



The Hermitage Herald

May 2026

Hello!

Welcome to May's edition of The Hermitage Herald – where we look back at what's happened over the month. There is always lots going on here in our wonderful school - enjoy!

Scaling New Heights: Students Shine in the Austrian Alps

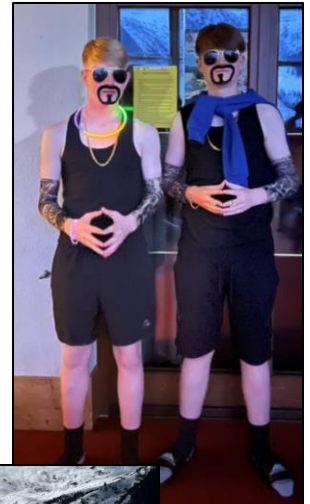
At the beginning of the month, we were thrilled to take a group of 80 enthusiastic students on an unforgettable adventure to the heart of the Austrian Alps. Staying in the stunning mountain resort of Hochfügen, students were immersed in breathtaking scenery, crisp alpine air, and the excitement of life on the slopes from the very first day.

Across five action-packed days of skiing, students made remarkable progress, challenging themselves and growing in confidence with every run.

From first-time skiers mastering the basics to more experienced students refining their technique, the determination, resilience, and positive attitude shown throughout the week were truly inspiring. It was especially heart-warming to see students encouraging one another, celebrating successes, and embracing new challenges together.

The excitement didn't stop when the ski lifts closed. Evenings were filled with a fantastic range of social activities designed to ensure everyone had fun off the slopes too. Highlights included a lively pizza and bowling night, competitive bingo and quiz evenings, and a brilliantly creative fancy dress party that had everyone laughing. And, of course, no ski trip would be complete without the ever-popular tuck shop, which quickly became a firm favourite and a daily talking point!

We are incredibly proud of all the students who attended the trip for representing the school so positively and maturely. Their enthusiasm, behaviour, and team spirit were outstanding throughout. This truly was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and we hope the memories, friendships, and confidence gained during our time in Hochfügen will stay with them for many years to come.



Oddballs Foundation

As part of Testicular Cancer Awareness Month, we were pleased to welcome the OddBalls Foundation into school. During their visit, they delivered an important and engaging message aimed at raising awareness of testicular cancer. The foundation encourages boys and men to regularly check themselves, while also working hard to remove any stigma or embarrassment around talking about the condition.

We would like to thank the OddBalls Foundation for their informative and positive approach to a vital health topic.

If you would like to find out more information, please visit: <https://theoddballsfoundation.com>



Duke of Edinburgh's Award - Spotlight

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is all about commitment, perseverance and personal growth – and this term, Year 9 student Isla has set an example by becoming the first Year 9 student to complete all three core sections of her bronze award.

For her volunteering section, Isla supported Junior Parkrun, where she played a vital role in helping create a welcoming and encouraging atmosphere for young runners. She embraced every task, whether helping with course set-up, marshalling, barcode scanning, or supporting the finish-line team. Isla also volunteered at Homework Hub in school, where she helped support other learners with their Maths homework – a fantastic example of giving back to the school community.

Isla's physical section focused on developing her speed and endurance through dedicated training, with the goal of achieving a top 10 finish in the NEHL Cross-Country League. Not only did Isla meet this goal, she achieved it multiple times, alongside a series of outstanding personal milestones. Highlights included finishing as first female at the Riverside 5K parkrun with an impressive personal best time of 19:55 and starting the track season strongly with a new 800m PB of 2:29. Her discipline and determination show just how far consistent hard work can go.

For her skills section, Isla turned her attention to baking and meal preparation, producing a wide range of dishes. Her evidence showcased everything from homemade sushi to beautifully baked cinnamon swirls – proving that skills training can be both creative and delicious!

Reflecting on her journey, Isla said that completing her Duke of Edinburgh sections has helped her grow in confidence, which is a key aim of the award. With expeditions still to come in September, Isla has already set the bar high. Congratulations, Isla – we look forward to seeing what you achieve next!



What's been happening in School?

