

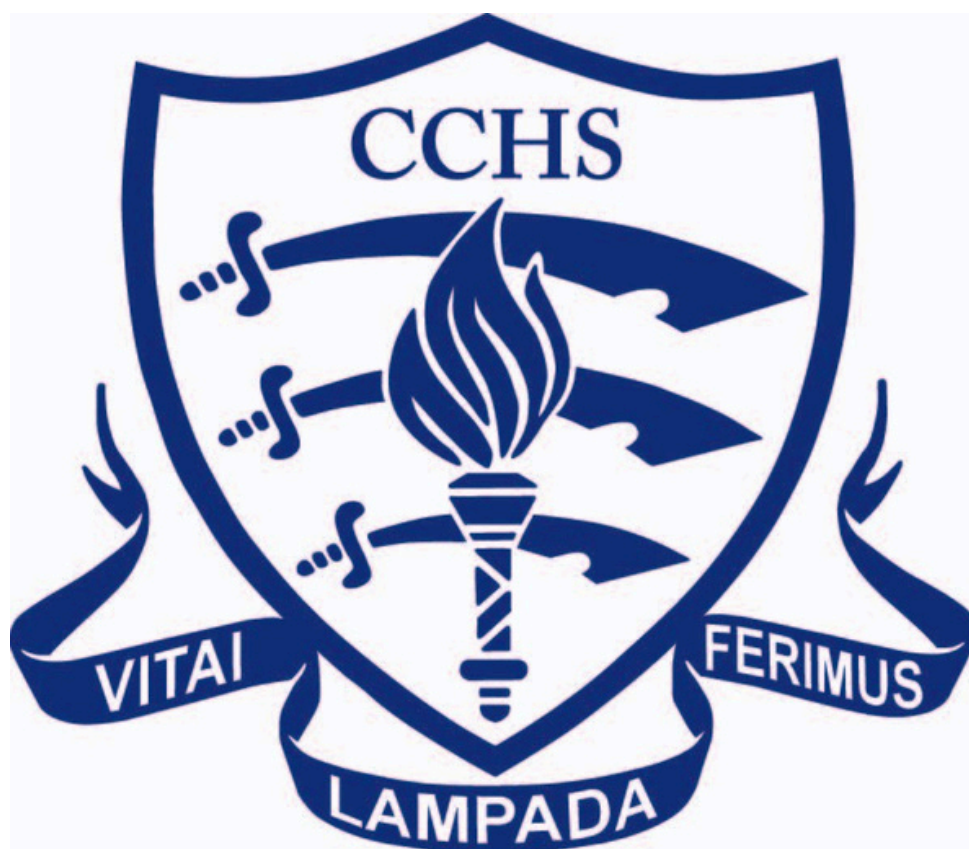


Chelmsford
County High School
for Girls

ALUMNAE

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER
2026



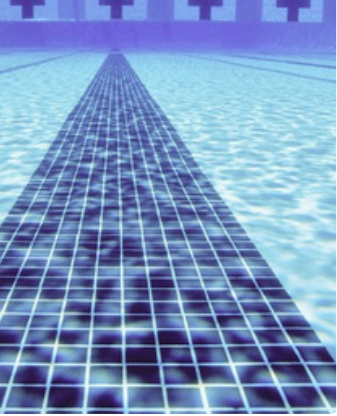


Editor's Welcome

On behalf of everyone at CCHS we would like to welcome all our Alumnae readers to the 2026 Alumnae Newsletter. Everyone at CCHS values the strong links between the school and its former students and this newsletter is just one of the ways in which we endeavour to keep in touch and share news of events, changes and continuities in the school. In this edition we pay particular tribute to the late Mrs Gill Hickman who will be well and fondly remembered by so many of our readers; her remarkable contribution to the school over nearly 40 years is something that will only very rarely be matched.

We have endeavoured in the following pages to offer articles on a variety of topics and we hope that each you will find something of interest. We are always keen to receive contributions from our readers, either in the form of a written note or article or perhaps as a donation of archive material which is being sifted out in consequence of a house move or a project of decluttering. Please also be reminded that we are always keen to facilitate alumnae reunions here in school; if you would like to get together with old friends to celebrate an anniversary of your joining or leaving CCHS we would be very happy to welcome you here for tours and refreshments. To discuss reunions, newsletter contributions or anything else related to your time at CCHS please do contact alumnae@cchs.co.uk and we will be pleased to help you.

We send good wishes from all at CCHS to all our former students and hope that you enjoy this summer's Alumnae Newsletter.



Headteacher's Welcome

2026 marks two important anniversaries for CCHS. Firstly, the 120th anniversary of the first girls to be taught at the school; and so, the beginning of a girls' education community in Chelmsford. 76 girls were welcomed to the school in 1906, with the formal opening of the school taking place in 1907. We now have 1,273 students in the school.

Secondly, this year marks the 110th anniversary of the first CCHS alumna to complete her university studies: Winifred Picking, who finished her natural sciences studies at Girton College, Cambridge, in 1916. I would like to focus on Winifred Picking here because I think her life tells us much about the nature of the school and the qualities of the students who have graced its classrooms over the decades.

Winifred was the eldest daughter of Emily and Harry Picking, who both led a village school. Winifred's time at CCHS was distinguished by academic success and being appointed school captain, all of which led her to Cambridge. Her name appears several times on two of the Honour Boards we still have up in the original school building; the Vernon-Harcourt Building.

After Cambridge, Winifred dedicated her professional life to public service. She was a city alderman, chair of the former Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Education Committee and served on the United Cambridge Hospitals Committee for 20 years. Winifred was a county councillor between 1937 and 1974, and served as a governor at Addenbrookes Hospital when the board was formed in 1948. Indeed, she became the hospital board chair in 1966, after a ten-year term as vice-chair. Additionally, she was the national chair of the British and Foreign School Society – now known as the Educational Opportunity Foundation. And, she also had a rich family life, with her husband and three daughters. Her public service in Cambridgeshire was rightly recognised with the award of a CBE in 1974. What a wonderful life; full of achievement, service and recognition.

To remember and honour Winifred Picking, the original school hall in our Vernon-Harcourt building has now been named, 'Picking Hall'.



At the start of this academic year, I received a letter from another former student, who attended the school from 1953 to 1960 – Jackie Rupp. It is a hand-written letter, full of warmth, sharing some reflections on her time at the school. Jackie wrote: "I have much to be grateful for, being at the High School." She mentioned the subjects she liked at CCHS, and noted her love of music was sparked by her time at the school. Jackie wrote about enjoying the French Exchange, noting the girl she stayed with on that exchange would eventually be bridesmaid at her wedding. Jackie went on to be a teacher herself.

Towards the end of her letter, Jackie wrote that she always wanted to help the school with a contribution: "That day has come," she wrote, "as I have sold my little house in France and have some spare cash. I have pleasure in enclosing a cheque for £500." Apart from the obvious generosity here, I was struck by the profound impact and lasting affection that animated Jackie's letter.

As always, we are immensely grateful to the CCHS Alumnae for all the support we receive. Most recently, a new alumnae mentoring initiative has started, thanks in large part to Emma Gaunlett. This project is enabling current Sixth Form students to meet (online) with members of the alumnae, benefitting from advice and guidance about university, professional life, etc. This is a testament to the generational links which are such a compelling feature of the role the CCHS Alumnae plays in the life of the school community.

Very best wishes to the CCHS Alumnae.

Mr Lawlor

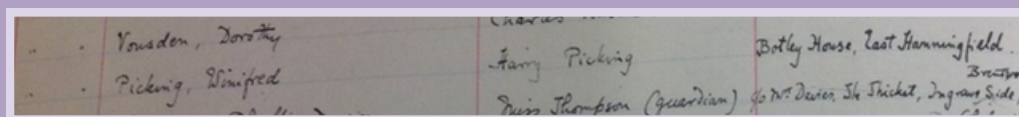


Winifred Picking in the records at CCHS

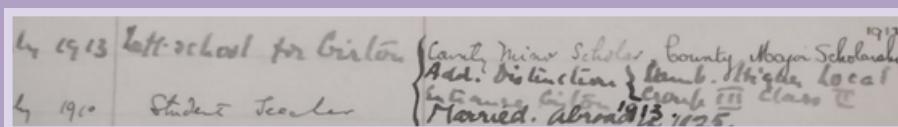
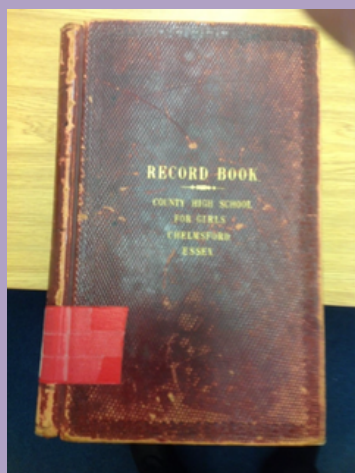
In his introduction Mr Lawlor noted that this year we are marking 110 years since Winifred Picking completed her education at Girton College Cambridge; the first CCHS student to complete a university education.

Winifred Picking, daughter of Harry Picking of Botley House, East Hanningfield studied at CCHS from 1907 to 1913, winning a County Scholarship to study at Girton College Cambridge where she achieved a result equivalent to a first class degree (if not at that time the full degree itself) and then worked as a research student at Girton.

She is noted in the first CCHS Record Book from 1907 as pupil number 60 on the 1907 roll and was 12 years and three months old when she joined the school. It is also noted that she had previously been a pupil at the Chelmsford Pupil Teacher Centre – a forerunner to CCHS from which 72 pupils transferred to make up the core of the pupil body when the school opened its doors in May 1907.



