

Ancora House School Newsletter

'Building resilience for future success'

Autumn Term 2025



We've had a busy first term of the year and have enjoyed working with the young people at Ancora House School. Alongside the education programme, our young people have been working with outside providers, including Chester University, who have offered sessions on critical thinking and Post 16 options. The young people have also been working with Mike Jones from Chester Zoo on a conservation and sustainability project. We are really grateful to Chester Zoo for their support and delighted to include a family ticket to the zoo for families in the report pack. We have welcomed Childnet to speak about online safety and young people have also had talks on Cyber Security. We are so proud of the young people at Ancora House School and thoroughly enjoy working alongside them.

Happy Christmas and all the best for 2025!
The Ancora House School Education Team



Art and Design



This term in art and design our young people have been busy exploring a wide variety of different media and techniques. They started off the term creating cabinets of curiosity out of recycled materials. They then decorated them to create their own personalised shelves. We looked at the history behind the scenes and where they originated from.

They then progressed to experimenting with 3D card relief frames, where they created some brilliant textures and layers of patterns through the use of cardboard. We think they look very effective!

They then finished the term by creating their own Tim Burton style portrait pieces, looking at the gothic cartoon style and replicating this with their own imagery. They used materials such as fine liners, watercolor paint and colored pencils.

All of the work that has been created has been to an incredible standard and it's been wonderful to see the young people embracing their creativity and having fun. They should be very proud of their achievements.





This term we have also been exploring natural forms. A range of objects were brought in for students to handle and draw inspiration from. Inspired by the work of the ceramicist Courtney Mattison, students were invited to create clay tiles based on the theme. Macro photography was used to capture close ups of the objects and the images were then digitally altered to create striking imagery.



Science

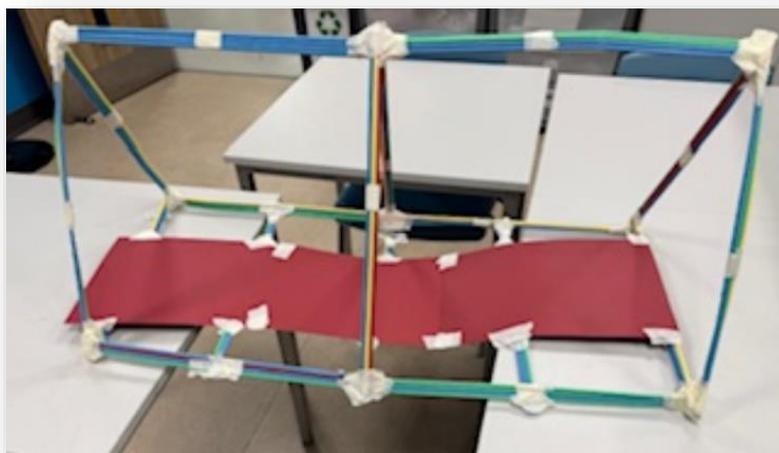
This term Science has been packed with exciting learning and hands-on experiences! Students have explored the chemistry of fireworks, discovering how different metal salts create vibrant colours in spectacular displays. In Physics, they investigated density through practical experiments (one of the GCSE required practicals). We were thrilled to welcome a guest from Chester Zoo, who brought fascinating artefacts and shared insights into evolution, climate change, sustainability and the responsibility humans have to help save this planet for the future generations. Our classes also raced ahead with speed practicals, measuring the speed

of different snowflakes, applying formulas to measure motion accurately. In Biology, we studied interdependence within ecosystems and adaptations to cold weather in plants (the humble pine tree/ Christmas tree); we examined pathogens, their impact on health, and learned about the rigorous process of how new drugs are tested to ensure safety and effectiveness. It's been a term full of curiosity, discovery, and scientific thinking!



STEAM

This term in STEM has been packed with creativity and engineering challenges! Students explored structural design through bridge building and tested buoyancy with boat construction, all structures are tested to destruction. They unleashed their imagination by creating roller coasters, intricate ping pong ball mazes and a tabletop foosball game. Innovation continued with stop-motion animation projects, catapult experiments, and the design of wind-powered cars and turbines. Each activity encouraged problem-solving, collaboration, and hands-on learning—making STEM both exciting and inspiring!



Careers & IAG

This term we have been working on the individual plans of our young people, as well as providing as many opportunities as possible for employer contact and real-life experience of the workplace. We feel strongly that students at Ancora House should have a range of careers experiences, possibly even more than their peers would be getting! Our careers support is bespoke. For some students this has meant supporting them to access courses in the community, visiting their home school or college, or for others it may be getting them to speak directly to people who are working in the industry they want to pursue.