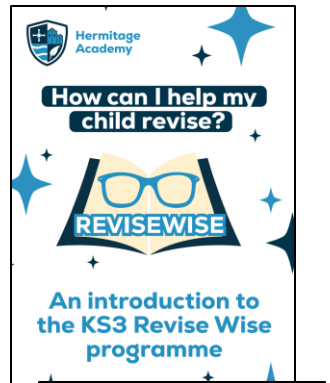
- Our Performing Arts department are busy rehearsing for our summer production, 'Mary Poppins' – watch this space for details of how to buy your tickets for this must-see show!
- On Thursday 2nd April we had James in from Kielder Observatory who spent the morning with the STEM and Robotics clubs teaching us how to code Sphero robots. There were different levels of challenges, coding the robots to travel in a straight line, a rectangle and then following a more complex path. We had great discussions about the recent rocket launch to the far side of the moon and the potential supernova of Betelgeuse any day now, or maybe in 100,000 years! We are currently planning our next visit up to Kielder, to see what else we can observe!
- To celebrate the end of term and the start of the Easter holidays, students gathered for our Easter movie night and enjoyed watching *Hop!* together. It was an egg-celent way to begin the celebrations. A truly fantastic night all around!
- Our very popular crochet club had all made easter eggs to fill up our basket to celebrate the Easter festivities. Year 7 students Skarlett H, Codi C, Florence C, Ruth H, Hannah C and Lexi B along with Year 9 students Lucie D and Lainey C created the display. The club has been a roaring success this year and it has allowed students from all year groups to come together in their love of crochet! The group are really looking forward to planning their next project – watch this space!
- Students in Years 7 and 8 have been working hard in Art – here is a sneaky peek at what they have been doing!
- The gardening group in the library has planted some tomatoes, cucumbers, peas and sweetcorn. Students have taken on the responsibility of watering them and we will plant them outside when it is warm enough.
- Students Evie and Abbie have embraced the warmer weather and have completed some al-fresco revision over lunchtime!



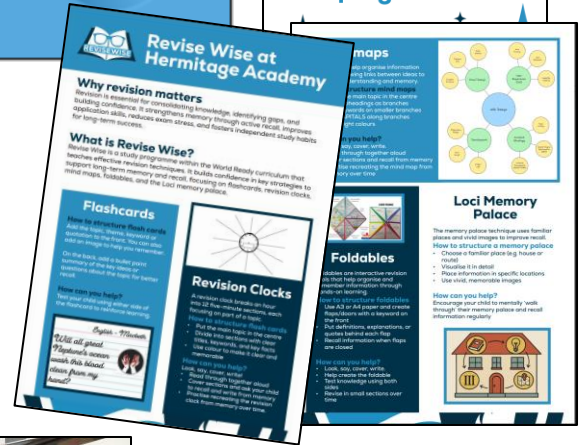
Year 11 and 13 – Exam Countdown



The month of May sees our Year 11 and 13 students embark on their final challenges of the academic year – GCSE and A-Level exams. The students will already have their exam timetables and both students and staff are now ‘locked-in’ and ready to face the next few weeks. Lessons in school will focus on final revision, and there are additional sessions during the school day and after-school to support students. Of course, there is also Student Pod and ReviseWise available – both excellent resources to aid with revision and organization for all year groups.



There are resources on the POD pages and also on our website, for key stages 3, 4 and 5.



Sixth Form Round-up

- Alumni Taminder and Beth came into school to discuss different routes into Law with Year 10 and Y11 students. They looked at the roles of barristers and solicitors.
- Our Sixth Form applicants took part in an Oxbridge session with Richard Petty, giving them the chance to reflect on their next steps, explore aspirations, and aim high in their academic journey.
- The University of Sunderland delivered a session about their summer school and student finance to our sixth formers.
- Sixth form students hosted a bake sale in school last week to raise money for SUDEP. A total of £243 was raised



epilepsy society



Hermitage Academy Sixth Form Application Form September 2026

There's still time to apply to our amazing Sixth Form!

Calling all Year 11 students! There's still time to apply to our fantastic Sixth Form, for a September 2026 start...just use the QR code here and apply today, to be part of this vibrant and close-knit community!

What's happening in our Hub and in the Community?

We have a strong pastoral offer here at Hermitage Academy, and as well as support for students within school, we can also offer information, guidance and support for families too.

CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) crisis and liaison team

The crisis and liaison team provide mental health support to young people (up to the age of 18) who are experiencing a crisis with their mental health.

What can the crisis team do for you?

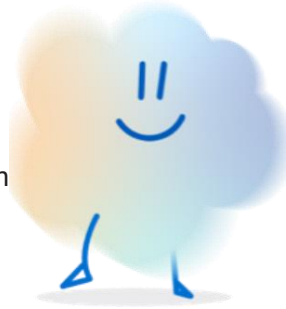
The team respond to the immediate mental health needs of young people, offering short term help, either at home or in the community, and will stay involved until there is a resolution of the immediate crisis.

Who can call?

Anyone who is concerned about a young person experiencing a mental health crisis can contact the service: **NHS 111 and select the mental health option 2.**
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

When to call?