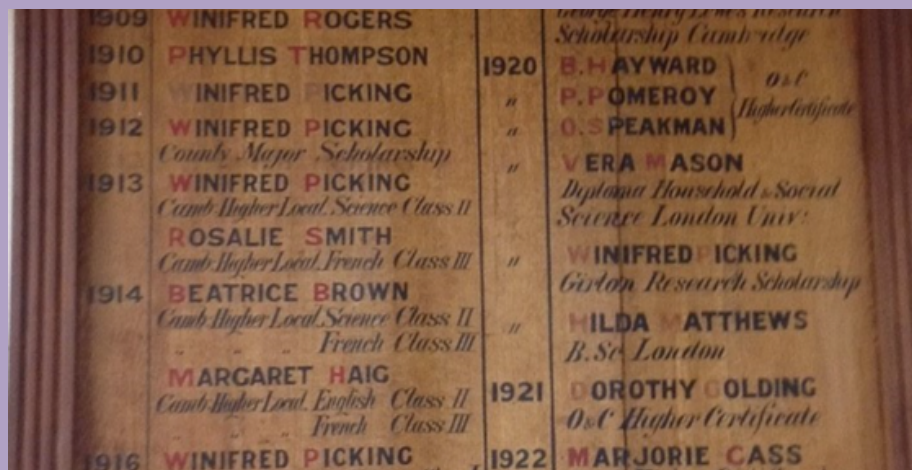
Entries concerning Winifred Picking in the school Record Book.



Her brother, Harry Picking was killed whilst serving with the Royal Fusiliers in the Battle of the Somme in July 1916 and is remembered on the Thiepval memorial to the missing in France, on the East Hanningfield war memorial and on his father's gravestone in East Hanningfield churchyard.



CCHS Academic Honours Board, 1907 to 1924.



Winifred Picking on the first school honours board.

Mrs Gill Hickman

Many of our readers will have their own memories of Mrs Hickman. As one of the longest serving staff in the history of CCHS Mrs Hickman taught many hundreds of pupils. Indeed at her retirement in 2004 she had taught here for nearly 40% of the school's life and the announcement of her death in the summer of 2025 generated many heartfelt posts on the various Facebook pages as her work as a teacher and also as a pillar of the local community was celebrated by so many who had been taught by her or had known her.

For contributions to the following tribute we are grateful to Mrs Gina Harvey and Mrs Moira Walker who worked with Gill at CCHS for many years and also did much to support her in her later years.

Gill did not speak much to her colleagues about her early life. She was born on the 6th September 1945 and it is thought that she was born and raised in Sheffield and she certainly studied Geography at Sheffield University. She was a keen hockey player and after her move to Essex she was a regular player for the County Team.

Gill came to CCHS in September 1967 and stayed until her retirement in the summer of 2004. She taught Geography throughout all those years and later in her career was Head of Geography, Head of Humanities and Senior Teacher. She was also a key member of the Sixth Form tutor team. In these roles she taught many thousands of students, influenced the education of thousands more and supported many hundreds in their sixth form studies and in their university applications. She was generous with her time in supporting students and her delight in being in the classroom was always clear. Few members of the teaching profession are still energetic innovators in their final year of teaching but Gill kept new ideas flowing right up until her retirement and indeed afterwards when she returned to school to support during a colleague's maternity leave.

Gill's teaching was always innovative and engaging and she responded with enthusiasm to the changing expectations of 'good teaching' which she experienced over her career. Whilst her knowledge of Geography was excellent and her students appreciated that knowledge she was not a teacher who was confined to the 'chalk and talk' methods which would have been common currency when she trained. She made excellent use of props such as chocolate oranges as well as the maps so beloved of geographers and she was always keen to develop cross-curricular initiatives, particularly with the other humanities subjects. Her enjoyment of fieldwork was always obvious and she led a huge number of trips over the years, most regularly to Snowdonia and North Yorkshire but also to more local destinations such as Little Waltham and of course the former Chelmsford Gasworks site in Wharf Road. Indeed it is testament both to Gill's long service and the sclerotic nature of local planning that 'Chelmer Waterside Redevelopment' was able to be a Year 9 case study for nearly twenty years and that the site has still not been fully redeveloped 22 years after her retirement. Gill's trips were always impeccably organised and enjoyed by both staff and students and the influence of these trips and her teaching on so many students and their careers is both immeasurable and continuing.

As a manager Gill was organised, efficient and a wise manager of personalities, giving her staff 'long reins and constant encouragement'. She was a warm and good humoured colleague whose own modesty helped her to encourage others to use their talents freely but she was always supportive if things did not go entirely to plan. Her standards were high and her departmental colleagues were always clear about the frameworks within which they operated. Her commitment, however, was always to Geography and to the enhancement of her pupils' learning and her tolerance for the snake oil and superficial initiatives peddled by ambitious and unscrupulous 'experts' was refreshingly low; she managed to blend high ideals and ambitions with good natured cynicism about the obvious nonsenses, fads and fashions which bedevil the life of every teacher whether they know it or not.

Beyond CCHS Gill's main interests were always hockey, music and the environment. She was a playing member of Chelmsford Hockey Club for over 45 years and a regular goalkeeper in a variety of teams. She was also a leading figure in the club, serving as vice-president for many years. She was also a long-serving secretary of Chelmsford Sports Club and did much in this role to help develop the facilities at Chelmer Park which are used by the Hockey and Cricket Clubs. Gill was a keen singer and a stalwart member of 'Camerata', an amateur chamber choir based in Chelmsford.

In retirement she was also a regular volunteer at the Essex Wildlife Trust reserve at Hanningfield, working each week on maintenance tasks around the reservoir. At home too her concern for the environment and the avoidance of waste was important and she was devoted to growing her own produce in her garden.

Gill died on the 29th July 2025. Life had become more challenging for her after the death of her husband Bob during the pandemic and her last years were spent in the Greenwood Court Care Home. As Gill did not have close family she was massively supported in her final years by her former colleagues Gina Harvey and Moira Walker and Gina writes that 'the only good outcome from Gill's dementia was witnessing the kindness and support received from the people we met over the last five years. Social workers, medical staff and complete strangers gave their best to improve her quality of life and enabled her to continue to help in the garden at the care home. Her funeral in September 2025 was attended by many who had known and admired her.

In tribute to Gill's outstanding commitment to this school over so many years it was decided that the school hall would be renamed the 'Hickman Hall'. A plaque to commemorate her life and service was unveiled at a memorial event held in the school in October 2025 and the new name for the school hall will help to preserve the memory of one of the school's most outstanding servants.



The CCHS staff in 2002. Mrs Hickman is third from right in the third row.



The CCHS Geography team in the 1990s –
Moira Walker, Gill Hickman, Gina Harvey
and Anne Lloyd



The new commemorative plaque in the
'Hickman Hall'.



A school social event in the 1990s. We don't know the names of the two ladies on the left but then we have Liz Roe (partly obscured), Kay Ingle, Gill Hickman and Gina Harvey. The gentleman on the right is noted as Mr Bell, a school governor.



Gill Hickman and Anne
Molyneux at a school sports
day at Melbourne Park – mid
1990s.

A Celebration of Mrs Hickman

Mrs Jo Cross, Current Deputy Head and former student.

It's hard to capture the essence of someone as remarkable as Mrs Hickman in just a few words, but if you ask anyone who knew her, student, colleague, or friend, they'll tell you the same thing: she was an inspiration.

Mrs Hickman was the heart of our Geography department, and many would say it was the best Geography department we could have asked for. That was thanks in no small part to the dynamic trio of Mrs Hickman, Mrs Walker and Mrs Harvey, whose superb leadership and camaraderie made it a place students wanted to be. It's no coincidence that so many chose to continue Geography at A Level, Mrs Hickman made it compelling.

Her teaching was legendary. She had that rare ability to command a room with quiet authority, even while facing the board. She could hear whispered comments behind her and respond without turning around, an art form in itself.

Her knowledge was vast, her lessons engaging, and her care for her students remarkable. One student still remembers her saying, "Girls, I know it's Friday afternoon, but we do have a lot of work to get through", a phrase that lives on today.

Her commitment to her students was unwavering. Even in the run-up to retirement, she was frequently found with Mrs Harvey, discussing ways to improve the provision of Geography. Her dedication never faltered, she remained professional at all times. In fact, even decades after she retired she continued to support the Oxbridge interviews for Geography and she could still be found in a river in North Wales supporting the annual Geography field trip.

There's one story that perfectly captures her professionalism: when a colleague misread their timetable and left for the day, Gill quietly stepped in and taught their lesson without fuss or fanfare and without anyone officially knowing. This was just another example of her selfless nature and her commitment to her colleagues.

Beyond the classroom, Gill gave so much of herself. Her contributions to the staff pantomime were unforgettable, and her commitment to hockey at CCHS was extraordinary. She gave countless hours to school teams, organising both serious and fun matches to include everyone, she supported sportswomen with unwavering enthusiasm.

She even played hockey herself well into her 60s, famously as a goalkeeper with the most retro kit ever seen. A true legend of a sportswoman.

I have particularly fond memories of a sunny day, many years ago, when, alongside my mum, we spent a day working on the conservation area. Once again, Gill went above and beyond the classroom for her students. It was a superb project, Bill Oddie even came to witness the proud installation of our owl boxes. A great project not only for the students but also for the local community, and it perfectly reflected her values and her love of learning beyond the textbook.

Her volunteering extended far beyond school, cricket clubs, hockey clubs, and Hanningfield Reservoir, places she clearly loved. She was often found serving teas at Chelmer Park for many local sporting events.

She was joyful, kind, and knowledgeable, and she taught generations all with the same warmth and encouragement.

Our Alumnae have shared many fond memories. Being sandblasted at Redcar Sands on a field trip. Her beautiful singing voice, especially her rendition of Little Donkey with staff at school. The time she and Mrs Walker gave a tub of sun cream to one of my cohort as a birthday present in North Yorkshire, because she always got sunburned on trips.

