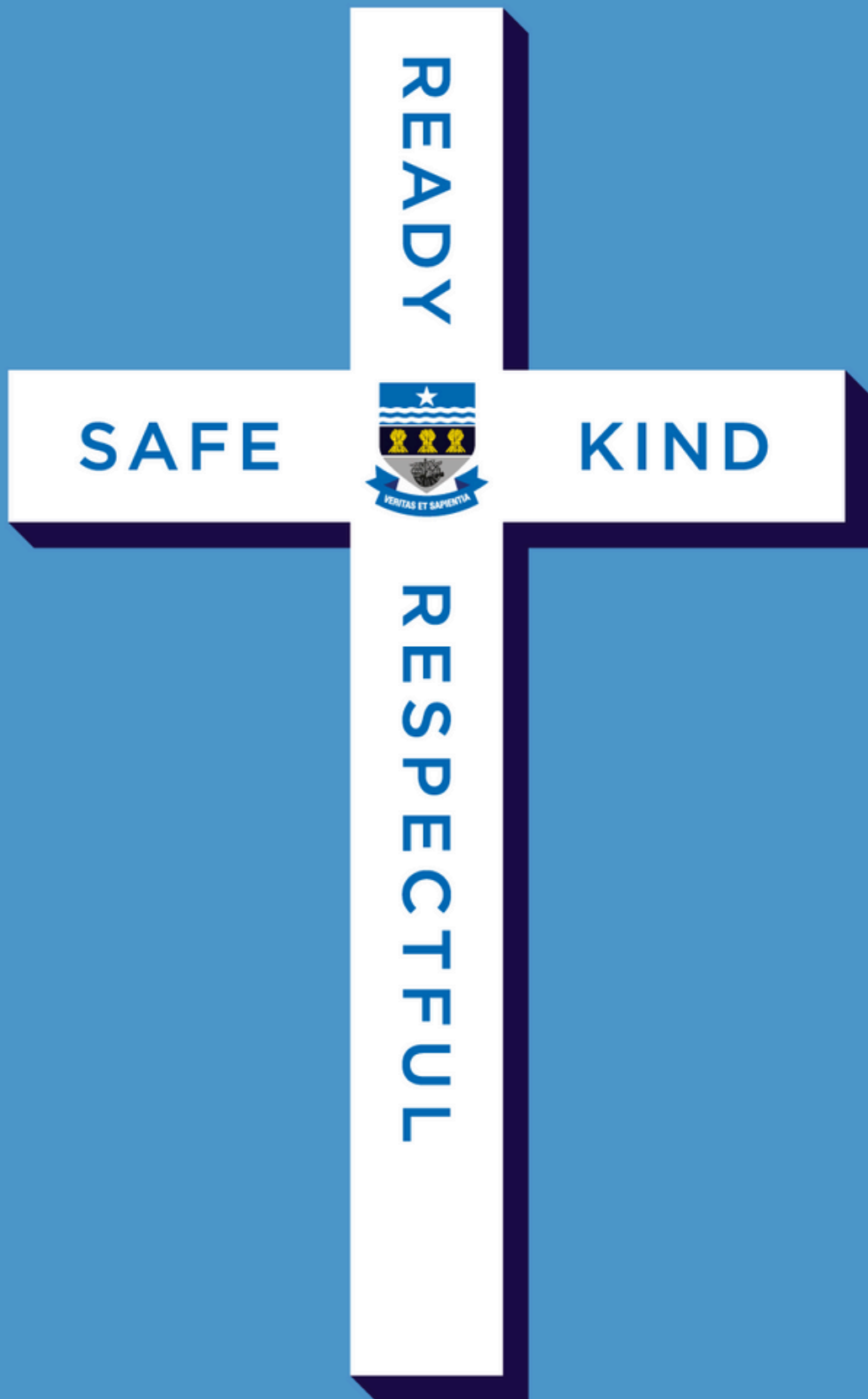
admin@epchs.co.uk

Monday – Friday: 8:00 AM – 3.45PM



**Our Lady Help of Christians  
Catholic Academy Trust**





*"I Have Come So That They May Have Life And Have It To The Full" - John 10:10*