- If a young person is suicidal or has self-harmed
- If a young person is experiencing extreme emotional distress that won't stop
- If a young person is experiencing sudden or severe anxiety which is preventing them getting on with their normal life
- If a young person is in extreme emotional distress and would like to speak to someone
- If anyone needs urgent advice about a young person's mental health



What happens when you call NHS 111 and select mental health option 2?

Calls are answered by a mental health professional. To get the support you need, the mental health professional will ask you some questions and listen to you. They can:

- Transfer callers to crisis clinicians for triage and assessment if this is needed
- Signpost to primary care services for further support, for example, your GP
- Refer to community services that are alternatives to crisis, for example, the voluntary sector
- Contact 999, if there is a risk to life

CAMHS can:	CAMHS cannot:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete urgent mental health and risk assessments • Offer advice and support about how to cope in a crisis • Help the young person and carers make plans to keep a young person safe • Develop plans to offer ongoing support as and when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide medication • Physically restrain a young person • Provide accommodation

Family Hub Workshops



Best Start Family Hubs support all families from pregnancy right up until your child turns 19, or 25 if they have special educational needs and disabilities. The team includes people from the council, NHS, community organisations and more. They can support you with everything to do with family life; they are here to make a positive difference for all families.

For more details, contact [Best Start Family Hub Chester-le-Street - Durham County Council](#) or telephone: 03000 261 111

What's on?	Where?
<p>Durham SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) drop-in</p> <p>For parents/carers of families with special educational needs and/or disabilities, drop in to ask SENDIASS for impartial information or advice</p> <p>Durham SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) drop-in sessions</p>	<p>Monday from 1.00pm to 3.00pm on:</p> <p>11 May 2026 1 June 2026 6 July 2026 3 August 2026 7 September 2026</p>

What's on?	Where?
<p>Educational Psychology drop-in</p> <p>Talk to the Educational Psychology team about any concerns you may have about your child such as learning, communication and language, social and emotional-wellbeing, practical skills or being independent.</p> <p>Educational Psychology drop-in sessions for parents and carers</p>	<p>Monday from 9.30am to 11.30am on:</p> <p>15 June 2026 17 August 2026</p>
<p>Sleep Workshop</p> <p>Sleep strategies and support for parents and carers of children aged 18 months to 19 years including children with SEND/additional needs.</p> <p>Book a place on a Best Start Family Hub event</p>	<p>Monday from 10.00am to 12noon on:</p> <p>15 June 2026</p>
<p>CAMHS Drop-in</p> <p>For parents and carers of children aged 5-19 years old. Come along and speak to a CAMHS worker about your child's needs. These sessions may be useful if your child is struggling with low confidence and self-esteem, low mood or worrying and anxious feelings.</p>	<p>Wednesday from 12.30pm to 2.30pm on:</p> <p>8 July 2026 9 September 2026</p>
<p>12 - 18 Workshop - Coping with Teenagers' Emotions - 2 hour session</p> <p>Learn how to cope with difficult situations and how teenagers can become emotional. Meet other parents and carers and discuss how you can help your teenager to control their emotions.</p> <p>Booking required - Contact Best Start Family Hub Chester-le-Street.</p>	<p>Thursday from 10.00am to 12 noon on:</p> <p>11 June 2026</p>
<p>12 - 18 Workshop - Reducing Family Conflict - 2 hour session</p> <p>Meet other parents and carers to talk about being a parent and managing family conflict. Understand why teenagers are argumentative or aggressive and learn strategies to help you cope.</p> <p>Booking required - Contact Best Start Family Hub Chester-le-Street.</p>	<p>Thursday from 10.00am to 12 noon on:</p> <p>18 June 2026</p>
<p>2 - 18 Workshop - Getting Teenagers to Co-operate - 2 hour session</p> <p>Meet other parents and carers and share some ideas and experiences about managing difficult behaviour and think about goals for change.</p> <p>Booking required - Contact Best Start Family Hub Chester-le-Street.</p>	<p>Thursday from 10.00am to 12 noon on:</p> <p>25 June 2026</p>
<p>12 - 18 Workshop - Building Teenagers' Survival Skills - 2 hour session</p> <p>Meet other parents and carers to discuss some of the reasons teenagers take part in risky activities and how we can help them to enjoy themselves without putting their health and wellbeing at risk.</p> <p>Booking required - Contact Best Start Family Hub Chester-le-Street.</p>	<p>Thursday from 10.00am to 12 noon on:</p> <p>2 July 2026</p>

Sporting Round-up

Lots going on, as usual in our PE department – here's a round-up of what's been happening since our return after the Easter break:

Congratulations to our Year 10 netball team who won their final league game for Hermitage Academy last night!