She was the master of brilliantly clever, deadpan one-liners. We remember her honesty, her kindness, her easygoing nature, and her huge commitment to students and staff alike.

Many remember with fondness the time Mrs Walker hurt her foot and Mrs Hickman wore a "Mrs Walker's Gopher" sign around her neck. That was Mrs Hickman's world, full of laughter, care, and community.

She was a brilliant form tutor, a favourite teacher, and a huge inspiration. Many went on to read Geography at university because of her. She made landscapes fascinating, weather enthralling and learning joyful.

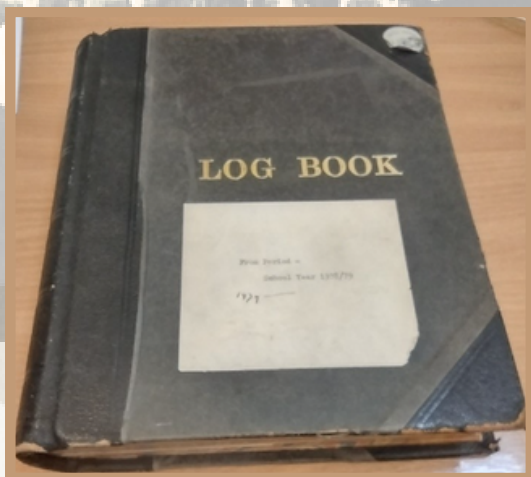
Mrs Hickman was, quite simply, an amazing teacher and an incredible individual. She will be remembered with love, admiration, and gratitude by all who had the privilege to know her.



Mrs Lowe, Mrs Woolley, Mrs Hickman and Mrs Roe appeared as special guests in the first staff pantomime after their retirement.

School Archives

Over the past 119 years CCHS has amassed a very great deal of archive material. This ranges from photographs, items of uniform and school magazines to records of school finances, of school productions and of moments when the school made the local or national news. Much excellent work was done in reviewing and organising this material by Mrs Maureen Ball during her time as Assistant Librarian and her notes on photographs are invaluable to any current user of the archives. However, there is not yet a complete catalogue of everything we hold and this means that a few hours burrowing can often be rewarded with the discovery of items or treasures whose existence has long been forgotten.



One such discovery made recently was of the school logbook for the years from September 1978 to August 2002. The keeping of such a record was formerly an obligation of every headteacher. It is not known whether Mrs Curtis' decision to stop the daily record in 2002 was a consequence of this rule changing or down to another reason. However, a swift look through the record of 24 years of relatively recent school history provides some real gems. Some these are records of formal moments, such as when the school was handed from one head to another or notes of particular student successes, productions, assemblies, concerts and so on. Others are more particular such as the record of 'the exclusion of two 5th Year Girls' in June 1988 for 'disruptive behaviour' or the resignations and appointments of staff. For example in October 1993 we have recorded the appointment of the famous Mr Alex Zambellas and in March 1995 a note about that the whole school photograph was abandoned owing to a snowstorm. We append a few more nuggets of interest from the log book below and will no doubt be revisiting it for future Alumnae Newsletters and posts on social media.

English interview for Fred Tenn contract to replace Mrs Frances Harris who has been promoted to the post of 2nd English department at Southend High School for Girls from 18 January 1994. Mr Alex Zambellas from Epsom School appointed.

Whole school photograph abandoned because of snow storm 3.4.95 Staff Development Committee meeting

2.00pm Commemorative Quiz Night.
7.30pm Interact Quiz Night.
The school celebrated its 90th birthday.
8.15am Senior Prefects took a special birthday assembly; Year 11 sang Steve Under's "Happy Birthday"; inspection and judging of decorated cakes until 9.45 am.
2.35pm Lunch in the Hall for staff, governors, pupil representatives and guests from Keenes and Southend House.
3.30pm Pupils returned to form to receive special 90th birthday mugs. School decorated with balloons.
4.30pm Tests for Year 9.
5.45pm Exhibition meeting to discuss aspects of the calendar.
Interviews for post of English Teacher. Mrs Titiya Roy appointed.
8.45pm IT meeting. 5.00pm Governors' meeting.

Record of the school's 90th birthday in 1997.

73 Academic Year 1990-91
20th July As headteacher from September to 1990, I arrived to take over responsibility today. (Signed) Bernice McCabe
23rd September In service training day. Time spent in departments in morning, followed by staff lunch in staff canteen room. Staffroom meeting in library 2.00pm-3.00pm.
26th September Visit of Mr Maurice Fudge, Principal of Chelmsford Adult Education Centre.
28th September Visit of Mr Bob Wood, County Inspector. We discussed among other things, the further particulars for the post of Deputy Headteacher, to be advertised on 14th September following the resignation of Mrs Louise Walsh, effective from 31st December 1990.
(Visited Mr Tuckwell at KEGS.
Mr Barker (Governor), Chairman of the Governors' Resolved
SAB committee, came in to discuss the appointment
17th September

1990 - the first days of Mrs McCabe's headship.

See fuller details in the school magazine for 1990-91
Two 5th year girls were excluded from 17.6.1988 for disruptive behaviour.

last day of term.
Pupils were congratulated in final assembly for a number of achievements:
An Archimedes 5000 computer (£1,600) has been delivered to the school following a successful collection of Tesco vouchers, organised by Mrs Harris.
At the National Festival of Music for Youth this July The Brown Trio won the Outstanding Performance

July 1992 – purchase of an Archimedes 5000 computer.



Autumn 1999 – CCHS as Sunday Times State School of the Year.

315
congratulated and thanked for all their hard work
Mrs Curtis has agreed to take over in the office from 26th August and the current Headmistress will therefore hand over the school, though technically retaining responsibility until 31st August 1997. She wished success and happiness in the future for staff, pupils and governors of Chelmsford County High School.
Fenite McCabe
August 1997. As headteacher from 1st September 1997, I arrived to take over that responsibility today.
Nicky Curtis.

August 1997 – the 'transfer of power' from Mrs McCabe to Mrs Curtis.

CCHS and Belgian Refugees – An Update

In the 2020 Alumnae Newsletter we included a brief article on the three sisters who studied at CHS between 1915 and 1919 when they were forced to flee Belgium owing to the war.

From the archives – C(C)HS & Belgian Refugees

Whilst working in the school archives for an item on CCHS and the First World War which appeared in the 2018 newsletter, your correspondent came across information about a family of Belgian refugees who were welcomed into the CCHS community in 1915 and who remained in touch with Miss Bancroft for years after their enforced sojourn in Chelmsford.

Dora Doehaerd, the eldest of the three sisters who studied at CCHS is recorded on the scholarship board which is still on display in the school – her place at St Hugh's College in Oxford was clearly a considerable success both for her and for the school.



The Doehaerd sisters came to Chelmsford in 1915. Their father, Emile Doehaerd, was a famous cellist and it is recorded that at the opening of the new school Hall (the current Gym) M. Doehaerd 'gave an hour of exquisite pleasure by a cello recital'. It appears that his daughters Dora, Cecile and Marie-Louise were first educated by the nuns at New Hall before transferring to CHS in 1915 and 1916. The family returned to Belgium in the spring of 1919.



Miss Bancroft
Headmistress from 1911 to 1935

The strong relationships they made with CHS are indicated by the frequent references to them in Miss Bancroft's contributions to successive school magazines. For example Miss Bancroft reported Dora's letter to her, describing 'days of tumultuous cheering, mad enthusiasm and overflowing happiness' in Brussels after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in July 1919. Other letters recorded their reminiscences of things such as CHS Christmas parties 'with excited CHS juniors, Father Christmas, the jellies and the cakes'.

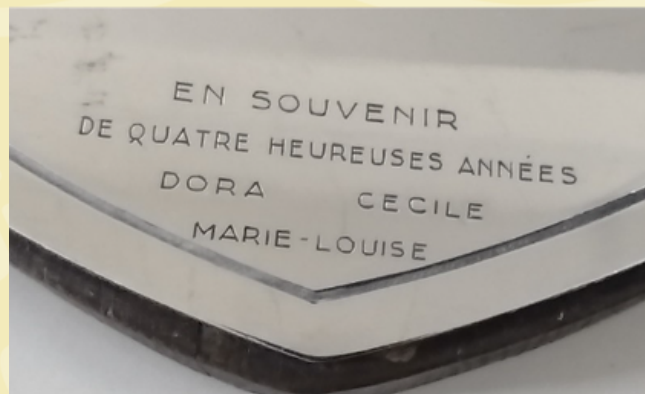
It is also recorded that in 1928, on the occasion of the school's 21st birthday, the Doehaerd sisters gave the school a silver shield inscribed with their names and 'En souvenir de quatre heureuses années' to be presented for House competitions in 'Instrumental Music, Speech and Song'. At the time of writing the whereabouts of this shield are sadly unknown but we remain hopeful of rediscovering it. If any reader remembers the shield or knows of its whereabouts the school would obviously be very glad to hear from them.

In this article we noted that:

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At that stage all that was known of the silver shield beyond the above was that 'The First House Competitions in Speech and Music were inaugurated on 21st February 1928, the results published in the magazine – the prize was the award of the Silver Shield donated by the Doehaerd sisters' and in a footnote to some material on the Doehaerds, the information that Mrs Curtis (then the headteacher) had found the shield sometime in the summer of 2001. However we are now pleased to announce that the shield has been found in the depths of a storeroom in the school's Music Department. Congratulations to Katherine in Year 12, one of our Music Prefects, for finding it whilst endeavouring to sort through piles of old scores and the musical detritus of years. The shield was last awarded in 1968 and then presumably stored until discovered in 2001. We assume that the shield was then passed by Mrs Curtis to the Music Department but 'lost' in the handover between Mr Cross and his successor and then uncereemoniously dumped in a dark corner when the old Music Room was cleared into the new Music Building in 2007.

