

Date: Friday 25th September 2026

The Valley Newsletter

Important Dates Coming Up...

Week: 21st – 25th September 2026
<u>Monday 28th September</u> Yr10 Childcare trip to Smyths Toy Shop <u>Tuesday 29th September</u> Yr8 Coffee morning DofE practise expedition walk <u>Thursday 1st October</u> KS3 Swimming for identified students
UPCOMING EVENTS
<u>Monday 5th October</u> School Council meeting <u>Tuesday 6th October</u> School Photos <u>Thursday 8th October</u> KS3 Swimming for identified students Yr7 & Yr11 Parents Evening

We have enjoyed another busy and productive week at The Valley School, with students continuing to demonstrate the positive attitudes and strong values that make our school community so special. As the term gathers momentum, it has been fantastic to see students across all year groups engaging fully in their learning, taking pride in their achievements, and supporting one another both in and out of the classroom.

This week has provided many opportunities for students to develop their independence, resilience, and confidence. Whether through academic learning, practical activities, enrichment opportunities, or preparing for life beyond school, students have approached new challenges with determination and enthusiasm. These qualities are central to our ethos and are evident in classrooms across the school each day.

I have also been particularly pleased by the way our students continue to represent the school when welcoming visitors. The warmth, respect, and kindness they show towards others never go unnoticed, and it is always gratifying to hear such positive feedback from families and professionals who spend time in our school. Their comments regularly highlight not only the excellent learning that takes place but also the genuine sense of community that exists here at The Valley School.

As always, thank you to our staff, students, families, and governors for their continued support. I hope you enjoy reading about the many achievements and experiences featured in this week's newsletter.

A visit from Professor Adam Ockleford

We were very fortunate to receive a visit from Professor Adam Ockleford and his colleague Sarah McCarthy this week. Adam is the Professor of Music at the University of Roehampton and founder of the Amber Trust. It is his research into the musical understanding and experience of young people with special needs that has informed the Sounds of Intent qualification which we deliver at The Valley. Adam was with us all morning and experienced a range of class music and small group instrumental lessons led by our fantastic staff from the music service. He was very complimentary about all the sessions he saw, and our students really enjoyed working with him.





Year 7 and Year 11 Parents and Carers Evening

We are looking forward to welcoming our Year 7 and Year 11 parents and carers to our upcoming Parents' Evening on Thursday 8th October, from 4:00pm to 7:00pm.

The evening will take place online via SchoolCloud, giving you the opportunity to speak with your child's teachers and hear about how they are getting on.

On 24th September, all parents and carers will receive a link to SchoolCloud, where you can book your appointments. You will be able to book a maximum of four appointments, and we recommend using one of these to meet with your child's Form Tutor.

If you have any questions or need a little help making your bookings, please don't hesitate to contact the school office. Our team will be very happy to support you.



Year 11s at College

Our Year 11s have made a fantastic start to their college taster sessions. During their weekly sessions they have met some of the college tutors, toured the site and completed various activities including a team building competition. This week, each group was asked to build a tower using just spaghetti and marshmallows. Every student involved worked well, demonstrating their co-operation and ability to work with others in the group. The winning tower was 85cm tall! Congratulations to team 2! Please do ensure your student has a water bottle with them on a Thursday as all students need to have a drink after our walk to and from college. Please also keep an eye on the weather as they will be needing a coat when it rains. We will still be walking whatever the weather!



Year 8 Coffee Morning

Thank you to all parents and carers who shared their feedback.

We are pleased to confirm that the Year 8 Coffee Morning will take place on Tuesday 29th September, 9:30–10:30am.

This is a great opportunity to meet with school staff, build positive relationships and strengthen our partnership in supporting students. An email with more information will be sent out to year 8 parents and carers. We look forward to welcoming you!



WhatsApp Groups: Helping Your Child Stay Safe

Recently, we have had some incidents in school involving WhatsApp groups, which have highlighted the importance of helping children stay safe when using messaging apps.

WhatsApp is a great way for children to stay connected with friends and family. However, group chats can sometimes include people your child does not know well, which may expose them to messages, images or conversations that are upsetting or inappropriate.

Children cannot control what other group members post, and content can appear unexpectedly. Even within friendship groups, children may experience pressure to reply quickly, feel left out, or encounter unkind behaviour.

Children with SEND may need extra support to understand the meaning behind messages, recognise unsafe behaviour, or know what to do when something makes them feel uncomfortable. It is also important to remember that messages, photos and videos shared in a group can be copied and shared more widely.

A simple way to help keep your child safe is to regularly check their group memberships and privacy settings together. Talk openly about who they are chatting with and encourage them to avoid groups that include people they do not know or trust.

Please remind your child that if they ever receive a message that worries, upsets or confuses them, they should stop responding and speak to a trusted adult. Let them know that they will never be in trouble for asking for help.

For further information, visit the [NSPCC's advice on WhatsApp and other chat apps.](#)

School Photos



Mobile Phone Use

At The Valley School, we are incredibly proud of the maturity, responsibility and good judgement consistently demonstrated by our students. Historically, mobile phone use has not presented any significant issues within the school. Students have used their devices sensibly and have responded positively to the expectations set by staff. However, in line with statutory guidance, we must introduce revised arrangements for student mobile phones from **1st October 2026**.

Statutory Guidance

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 requires state-funded schools to have regard to this guidance when exercising their functions. This effectively gives the guidance legal force.