These girls have shown incredible dedication over the past 4 years and have been fantastic role models to our younger students—talented, witty, and full of passion. Well done, girls!

Here's a throwback picture from Year 7!

Well done to our Year 8 football team who have played their last game of the season.

The team has shown amazing effort, determination, and teamwork from start to finish. Every single player should be proud of how far they've come and the spirit they've shown throughout.

A special shout-out to Jay E, our Player of the Match, for his pin-point delivery and the winning goal that sealed the game in style. Outstanding performance!

Hermitage 1 v 0 Tanfield
Hermitage 0 v 0 Park View

Congratulations to our netball teams who had another successful night playing their final games of their leagues against St Bede's.

A special shout-out to our players of the matches: Nancy, Kinga and Charlie!

The U13 Boys Handball team travelled to Leeds Beckett University to compete in the England Handball Regional Finals yesterday. The team delivered an outstanding performance, finishing 2nd place. They were unbeaten throughout and narrowly missed the top spot on goal difference.

A massive well done to all players involved, you are superb ambassadors for our school.

Our Year 8 girls competed in a 6-a-side football tournament last night, they showed great teamwork and sportsmanship. We didn't come away with a win, but they worked very hard throughout the tournament.



Sporting Round-up

Year 10 student Lily P, and her football team, Wallsend Boys club U15 Girls, have won:

- NFL Premiership U15 Girls
- Northumberland County Cup
- NFL League cup

...with Lily playing as striker and scoring over 50 goals and the season has not even finished yet! An amazing achievement Lily – Well done!



Rowing regatta season is underway, and we have many Hermitage students who row for different clubs in the area. Recently, Chester-le-Street ARC held their regatta at the club, and Year 8 students Erin M, Mila S, Emily M, Alice M and Mia H bagged a medal in their first quad race!

In addition, Sam H (Durham ARC) and Elliott F (Chester-le-Street ARC) in Year 10 and John B and Millie D (both Lambton RC) in Year 11, competed in the Junior Inter-Regional Regatta in Nottingham at the end of April. They all had been selected to row for the Northern squad, meaning they were racing against another 15 other regional teams from around the country. Well done to Elliott who gained a bronze medal racing in a double, and well done to John, Sam and Millie who did our region proud!



Elyssia and her dance school competed at 'On The Beat' urban and street dance competition. Her crew Black Links won first place in the group section and Elyssia took first place in freestyle as well as 7th with her quad group.



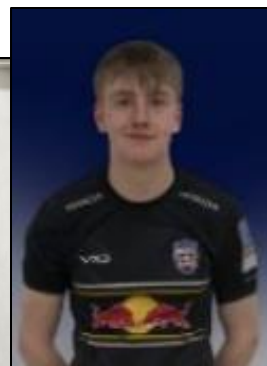
Holly G in Year 8 took first place at the recent Deerness Floor Championships, displaying wonderful artistry and beating gymnasts two years her senior.

Isla and Olivia took part in the County Durham athletics events, where they competed in a range of track and field events. They both did brilliantly, winning U16 overall Silver and Bronze medals respectively.



Durham City U15 rugby team won the Durham County Cup, 45-21 against Consett. Well done to Hermitage students Jack K, Merrick G, Joseph A and Noah B!

Year 11 rugby players Adam L and Will D, have been selected for the Red Bulls Academy, a pathway into playing rugby professionally. They have already played some games as part of the U16 squad, and the boys have travelled around the country to play. They played tournaments in Warwick and have also travelled up to Scotland to take on the Scottish Academies.



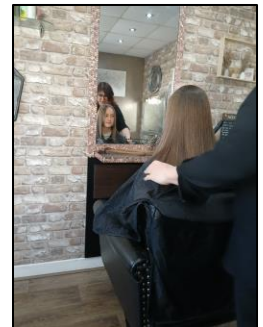
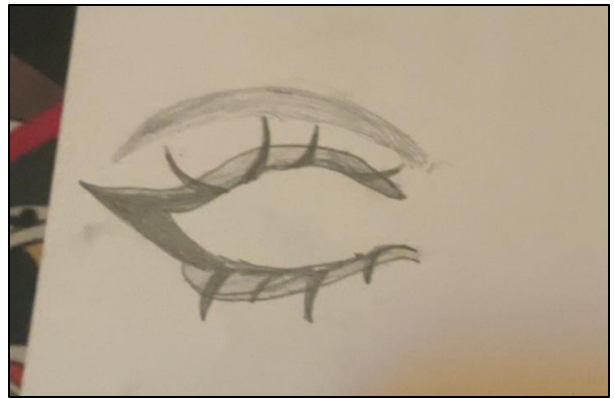


Hermitage Good News!