We are really glad to have found this significant piece of school history and are delighted to be able to award it once again to the overall winners of our biannual House Music Competition. Although it has sustained some minor damage over the years, after a good polish, the shield is looking pretty good after its 25 year hibernation and nearly 60 years out of use. It serves as a reminder of the musical history of CCHS over the past nearly 100 years, the welcome the school was able to offer to the Doehaerd sisters in 1915 and their great gratitude for this welcome.



The inscription on the shield. The marks on the upper left are minor scratches which will not easily polish out.



An Interview with...

Mrs Chumbley

Our Alumnae Prefects recently caught up with Mrs Chumbley to ask her about CCHS and life after school.

How many years did you teach at CCHS for?

I was fortunate enough to spend 23 years at CCHS. I arrived as a part-time Mathematics teacher and was lucky enough, shortly afterwards, to become a full-time member of the Pastoral team.

What are your favourite memories of the school?

So many fantastic memories from trips abroad to fun in the classroom. I thoroughly enjoyed participating in numerous CCHS ski trips with marvellous colleagues and eager students- initially novice skiers. The camaraderie among the Pastoral team will always remain with me. Students were unaware that we rehearsed daily in order to pull off a slick Year Leader staff karaoke performance- such fun! Lastly, which other school would see a Mathematics teacher pounding along the corridor in a policeman's helmet brandishing a metre ruler; the Misconception Police remains my fond invention.

What's one thing you learned at CCHS that has stuck with you?

All members of the CCHS community carry their own load- everyone needs a listening ear and need to focus on their strengths not that of others.

How do you plan to spend retirement?

I am currently spending weekday mornings taking classes in Zumba, yoga, Pilates, and Aqua aerobics which is fun. I am looking forward to an extended holiday in Queensland, Australia visiting family for the UK Winter.

If you could give advice to your younger self when you first started teaching, what would you say?

Just realise early on "You can't do it all" and then embrace the best career imaginable.

Leaders of Tomorrow

Many of our readers will be aware that over the years CCHS has made a considerable priority of work both to increase the number of disadvantaged students in the school and to support them once they are on roll. For students who fall into a number of categories, but predominantly those who are, or have recently been in receipt of free school meals the school makes provision for support before and during the application process. There are also certain provisions made in the offer of places to support those from disadvantaged backgrounds to study here.

As part of this work a team of students ably led by two of our Senior Prefects visits each of our ten local partner primary schools for a roadshow to speak to students and their parents about life at CCHS and to dispel any misconceptions that they might have about a girls' grammar school. This year the team were able to speak to 306 primary pupils across the ten schools. We also invite these primary schools to send a small group of girls to each of our Enrichment Days; this gives us up to 60 visitors on each Enrichment Day who much enjoy working on Languages, Science and the Creative Arts. Both the roadshows, the Enrichment Days and the other work done to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds has done much to broaden awareness of CCHS in our local community and we have been most encouraged by the rise in the number of students from these backgrounds who have chosen to sit the entrance test. Readers will also be interested to know that the very nature of the test itself has, in the recent past, also been radically changed so as to reduce the potential influence of tutoring and to help make the school accessible to all. We are pleased to be partners with Reading School and to share in the pioneering work of their Future Stories Community Enterprise and are also glad to see more schools expressing interest in moving away from some elements of the traditional eleven plus test.

We have recently begun further to develop our work with those who come into the school noted as 'disadvantaged'. Ever since the introduction of the 'pupil premium' system for supporting such students, we have been really careful to target spending so as to achieve the biggest gains. This work is now being developed with a specific programme designed to identify, at an early stage, any challenges which students experience and to build a continuing network of support for them as they progress through the school.

We have no doubt that our readers will be interested in this update on the way that CCHS continues to take seriously its responsibility to support the disadvantaged and to promote social mobility. Our commitment to this work is always important and speaks especially strongly to a political climate in which government support for grammar schools remains muted at best.



Primary Enrichment – Music



Primary Enrichment – Science



Primary School Visit.

In addition to the normal round of high quality music and drama which we see each year at CCHS we were delighted to welcome to the school stage a student led production. A Night at the Musicals involved over 100 students on stage and a live band composed entirely of students. Together they performed two hours of items from well known musicals under the direction of three Year 12 students. Ava, Katherine and Ella organised every aspect of the show including choreography, costumes, musical arrangements and much more. All profits from the event were donated to the Belinda Starling Memorial Foundation, a local charity which supports local young people in developing their theatrical, musical or literary ambitions. We were delighted that Belinda's parents and staff from the Essex Community Foundation were able to join us for the performance and even more delighted that the show raised nearly £3000 for such a good cause, as well as giving so many students the opportunity to showcase their talents on stage or in the band.



Night at the Musicals
March 2026

CCHS House Events

House Events.

Whenever former students return to the school one of the things which they remember most fondly are the House Events and the mixture of serious competition and licensed absurdity which makes them so memorable. We are sure that readers will be delighted to know that the house competitions continue to be bravely fought, now with six houses all the way through the school. The current events each calendar year are as follows

Spring Term	Summer Term	Autumn Term
Clothes Recycling	Cakes	Indoor Athletics
Debating	Clothes Recycling	Football
Pancakes	Benchball	Karaoke
Swimming	Tennis	Decorated Classrooms
Hockey and Netball	Cricket	
Basketball	Sports Day	
Badminton	Rounders	
	Music in 'even' years.	
	Drama in 'odd' years.	

Some of these events such as badminton involve relatively few students over a number of lunchtime sessions but others are major events which run over a number of lunchtimes and involve very substantial numbers of competitors. Others in turn (decorated classrooms, sports day and Music/Drama) involve the whole school over an intense day or part day or a whole day. We are grateful to the PE department and particularly to Mr May and Mrs Cullum for all the support they give to these events and especially grateful to Miss Holt for her enthusiasm and efficiency which is vital in ensuring that these events remain a key part of the life of the school and help to balance the commitment to academic work with a commitment to fun and to extracurricular activities. Finally thanks are due to each year's House Officials for their hard work and enthusiasm.

Decorated Classrooms 2025:



A selection of entries in House Cakes 2026:



Dance

Drama

MUSIC

Music, Dance and Drama.

In the past year Music at CCHS has continued to be hugely successful. Over 250 students have instrumental lessons with our 12 instrumental teachers and at any time there are around 17 ensembles led by both staff and students. We continue with our pattern of two major concerts each year (each running for two nights) at Christmas and in the spring as well as our Cabaret Concert for individual and small group performers each July. We are proud of the high standards to which the students perform and every concert is well attended by parents and friends of the school. We were particularly pleased to be invited once again to showcase the school symphony orchestra at Essex Music Services' Vibrant Voices showcase in Chelmsford Theatre and it was great to hear the orchestra performing not only an excerpt from Dvorak's New World Symphony but to see and hear them conducted by Amy from Year 11 playing her own original composition of a piece of film music. We are hoping for some more opportunities to take music out of the school and into the community in the coming months.

Currently six students in Year 12 are studying A level Music; this is more than in very many schools and indeed a good number of sixth forms no longer offer Music at A level. We are therefore really pleased to have such a vibrant class of academic musicians and were recently delighted to welcome two alumnae visitors to speak to them about careers in Music and the Arts. Sophie Rashbrook and Isabella Gage both studied A level Music at CCHS and since leaving the school in 2006 have developed really interesting careers – Sophie with the Royal Opera House and Isabella in artistic management. The Year 12 musicians were delighted to meet them and we thank them for their time and support. Isabella's mother Felicity Wright was herself a student at CCHS in the 1970s and later taught singing at the school. She did much to invigorate the Chamber Choir into its current incarnation as Cantatrici; Isabella was delighted to meet the current student conductors of a choir in which she and Sophie had sung and which her mother had effectively founded.

The annual school Dance Show continues to be a real highlight of the year, and this year was no exception. Over 200 hundred students took to the stage over three nights in November to present Euphoria – a celebration of student talent in a range of styles of dance. Particular congratulations are due to the Year 13 Dance Officials Melisa, Felita, Daisy, Chelsea and Ishita for their work in coordinating and rehearsing the show and as ever to Mr French and Mr Rowell for the highly professional sound and lighting which made the show such an experience for the packed audiences.