The NHS Education and Training Team set up a wonderful opportunity for one of our young people interested in working as a Health Care Assistant. They attended the training centre and met with the team, including the current Health Care Assistant Trainer/former Health Care Assistant for 8 years. It was a wonderful opportunity, enjoyed by the young person and described as “delightful” and “enjoyable” by the team afterwards. Our young person particularly enjoyed their short training session in taking observations from a patient.



We have continued our work with partners from various agencies both at Ancora House and out in the community. Mike from The Cheshire and Warrington Pledge delivered sessions in Cyber Security giving students and staff alike a chance to pause and really consider the information that they share online that they would never share to strangers in the real world!

We were lucky enough to welcome another Mike, from Chester Zoo, to run the popular ecology sessions helping students consider how they can help protect wildlife and habitats around the world.

We have continued our work with the University of Chester. Chantal has spent time with students on both wards looking at Critical Thinking Skills. Critical thinking is a vital skill for our students to develop to help them in navigating information overload, combating misinformation and making better decisions.

Our focus on recognising the many and varied skills our students show us every day has continued this term. This has always been important to the team but our observations have become more focused using the global Skills Builder framework (<https://www.skillsbuilder.uk/>) allowing us to feedback our observations to our young people, their parents & carers and the clinical team.



The whole team at Ancora House School really are passionate about your young person being able to access positive activities. If you would like to speak to one of the team regarding our careers programme, please use the contact details found on the website.

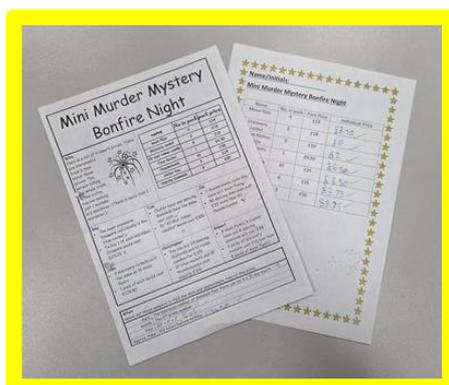
Maths

Real life Maths – show me the money!

During the Autumn term we have looked at a wide variety of topics in the weekly maths group sessions. We have completed maths tasks relating to calendar events such as Children in Need, Halloween & Bonfire Night. The young people had to work through a series of mathematical clues to solve the puzzles. After half term we looked at 'Money Matters'. This included a visit from Carol from The Money Charity who ran a workshop on being a Savvy Consumer.

In more formal maths lessons, we have continued to support our young people on an individual basis, keeping them in line with their home school or college. We hope all of our young people are proud of themselves for continuing with their maths education whilst at Ancora.

Well done guys.
Keep it up!



PSHE

During the Autumn term, we have worked through a series of lessons entitled 'Marvellous Me'. In these lessons we have looked at:

- Self-concept
- Emotional wellbeing
- Healthy lifestyles
- Learning skills
- Choices & pathways
- Employment
- Positive relationships
- Becoming a parent
- Online Relationships



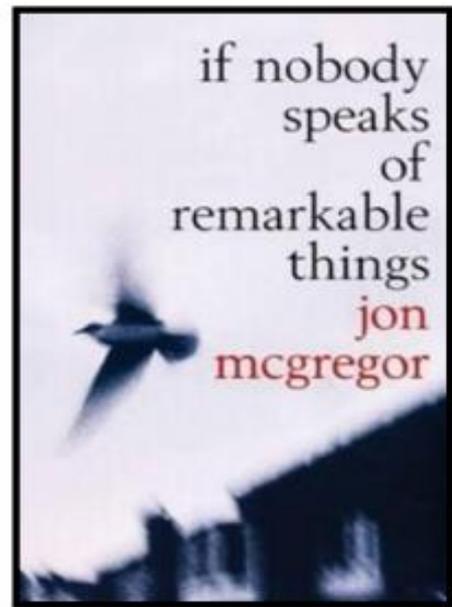
All of our young people have shown a mature approach to discussing sensitive topics; we always value their opinions and input in these sessions. They have also shown respect to their peers who have different life experiences and views. Well done to everyone for engaging positively and appropriately – you have all done yourselves proud.