Lots of good news this month! Please do share with us any exciting news, things you have been involved in, or anything that you are proud of – we'd love to hear about it!



- Ruth H and Florence C in Year 7 got in touch to say they went on a litter pick around Riverside Park and they made the local news!
- Sophie G in Year 7 contacted us to say: “My football team, Whickham FC U12 girls won the Northumberland boys league.” Well done Sophie and your team!
- Courtney R in Year 7 wanted to show off her drawing skills. She said, “Look how much I’ve improved over the years!!”
- Katie M in Year 7 wanted to tell us, “I am in the ensemble of a movie!” That’s amazing Katie – such an achievement!
- George D in Year 7 wanted us to know that “On Saturday I took my first senior wicket in cricket for Mainsforth cricket clubs 2nd team.” Absolutely brilliant news, George – well done!
- Erin M from year 8 donated 12 inches of her hair during the Easter break. It has gone off to the ‘Little Princess Trust’, an amazing charity that provides real-hair wigs, free of charge, to young people who have lost their hair through cancer treatment and other conditions. We are so very proud of you Erin.
- Joel in Year 7 just wanted us to know he won his football match, picked up Players’ Player of the season and Parents’ Player of the Season. Wow! What an achievement!



- Finally, David B in Year 8 just wanted to share with us that he loves the chicken wraps in school! This lunchtime meal is now considered legendary amongst students past and present – we haven’t met many people in school who don’t love them!

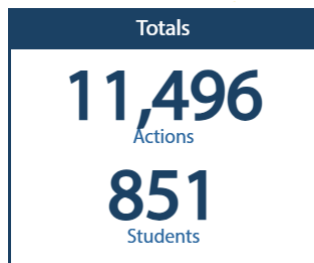
Activities Day and Hermitage Festival

The summer term is moving quickly, and we look forward to our end of term celebrations and activities. On the penultimate day of the summer term, we stop usual timetabled lessons and instead have a full day of alternative activities. Some of these will be based in school, whilst others will be off site at different venues within the region and beyond. For more details on the trips offered this year, head over to Student Pod.

The following day, on the last day of term, we hold our annual sports day and Colour Run for all students (and staff!). It really is a great end to the year and let’s hope the weather stays warm for it!



Positive Points and Praise



These students have collected the most positive points across April.

In total over the month of April, students in years 7-11 collected a whopping 11,496 points in total, with the category 'Perseverance' being where the most points were awarded.

At school we love recognising students' hard work and positive attitudes. Alongside awarding house points, we also celebrate achievements with special postcards, for

Year	Top Points
7	Jack B
8	Lexi W
9	Alfie U
10	Alyssa H
11	Ruby O
12	Jumana F
13	Katie M

sounding like an expert, going above and beyond, completing excellent homework, and much more. We take time in assembly to showcase the fantastic things our students are doing. We encourage you to share in these celebrations at home too—there are surely plenty of fridges across Chester-le-Street proudly displaying our postcards!



Dates for your Diary - May 2026

May	What's on?
5 th	GCSE written exams begin
11 th	A-Level written exams begin
12 th	DofE Expedition meeting (5pm-5:45pm)
14 th	Year 12 Next Steps event
15 th	Book Swap (English department)

House Points - April

We love a bit of healthy competition here at Hermitage Academy, and our house points system means that every student and member of staff in school can feel a part of something and contribute to the success of their houses. Points and successes are celebrated every week in assemblies, with Heads of Achievement handing out postcards to those who achieve top points for their houses. Here are the most up-to-date points for this half term thus far:

House Points	
Half-Term	
1.	 2,769
2.	 2,604
3.	 2,548
4.	 2,471

Assemblies – May 2026

We carry on the theme of 'Embracing Differences' up until we break up for half term at the end of May.

Please do ask your child about their assemblies – there is always a wealth of information that children take away and supportive discussions at home will further their understanding and awareness of these important topics. Every week parents will receive a link for you to access further information or support in line with the topics presented in assemblies.

It's called 'Carrying on the Conversation' and we hope it will strengthen the links

between home and school on the important topics for young people today.



Week beginning:	Assembly focus
5 th May	Student Leaders assembly takeover
11 th May	Judging a Book by its Cover
18 th May	Etiquette and Expectations

Other ways to Keep in touch

If you have anything to share about your child, or anything that may be happening in the community that you think we would like to hear about and could feature in our newsletter, please do get in touch.

Also, please let us know what you think of our newsletter! We'd love to hear from you!


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