Dance

Drama

MUSIC

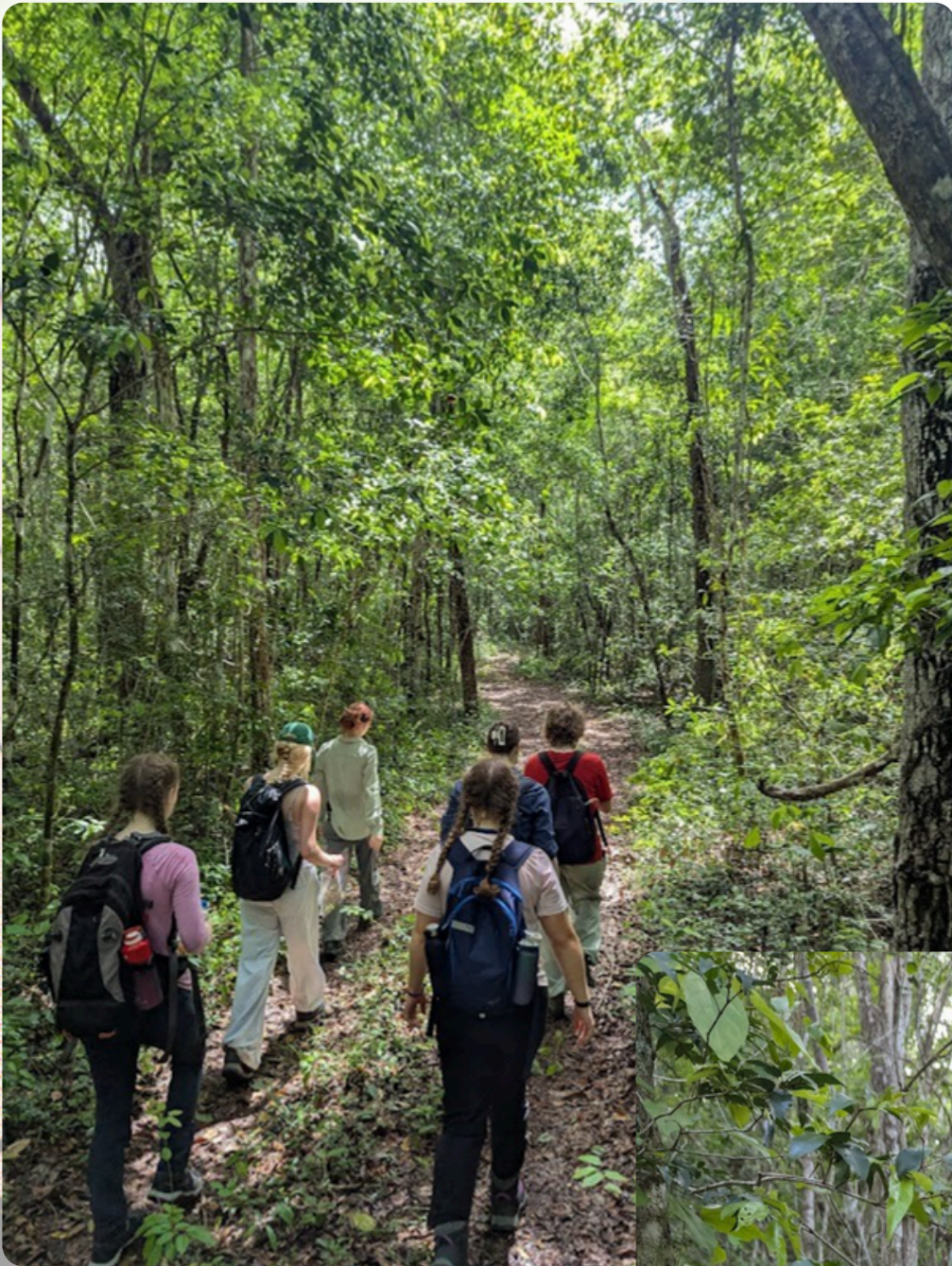
This year's school production was Tattie Hennessey's adaptation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Students from Years 8 to 13 presented a thought-provoking and stylish take on Orwell's timeless classic. Often the very best school productions are those with darkness at their heart and these are certainly a counterpoint to the happy endings so beloved of musical theatre. Each night's audience was moved by the performances on stage and shared in a profound theatrical experience as well as amused by students inhabiting roles as the various animals and birds on the farm. The production was further enhanced by the musical interludes and accompaniments. Remarkably, the music for these was composed and arranged by Sylvie and Isobel in Year 12 and played by a student band conducted from the keyboard by Isobel. We celebrate the work of the cast, crew, band and of course the vision and determination of Miss Day who produced and directed such a successful show.



Mexico 2025

After a highly successful school expedition to Mexico in 2018 a repeat visit had been planned for 2020. The pandemic led to the cancellation of this visit and we were glad to be able once again to run an expedition in 2025. Mr Moller, Mrs Buckley and Mrs Manning and an intrepid group of Year 12 and Year 13 students travelled to the Operation Wallacea camp in the Mexican jungle. There they contributed to the scientific research that is Operation Wallacea's main focus, engaging in habitat surveys, and surveys of bird, mammal and insect life. The second week of the expedition was spent on the coast with students scuba diving and snorkelling and working to support Operation Wallacea's work on turtle conservation. The students learned a very great deal from both parts of the expedition as well as from a brief trip to some Mayan ruins; their knowledge of Biology and of Mexican culture and society as well as their confidence in travelling to a very different country were both immeasurably enhanced by this experience. We hope that many of them will continue to be involved in adventurous expeditions and scientific field work as part of their university experiences. Our thanks as always are due to the staff who led and supported this expedition and we look forward to another edition in 2027.









STEM

It is always inspiring to see how students make the most of the extracurricular opportunities on offer, and STEM clubs are no exception. The Electronics Club is always buzzing on Wednesday lunchtimes, with Key Stage 3 students developing technical skills and building strong foundations for future engineers.

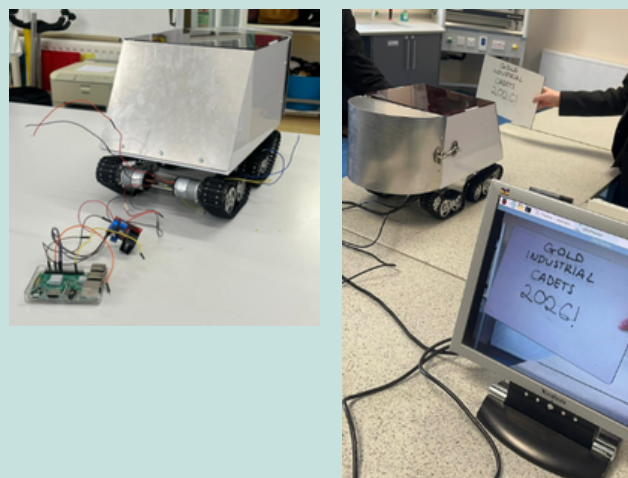
As part of the Engineering Club, Year 10 students produced an impressive range of carefully considered projects designed to benefit the wider community. This included a remote-controlled boat designed to support flood rescue efforts; a smoke-alarm nightlight connected to a wrist strap to alert children with hearing impairments; a performance-monitoring watch for athletes; and a medication reminder system to support patients with Parkinson's disease. The support and guidance from Mr Ed Bye from the Chelmsford Science and Engineering Society have been invaluable throughout. The annual TEXPO competition at Anglia Ruskin University provided an excellent platform for students to showcase their work and receive valuable feedback from experts in the field.

Sponsorship from Leonardo has enabled the successful delivery of both Bronze and Gold projects delivered through the Engineering Development Trust for another year. These opportunities provide vital experience of working with industry professionals and play an important role in encouraging more girls to pursue careers in STEM subjects where women are still underrepresented.

The Year 9 Bronze project showcased how the younger generation might make use of AI, with students designing an app to help older citizens build social connections. Importantly, they also demonstrated a thoughtful awareness of the potential challenges associated with AI. The Year 12 Gold team benefited greatly from a two-day workshop at the University of Cambridge, developing a wide range of skills—even among those with little prior experience. Their involvement in visits and competitions has provided valuable opportunities to engage with industry experts and academics, inspiring them to pursue STEM subjects further. In addition, the STEM Leadership Programme has been highly popular among both Year 9 and Year 10 students, offering opportunities to reflect on and develop their leadership skills.

The breadth and ambition of these projects highlight the enthusiasm and creativity of our students, along with the dedication of staff. We look forward to seeing how these experiences shape their journeys beyond school.

Industrial Cadets Gold Project – Insights from the Team



The Industrial Cadets project was about creating a model vehicle as a team alongside writing a report detailing all of our planning, design choices, evaluation of our construction and more. Our project brief was to create a medical robot that could transport medical supplies and sensors to any personnel; therefore we decided to install a night vision camera and a heart sensor to further challenge and improve our skills in coding and electronics. These extra challenges we added, on top of constructing our model from the chassis to its extra features, such as the shelf to store medical kit, coding the vehicle to move and turn with differential steering and working with the electronics and different materials to put it all together, enabled us to develop our communication and teamwork skills in a short time frame and improve our ability to analyse any errors and form solutions.

During the project, we visited the University of Cambridge's Dyson Centre for Engineering Design, where we used professional workshop facilities to manufacture and assemble components for our medic robot. Through activities such as metal fabrication, CAD design, laser cutting, soldering, and electrical assembly, we developed practical engineering skills while progressing our project. We also had the opportunity to visit Leonardo, where we gained an insight into the work of a leading aerospace, defence, and security company. The visit allowed us to learn about cutting-edge engineering technologies and hear from professionals about their experiences in the industry. It was an inspiring opportunity that helped us better understand how engineering skills are applied in real-world projects.

Aashrita (12 JBR), Hannah (12 KRE), Abigail (12 JBR), Holly (12 JOR), Nma (12 VCA), Elissa (12 JBR)



STEM leaders

How has being a STEM leader developed my skills?

- Helped me practice my communication through working with groups
- Helped me improve problem-solving skills in the moment
- Helped me build my self-confidence by presenting to an audience

How do I know?

- I went from using scripts to presenting without one
- In our first activity, we finished with extra time. In our last one, we ran into the same problem, but we came up with a solution quickly

How has this helped?

My ability to lead others has improved as over time, I gathered more experience on how to work with others, explain effectively, and fix problems. Improving my confidence and organisation means my activities run smoother for the participants.

Our highs...

- British Science Week- so many people turned up to make straw rockets! Everyone enjoyed the competition (the winners got sweets!)
- Bottle rockets with primary schools- they loved decorating them and they all had a blast!



- Our first activity on lemon volcanoes- finished too quickly and the reaction was very underwhelming
- Testing out the bottle rockets before the activity- it barely moved off of the ground!



...and our lows

What have I learnt?

I have learnt that personally, I just need a little practice of some key points to present, not a whole script. This has taught me that I should believe in myself more, as even the most daunting parts come around, and they don't turn out as bad as you think.

What have I achieved?

I have achieved many things, like improving my self-confidence and teamwork skills. I am proud that I have put myself out there and have learned so many things about being a leader, inspiring others, and about STEM.

In the future?

I will use these skills to think creatively, collaborate with any group of people and lead others confidently no matter the setting. This experience has taught me many transferable skills, like organisation, which will help me in everything from homework now to jobs later on. I will further develop these skills when I work in teams and when I present to others.

Diya (10G)

MY LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

This is the progress I made throughout the STEM leadership course.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

I developed my skills by receiving feedback from participants and teachers. I worked to reflect on their feedback and apply it to my next activity.