“All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default; anything other than this should be by exception only. Schools should develop a mobile phone policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality to mobile phones (for example, the ability to send and/or receive notifications or messages via mobile phone networks or the ability to record audio and/or video) throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime.”



New Procedure

Students who bring a mobile phone to school will be required to hand it to their Form Tutor during morning registration.

Phones will be placed in individually named pouches and securely stored in a locked location throughout the school day. They will be returned to students at the end of the school day before students leave the site and before taxis depart.

Students who choose not to bring a mobile phone to school will not be affected by this procedure.

Contacting Your Child During the Day

Should a parent or carer need to contact their child urgently during the school day, the School Office will be happy to assist. Likewise, if a student needs to contact home, appropriate arrangements can be made through the School Office.

Maroon Class's visit to the Museum

Maroon Class had a fantastic visit to the museum, where they explored the fascinating Blood and Bone exhibition. The students enjoyed travelling through breathing tunnels and sensory caves designed to mimic internal organs, blood cells and bone structures, giving them an exciting and interactive way to learn about the human body. They had lots of fun exploring the exhibition and, afterwards, enjoyed exploring the rest of the museum.



Researching Rationing

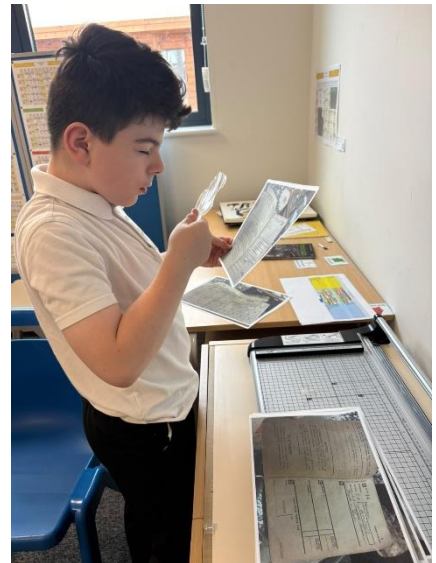
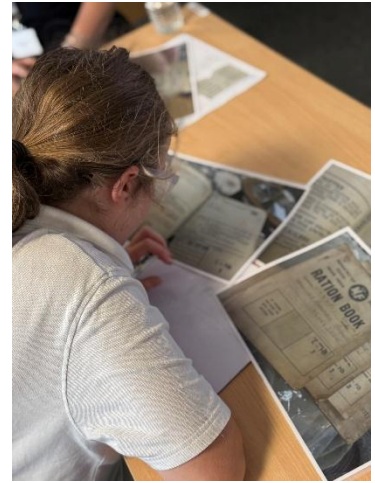
During our work to find out more about World War 2, Year 9 have been looking at primary and secondary sources of information.

We were incredibly lucky to have some photos of a primary source of information- Bea's Grandfather's ration book, and those of the whole family!

Peach Class looked carefully at the images to find out something new about rationing during the war. They found that people had to choose one shop and only go there for specific items and saw a rare fuel ration book.

Peach Class were shocked to discover that one of the food ration books was dated 1954, wasn't the war long over by then? Further research told us that this must have been one of the last ration books issued as rationing ended in July 1954.

It made us all think about how long the effects of war lasted for people in the UK. Thanks to Bea's family for sharing this important resource!



Services for Young People

This week, Services for Young People hosted a pop-up stand in during lunch time.

Students enjoyed finding out more about the services available to them and encouraging their peers to come along and find out more too. Some of our students already access Services for

Young People, so it was a great opportunity for them to share their experiences and show their friends how the services can support them.

It was fantastic to see so many students getting involved, asking questions and supporting one another!

Here is more information for parents. Some students would have taken leaflets home too:

At Services for Young People (SfYP) we welcome young people aged 11-17, up to 25 for care leavers and those with SEND in Hertfordshire, to join our youth work projects. We are committed to giving young people high-quality opportunities to learn life skills and excel in their personal and social development. We aim to address issues at the earliest opportunity to give young people the best chance to succeed, have a voice in their community, reach their potential, and make a successful transition into adulthood.

We are currently particularly keen to hear from young people with SEND who may benefit from joining our independent living skills project, which supports the development of practical life skills and independence, and our SEND Youth Council, which gives young people the opportunity to have their voices heard and influence decisions affecting services and their local communities. If you feel your young person would benefit from attending a youth work project, please complete the referral form on our [website here](#).

For further information or inquiries, please see the SfYP website:

www.servicesforyoungpeople.org, email us: sfyp.stevenage@hertfordshire.gov.uk, or phone us: 01438 843340. We look forward to welcoming your young person soon!

After-School Clubs

Parents will need to collect students at 4.15pm from reception. **A separate email was sent out last week confirming clubs on offer and how to apply.**

The clubs currently on offer are as follows:

Tuesday

Multi-Sports Club KS4 (max. 12)

Performing Arts Club (max. 30)

Wednesday

Multi-Sports Club KS3 (max. 12)

Art Club

On a Thursday after school we will also be offering an Art Club until 4.15pm. Please sign up via Arbor as per other after school clubs.



The list of students expected to attend clubs on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays will normally be sent as a separate email to this newsletter. If your child is on this list, then it means that we have received your permission and that arrangements regarding transport home for your child have been agreed with you. If this is not the case, you need to contact admin@thevalley.herts.sch.uk so we can address any anomalies well before the evening.

Students will not be able to join a club after this list has been published until the following week as organising transport and supervision is too complex to do well with very short notice.

Thank you for your support with this.