English

Lost in Description

This half-term in English, our learners have been boosting their English Language skills by identifying what makes descriptive writing *good*. We've been reading a variety of texts and cross-referencing them with the GCSE English mark schemes to see which authors would be getting top marks! One extract that inspired our young people was the opening description of a city at night-time, taken from Jon McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*. Young people then wrote their own city descriptions using McGregor's ideas as a jumping off point. We have had some wonderful pieces of description, such as the example below!



As the stars danced in the sky like little balls of fire, the water rippled and the boats slowly bobbed up and down. Talking people; music playing; cars rumbling: the bustle of the city echoed off all of the magnificent, mighty buildings. Although the lights from these imposing structures ~~sometimes~~ were sometimes blinding, they also illuminated the city in a way that truly brought it to life.

Our learners have also been putting their brains to the test with a variety of word games, such as the New York Times' *Connections* game, where 16 words can be arranged into four groups of four, and a

magic wand	black cat	pointy hat	broomstick	Link: villain escape
boat	train	bike	bus	Link: public
eyes	wings	socks	chopsticks	Link: parts
womb	doubt	crumb	lamb	Link: meat &

connection identified. Some of these groups were really tricky! Another activity that was designed to improve our vocabularies was the word sort task: young people have to rank a series of synonyms from one to ten, and justify why one synonym is better than another. Oh, the fun we have in studying language!

Finally, another crowd-pleaser over the last few months have been our English Group debate sessions. Each week, learners have had to draw a statement at random, and then decide if they are for or against it. Using their persuasive writing skills, young people then have to come up with a short speech off the top of their heads to give about their statement. We've had some really fascinating debates, and all young people that took part were able to demonstrate good active listening skills. The topics range from "Should we limit the use of AI?" to "Should weekends be longer?", giving everyone a chance to express their viewpoint and perspective on an interesting idea.



Life Skills

LIFE SKILLS

We have had an interesting mix of sessions this half term and our young people have worked really well together.

We have been fortunate to be able to welcome a couple of external visitors. A lady from the local College joined us to discuss post 16 options and we also had a gentleman from Youth Fed who joined us to discuss internet safety.

We have also looked at transferable skills such observation and communication and our young people have accessed a careers platform called Morrisby.

Within our school, we launched the AQA Award Unit Scheme. We are so proud to be able to say that some of our young people achieved an AQA Unit Award in Safety in the Community as well as Confidence and Self-Esteem. We're proud of all the work our young people have completed this half term.

Wishing you all a peaceful Christmas,

Kerry and Chris



Outdoor Education

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

During outdoor education this half term, our focus has been on the 'Natural World'.

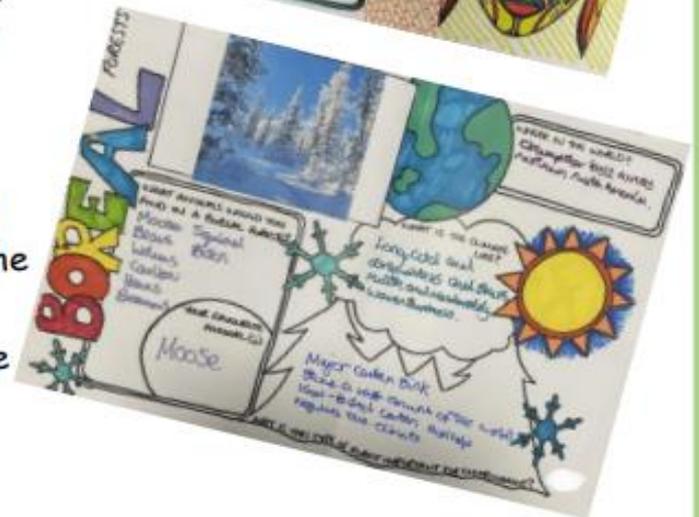
We have discussed and researched different types of forests which included, tropical, temperate and boreal. We highlighted the benefits of these large-scale ecosystems and the incredibly complex biodiversity.

We also had focus sessions on the negative impacts on these important ecosystems. We covered palm oil; the impact and discussion around more sustainable ways of growing it. More recently, we discussed the Illegal Wildlife Trade and researched the impact on a targeted species.

It was also an absolute pleasure to learn about the Maasai people with our young people, who took part in really thoughtful discussion. They showed great sensitivity and understanding towards how other people may choose to live and for that, I am very proud of them.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my warmest wishes for a peaceful Christmas period to you all.

Chris



We really value the opportunity to meet parents and carers. If you would like to come and have a look around Ancora House School and meet the team, please contact: Amanda Lacey, Headteacher amanda.lacey@ancora.cheshire.sch.uk



Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

From all the staff at Ancora House School