EVIDENCE AND IMPACT

I have successfully planned and delivered 3 STEM activities in which my team worked well together and participants were engaged throughout. I am also more confident in leading activities.

HIGHS AND LOWS

The high points of the course were gaining confidence in my leadership skills and successfully leading STEM activities. The low points were dealing with unexpected challenges and learning how to manage time effectively, but these experiences helped me become a stronger leader.

SELF-DISCOVERY

I have learned that I can lead others and take responsibility for a group. I communicate well, work effectively as part of a team, and remain calm when facing challenges. I have also learned that confidence grows through experience and practice.

PROUD OF DOING

I am proud of the progress I have made in my communication, teamwork, and leadership skills. I am especially proud of successfully leading STEM activities, helping participants enjoy and achieve their goals, and becoming more confident in sharing my ideas and being organised.

FOR THE FUTURE

In the future, I will use the skills I have developed throughout this course in both school and everyday life. They can help me work effectively with others, take on leadership roles, and manage my responsibilities. I will continue to improve these skills by taking on new challenges.

Alumnae Mentoring

We are excited to be able to report on the first year and pilot phase of our Alumnae Mentoring Scheme and are really glad to have made so many excellent connections between former and current students. We have had a great deal of positive feedback and know that the students have really enjoyed their interactions with those who have offered to support and advise them. We are incredibly grateful to Emma Gauntlett (CCHS 2002 to 2009) for her tireless work in driving this initiative forward and for the time she has spent pairing up students and alumnae volunteers and responding to emails from far and wide.

Emma's work has been particularly valuable as the start of this new scheme was not without its challenges. Considerable time was found to be necessary to work through and around the school's safeguarding obligations in a way that was practical for mentors who are based around the country and indeed around the world. However we were eventually given the go ahead for our scheme by the Essex safeguarding authorities and are grateful to all our volunteers for their patience during this stage. We are also grateful to Mrs Rae Dale, the school's HR officer, for her commitment to the success of this initiative.

We have learnt much from the pilot year of this scheme and look forward to a new edition which we hope to begin in the autumn. As and when we are ready to welcome new alumnae volunteers we will notify our readers via the normal channels.

Alumnae Achievements and Interests

We are always delighted to hear of the achievements and interests of our former students and it is often good to be able to share these achievements with the current students. Our current students are always delighted and fascinated to meet or to hear about former students and the different opportunities and challenges which they have met. There are many ways in which we hear of the great and good things which members of the CCHS Alumnae have achieved; we hear directly from former students or via traditional or social media or via the contacts of staff, former staff and friends of the school.

If you would like to let us know about something you have been involved in, a charity which you would like the school to consider raising money for or an award or career which you have achieved we would be delighted to hear from you. Similarly if you are involved in an initiative which you think could be of benefit or interest to current students we are always keen to see how we might make use of our connections with our alumnae. Finally if you are in touch with other alumnae and would like (with their permission) to let us know about achievements which you fear that they are too modest to mention we would love to hear from you. Please do consider emailing alumnae@cchs.co.uk with any information which you think would be useful or interesting to your school.

An Interview with...



Amy Abdelnoor

Introduction

Amy Abdelnoor is a novelist and teacher, who studied at CCHS between 1989 and 1996. Alongside travelling and teaching, she has a passion for writing and is excited to share her debut novel, *Everland*, with the world. In an interview with the Alumnae Prefects, Amy shared her thoughts on her time at the school, life after CCHS, and how these experiences shaped her book.

CCHS memories

Amy began her studies at CCHS in 1989, and studied English Literature, French, Latin, and General Studies at A-Level, alongside GCSE Russian with Madame Gulliver. She reflects on how the school campus has grown and improved since her time here, with the new developments to the Bancroft Building and other facilities. With her daughter attending CCHS currently, we also discussed the wider range of sports available, as she is glad that there are so many options to be accommodating and encouraging to all students to explore their interest in sports. She also remembers feeling unsure of her career path, which many students can still relate to today.

Summarising her time at CCHS as 'happy days', she reminisces about the constant stream of bake sales, helping with the Year 8 French trip, and meeting the Headteacher at the time, Bernice McCabe, for lunch in her office once a week. There was also a tradition in her Latin class to share chocolates to get them through the lesson on Friday period 5. Finally, Amy remembers House Cakes, which is still a much-loved House event. In 2026, CCHS celebrates its 119th birthday.

Life after CCHS

After completing her journey in CCHS, Amy went on to study English at Cambridge University and part way through switched to study Arabic. She later decided to join the Unipal charity for an internship in the city of Ramallah in 2000 (the book's setting), where she lived under the Israeli occupation. During her time there she met a friend who had gone through a very traumatic event and was still living with its effects. These experiences had a deep impact on her and helped shape the themes that she would go on to write about. She has also spent time living in Italy and says this life experiences have taught her a lot about the real world. Her advice to current students is simple: go out and see the world, because experiencing life first-hand is one of the most powerful ways to learn.

About her debut novel- Everland

Everland is Amy's debut novel, published by Penguin. It follows the story of two teenagers and explores themes of growing up and the enduring "universality of humanity and love". Amy started writing this book in 2019, when she first began teaching at KEGS.

This novel was inspired by her experiences in Ramallah, where she recalls noticing a cactus plant used by the locals to mark their territorial borders- a plant that continued growing undefeated despite its harsh surroundings. Its resilience stayed with her and became a powerful symbol in the story. "Once you engage with Palestinian stories, you don't forget," she says.

An early iteration of Everland was shortlisted for the Lucy Cavendish Fiction Prize 2023. Amy also spoke about the challenges of writing, stating that "you've got to learn to fail, then pick yourself up again," a message she hopes will encourage young writers not to give up.

Looking ahead to the Year of Reading in 2026, she emphasised that reading is not only a source of entertainment but also a way to build empathy, something she believes should be revived in today's increasingly apathetic world.

Everland is now available, and she warmly invites the CCHS community to preorder and support a fellow past student, helping to preserve the "art of reading".



Alumnae Snapshots – Our Alumnae Prefects caught up with some of the former students who came to support CCHS throughout the year.

Izabella Kalaitzis (CCHS 2007 to 2013)

What is your current job and what do you do on a day-to-day basis?

I am currently working as a GP in Chelmsford area. I assess patients in my morning and afternoon clinic and between clinics make referrals, check blood results and perform other admin tasks.

How did your studies lead to the career you have now?

I chose to do Maths, Chemistry, Biology and English literature A-levels and also took part in extra-curricular activities such as working in care homes, gaining work experience at Cancer Research UK Labs and at Broomfield Hospital. This all led to my career in medicine!

What is your favourite memory of school?

I have so many... I loved the house competitions – house decorated class rooms was always such fun. I also have fond memories of the Christmas songs we sang from around the world and visiting Chelmsford cathedral every year. I hope these traditions have been continued!

What's one thing you learned at school that has stuck with you?

That hard work and discipline pays off.

Bethany Diggins (CCHS 2013 to 2020)

What is your current job and what do you do on a day-to-day basis?

I'm a physiotherapist which means I am a movement specialist within healthcare. I work with patients in and out of the hospital treating everything from fractures to brain trauma.

How did your studies lead to the career you have now?

Most physiotherapy degrees require biology A Level. A few also request a second science or maths but that is rare. Straight from school I started my physiotherapy degree which is the qualification needed to become a chartered physiotherapist. I began working after that fully qualified.

What is your favourite memory of school?

Spending time with my friend Izzy! Sorry to all the teachers that had us sat next to each other...

What's one thing you learned at school that has stuck with you?

Tudor history! I didn't know then the amount of pub quiz questions I would be able to answer by doing history A Level.

Interview with Isabella Gage (CCHS 1999 to 2006)

How did your studies lead to the career you have now?

Isabella studied Music at A-Level, and now works in the music industry, managing artists, with many other roles in between. She stresses the confidence that CCHS helped her to develop, which is a necessity in the industry she works in.

What is your favourite memory of school?

The level of camaraderie that students have, developed through events such as the sixth form trip to Prague, House competitions, and more. For example, one year she took part in decorating the classroom as a modern art gallery, with comedic imitations of artists such as Jackson Pollock and Damien Hirst. She speaks fondly and affectionately of the inevitable silliness and extravagance that comes with CCHS events.

Pragya Sinha Kumar (CCHS 2011 to 2018)

What is your current job and what do you do on a day-to-day basis?

I am currently a litigation paralegal at a criminal defence firm. We mostly deal with cases with international and/or political aspects. My day-to-day is varied; my job has taken me from Westminster Magistrates' Court to Phnom Penh. Generally, my tasks involve researching and drafting legal advice, written submissions, meeting with barristers and clients, and thinking about litigation strategy.

How did your studies lead to the career you have now?

I took English, History, Maths and Latin for my A-levels. I never felt defined by any particular subject but I really enjoyed the discursive elements of my History and English lessons. I found it exciting to set out my analysis and be challenged on it. I was not always on top of the reading – I was embarrassingly voted most likely to not do their homework in our yearbook – but it was fun to persuade based on first principles/logic. I also loved engaging with the political and philosophical aspects of both subjects; I was pulled in by the conniving power consolidation of Henry VII and revolutionary appetite in France and Russia. Together with Bar Mock, where we were coached by an extremely well-accomplished and generous human rights barrister, that is probably what led to me doing Law.

What is your favourite memory of school?

Anything involving my friends. We chatted way too much, did silly things and got told off for it, but that laid the foundations for friendships and support that I still have. The women I know from CCHS are some of the funniest, cleverest, and kindest out there, and I treasure the fact that I saw them come into their own at school. I also have very warm memories of the art rooms; they were a real haven at lunchtimes and I miss them being so casually a part of everyday life.

What's one thing you learned at school that has stuck with you?

There are definitely more serious things I have learned, but the one that comes to mind is Dr Graham telling us to "write with the confidence of a KEGS boy". This has come back to me in one form or the other before every exam or daunting experience in my life and has probably done the trick.

Interview with Sophie Rashbrook (CCHS 1999 to 2006)

How did your studies lead to the career you have now?

Sophie works in opera, doing a wide variety of activities such as editing programmes at the Royal Opera House and music journalism. Studying History and English at A-Level has helped with her storytelling skills, which is useful in her profession. Languages are also particularly important in the field of opera, so her CCHS-taught knowledge of French, German, and Russian often comes in handy.

What is your favourite memory of school?

House Decorated Classrooms and House Dance stand out, as everyone was always so outrageously competitive. One very memorable moment was in year 7, when her form performed a dance to 'I Just Can't Wait to Be King' from the Lion King, and another time they decorated their classroom as a full-out jungle. The history opportunities were another highlight, from Philosophy of History Society to Cold War Day.

Former Student Success.

We were delighted to hear recently from Una Jenkins (Fahey) who studied at CCHS from 2000 to 2007. Her company 'Transformation Education CIC' was recently a winner in the Female Business Awards. Una's company which trades as Durham Home Ed Community Hub provides community-based support for home-educated children in the Durham area, offering connections and opportunities to those who are home-educated. The company won in the 'Services to Local Communities' category.

We congratulate Una on her achievement and on the hard work which it has taken to develop the business which clearly offers much valuable support to the communities it serves.



Campus Upgrades

Given the realities of funding and planning permission there are unlikely to be any major building projects on the school site in the immediate future. However as the school continues to make excellent use of the Chapman Sports Hall and the new Bancroft building, both of which opened in 2021, we are focusing instead on upgrading aspects of the current buildings to improve the environment for learning. In the past year we have seen the installation of air conditioning in the Drama Studio and adjoining rooms, the first stage of work to repurpose the former caretaker's house at the front of the school and most recently the installation of new solar panels on the roof of the Year 13 Common Room (formerly the workshop) and the school hall. The air conditioning will do much to make the Studio more usable in hot weather and really enhance the environment for our students. The solar panels (together with those on the Bancroft and Chapman buildings) will see the school generating a good proportion of its own electricity over an annual cycle with a significant contribution back into the grid on very sunny days. This will in turn help to offset the running costs of air conditioning in key rooms and the computers which are so important in so many aspects of teaching these days. Our thanks to Mrs Melissa Mulgrew (Business Manager) and our indefatigable site management team for all their work in planning and managing contractors.

Senior Speech Day

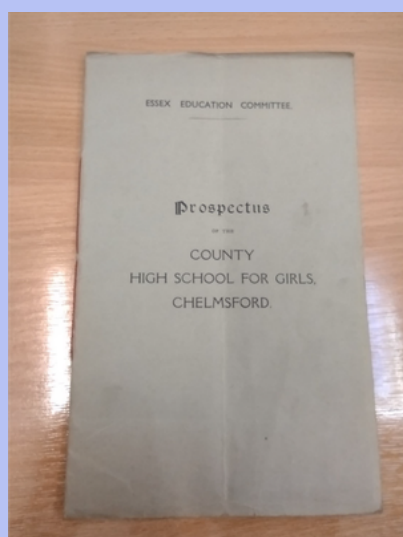
Following long-established tradition the school's Senior Speech Day was held in Chelmsford Cathedral in late April. In 2026 we celebrated the successes of those who sat their A levels in the summer of 2025 and we were delighted to welcome so many parents and friends of the school to share in the celebrations. The evening's guest speaker was Dorothy Byrne. Dorothy was for four years the President of Murray Edwards College in the University of Cambridge, one of only two women's colleges remaining in the university. Under Dorothy's leadership the college continued to champion and promote the interests of girls and women in education and beyond. Dorothy was previously the Editor-at-Large and Head of News and Current Affairs at Channel Four Television for nearly 20 years. Programmes she has overseen have won many Emmy, Bafta and Royal Television Society Awards and Dorothy is a Fellow of The Royal Television Society, marking her outstanding contribution to television. Dorothy spoke with warmth and wit about the challenges and successes of her career, drawing out valuable lessons for her audience.

Donations to CCHS Archives.

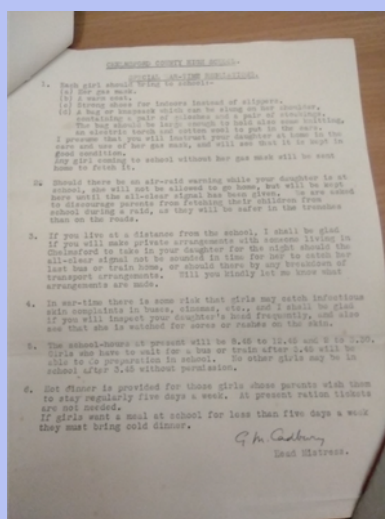
We are grateful to Mrs Janet Horsnell (nee Briggs) for her kind donation of a box of documents to the school archives. Janet's mother Margaret Francis Horsnell (nee Davies) studied at CCHS between 1940 and 1947 prior to studying pharmacology and dispensing at Chelsea College. She started work at Sutherland Lodge Surgery (which still functions to this day) on the first day of the National Health Service on the 5th July 1948. She was mayoress of Chelmsford in 1964/5 and was an active member of the Old Girls' Society for many years, editing the OGS supplement to the CCHS magazine. Mrs Horsnell died in 2017. Her daughter Janet also studied at CCHS between 1964 and 1971 and was keen for the school to take into its keeping the documents and school magazines which she and her mother had preserved over so many years.

We are always pleased to hear from any former students or their families who may be looking for a safe home for material pertaining to the history of the school.

Below are some examples of the material kindly donated by Janet Horsnell.



1940 Prospectus

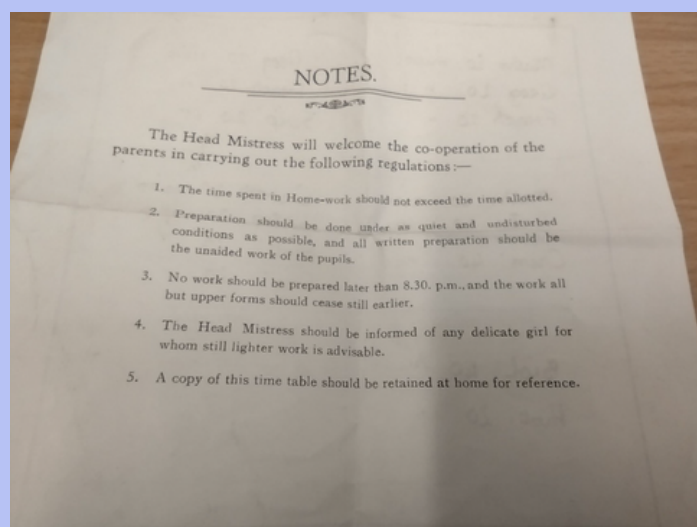


1940 Wartime regulations.

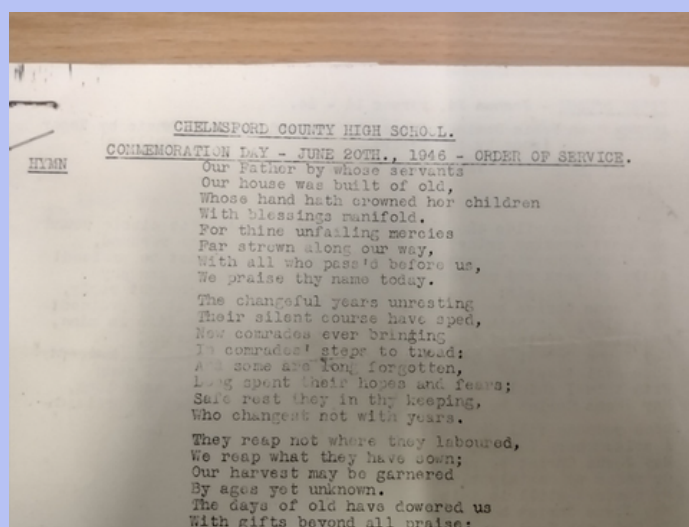
MONDAY	THURSDAY
Maths 20 mins.	Geog 20 mins.
Geog 20 "	French 20 "
French 20 "	Scrap 20 "
TUESDAY	FRIDAY
Maths 20 mins.	Geom 20 mins.
Latin 20 "	Latin 20 "
Chem 40 "	Hist 20 "
	Eng 20 "
WEDNESDAY	SATURDAY
Biol 40 "	
Hist 20 "	

Head Mistress: H. M. Gashbury
Signature of Parent or Guardian: J. B. Davies
D.T.O.

1940s Homework Timetable.



Notes on Homework, 1940s



Commemoration Day 1946 – Note the school hymn which is still sung each Commemoration Day.

In Memoriam.

We were saddened recently to learn of the death of Mrs Ann Crack. Mrs Crack was a longstanding member of the office staff here, serving the school for 26 years between 1976 and 2002. For many people she was either the first or the last person they met when visiting the school. She also fielded the majority of the telephone calls made to the school and was adept at dealing with the many and varied issues which confronted the office staff. Many of our readers will remember Mrs Crack working alongside Mrs Heseltine and Mrs Cornish as part of the core administrative team which did so much to support staff and students for so many years. She was a calm and cheerful presence who was unfazed by the sometimes frenetic pace of school life and whose care for the staff and students with whom she worked was always clear.

We send our best wishes to Mrs Crack's family and are pleased to record her many years of devoted service to this school.



Alumnae News - Prospective new Chief Constable.

As this edition of the alumnae newsletter was in the final stages of preparation we heard that Rachel Nolan (CCHS 1988 to 1995) has been selected as 'preferred candidate' to be the new Chief Constable of Essex Police. Having served at every rank in the police since joining the force in 1998, Rachel was praised as the 'outstanding candidate' in the selection process. Once her appointment is ratified she will be the first woman to hold the post since the Essex constabulary was founded in 1840.

We congratulate Rachel on her selection and look forward to hearing of the confirmation of her appointment in due course.



Staff Leavers

In the summer of 2025 CCHS said farewell to the following members of teaching staff:

Mrs Marion Chumbley

Mrs Chumbley joined CCHS in September 2004 as a teacher of Mathematics. Her dynamism, character and inimitable way of explaining a problem or concept meant that she immediately made a real impact on her students and on the wider school and many will have memories good or less good of the 'Misconception Police'. Students who were lucky enough to be in her classes achieved excellent results, many of these despite some students initially feeling that maths was not for them. However Mrs Chumbley's knowledge and the force of her personality helped even the most reluctant student of calculus or algebra to a higher level of knowledge and understanding.

Beyond Mathematics Mrs Chumbley contributed to many school trips and in alliance with Mrs Lesley Henderson she came to play a leading role on a number of school ski trips. Not even a potentially serious coach-related mishap on one of these trips could impact Mrs Chumbley's efficient approach to problem solving. This calm and measured approach even in the most challenging of circumstances helped Mrs Chumbley to play a really successful role for many years as part of the school's pastoral team. As a Year Leader and latterly as Senior Pastoral Leader she did much to shape the school's response to the increasingly challenging pastoral landscape which all schools now face. However this deeply serious and important work did not prevent her continuing to enjoy the absurdities of Staff Karaoke or her signature role as a Flowerpot Person in the recent staff pantomime.

Mrs Chumbley was most certainly a colleague who made an impact on the school, not only by 21 years of sterling service and her commitment to high standards in all her work but also because of the support she offered to younger colleagues and the way in which she was able to achieve so much without losing her sense of humour or her sense of perspective on the everyday challenges of school life. We wish her well in her retirement and are sure that her zest for life will lead her to many exciting adventures in the next phase of her life.

An interview with Mrs Chumbley in which she looks back on her teaching career and her 21 years at CCHS is to be found on page 12 of this newsletter.

Staff Joining CCHS.

In the academic year 2025 to 2026 the following staff joined CCHS:

Mr Ryan Harris – Teacher of Mathematics.

Mrs Fiona Rhode – Teacher of Mathematics.

Mrs Sophie Roy – Teacher of Spanish and French.

Mrs Julie Bennett

Mrs Bennett joined CCHS in April 2015, initially to support the German department during another colleague's maternity leave. Before long she was a key member of the team and during two subsequent periods of maternity leave Mrs Bennett shared leadership of the department with Mrs Cannon and Mrs Gilbert. It is a tribute to the good humour and professionalism of all three valued colleagues that the German department continued to be so successful under their joint leadership. Mrs Bennett's expertise, dynamism and organisation were a great gift to her students and her leadership of arrangements for oral examinations across all the modern languages was much valued by her colleagues. Mrs Bennett was unfailingly positive and professional even in the most challenging situations and an experienced leader of foreign visits and mentor to trainee teachers. She was committed to helping every student achieve her best and we were very sorry to see her leave to take up a position at Westcliffe High School for Boys.

Mrs Jane Lockwood

Mrs Lockwood joined CCHS in September 2019 to teach Mathematics. She was not a stranger to the school as two of children had studied here; she was quickly at home as a valued member of the Mathematics Department and an expert Sixth Form tutor. Indeed she was for a period Subject Leader of Mathematics and in each of her roles she was calm, organised and extremely knowledgeable. Her students much valued her experience and expertise and we are grateful to her for her contribution to the school. She retired in the summer of 2025 and we send her all good wishes for the next phase of her life.

Frau Katherina Goettl

Frau Goettl joined CCHS in November 2019 as Subject Leader for German. Her quiet enthusiasm and commitment to her students' success were much appreciated by all her students and they benefitted hugely from her expertise in all aspects of her native language and culture. Her time with us was punctuated with two periods of maternity leave and after the birth of her second child she and her family decided to relocate to Richmond upon Thames; we wish her every happiness in her new home there.

SCHOOL SUMMER FESTIVAL

The school summer festival organised each year by the Senior Prefects is now firmly established as part of the annual round of events at CCHS. Inspired by 'Pinkfest' the original festival held in the summer of 2016 the festivals have continued to develop each year.

The 2025 Senior Prefects took as their theme for the year 'Find Your Voice' and focused on encouraging students to speak up and speak out. On International Women's Day in March 2025 they ran a series of workshops for Year 7 students on this theme and from this work followed the title of the summer festival. 'Amplify' aimed to celebrate female voices and everyone came dressed as their childhood icon. A range of stalls and games were on offer, together with House Tug of War and a series of excellent musical performances. The afternoon gave the school an opportunity to relax in the sun (or in some cases hiding from the sun as the heatwave grew) and raised over £1700 for Voiceability. Voiceability is a charity which provides advocacy and support services to those who need help making their voice heard in terms of decisions over their health care and wellbeing and we were pleased to support the excellent work which they have been doing for over 40 years.

Congratulations to the 2025 Senior Prefects for all their hard work in organising the 'Amplify' Festival.





Reunions



1994 leavers and Mrs Gulliver.

We are always pleased to welcome groups of former pupils who wish to visit the school as part of a reunion. If you would like to organise such a visit do please email alumnae@cchs.co.uk and we will do our best to find a suitable date. Whilst in many ways a weekday or weekday evening works best for us we are also sometimes able to host reunions on a Saturday morning. These visits normally involve some time for coffee, cake and reminiscence as well as a tour of the school led by current students and are, we understand, often continued for lunch and thereafter in a suitable pub or restaurant.

In the school year ahead we would be particularly pleased to hear from those planning reunions for those who started or finished at CCHS in a year ending with a seven; perhaps leavers from 1977, 87, 97 or more recent years would be interested in getting together?

If you are trying to get in touch with former friends, you may be able to link up with them through our private CCHS Alumnae Facebook group. However, it is also worth checking for contact details with the School via alumnae@cchs.co.uk. We cannot give out contact details to others, but we can contact them on your behalf to facilitate the link. Our electronic database of members means we can quickly find former students who have signed up to it by their leaving year, or by name.

If you are in touch with other former students, please encourage them to sign up to the database via our [website](#).



2004 leavers



1974 to 1981 reunion.

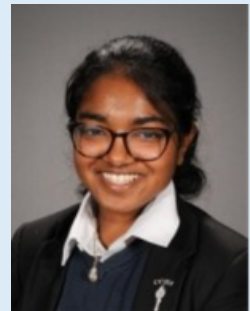
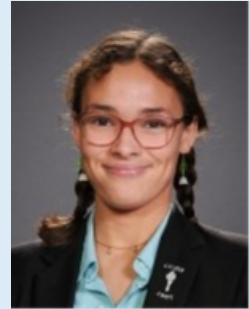
Meet our Senior Prefects for Alumnae Relations

Meet our Senior Prefects for Alumnae Relations.

Charlotte and Hanushka are our current Senior Prefects responsible for supporting with alumnae relations. They have already met a good number of alumnae visitors and have conducted the interviews which are included in this newsletter.

Charlotte and Hanushka are always keen to be involved in supporting alumnae links in whatever way is possible and they look forward to meeting more of our readers over the rest of their time in post.

2026 Charlotte and
Hanushka



Training the next generation of teachers at CCHS.

If you are interested in pursuing a career in teaching your former school can support and potentially employ you. We have trained a number of strong graduates over the past years, working with a variety of training providers to secure 'QTS' or 'qualified teacher status' for each candidate. We work on two broad models – one is 'in school training' where the student teacher is predominantly based in school and the other is the more traditional route where the student applies for a PGCE (postgraduate certificate of education) course and then accesses a mixture of in school and university based training.

If you would like to discuss routes into teaching and the opportunities that CCHS can provide do please contact our Assistant Headteacher (Teaching and Learning), Adam Selby by email at aselby@cchs.co.uk

How can former students help CCHS?

Careers Information:

We run two major careers events each year and are always glad to welcome former students to talk to our current students about their careers.

- The Year 10 Careers Day takes place each October. Every year we are joined by former students who give a series of presentations to different groups of students. Normally our visitors join us for around two hours in either the morning or the afternoon and speak to 4 different groups of Year 10 students in that time.
- The Year 9 and 12 Careers Evening takes place in February each year. This runs from around 5.30 to 7.30 pm and we aim for about 50 stalls in the school hall and surrounding rooms. Students from Years 9 and 12 attend with their parents and this is an informal evening where visitors are free to visit as many stalls as possible in the time available to them.

If you are able to help with either of these events Dr Hiner would be very glad to hear from you. He can be contacted by email at ahiner@cchs.co.uk

Mock Interviews:

If you are able to offer mock interviews for university entrance purposes we would also be very glad to hear from you. Interviews could be held in person or online and the key time of the year for these would be in November when our candidate for Oxford and Cambridge universities are preparing for their 'real' interviews in December.

Lunchtime talks:

We are keen to expand the number and range of these highly successful sessions which have run for many years. Their aim is to promote interests and debate that extend beyond the curriculum and to give students a sense of the different areas in which their successes at school can take them.

If you have a particular area of expertise and would like to engage in discussion with our students, please contact Dr Hiner at ahiner@cchs.co.uk

Keeping in touch....

CCHS Alumnae on Social Media

We now have an Alumnae Instagram account which runs alongside our Alumnae Facebook accounts.

We post pictures and memories that we hope are of interest to our Alumnae ranging from the early 1900s when CCHS first opened its doors, right through to recent years. It's a great way to be reminded of events that took place during your time at CCHS, and to see some familiar faces in some of the photos!



Our Alumnae
Facebook private
group can be found
at: CCHS Alumnae



Our private
Instagram account
can be found here
[@CCHS_Alumnae](#)

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