13.02.2026 Issue No: 1185 The Link

Charles Darwin School

Aspire - Endeavour - Achieve

Headlines

Year 9 Parents' Evening
Thank you to all the families who attended Wednesday evening's Parents' Evening. It was very well attended, and many valuable conversations took place as we continue to lay strong foundations for GCSE study. Please remember that even if a subject is not continued to GCSE, the Key Stage 3 curriculum is carefully designed to develop transferable skills that support success across all areas of learning. It is therefore important that students maintain their current high levels of effort and commitment through to the end of the key stage.
The next important step in supporting your child's educational journey is the Year 9 Options Evening on 11th March. A letter has been sent to Year 9 families this week with further details from Mr Boyden.

Rising Stars
It was wonderful to share break with cake with so many fantastic rising stars on Thursday to present them with their Bronze badges. This shows their dedication and commitment to school and progressing in their studies by attending these extra sessions to enrich their experiences at school. My thanks to Mrs Quinn for organising and all the staff that created wonderful opportunities this term.

Celebration of Success Assembly
Our Celebration of Success assembly for former Year 11 students, who sat their examinations in Summer 2025, took place today, and there was so much to celebrate with lots of certificates and citations being awarded. This assembly was an opportunity to recognise the students' achievements and mark the end of a significant chapter in their lives. These certificates are not just pieces of paper, they represent the students' hard work, dedication, and resilience over the past 5 years. All the students should be very proud of what they have accomplished, and we are delighted that so many have chosen to continue their education at our sixth form. It was a special privilege to present Jonathan Oryema with the Head Teacher's Award for 2025

Year 11 and 13
It is essential that students maintain momentum with revision over the half term alongside taking the chance to rest before the big push up to exams.

I hope you all have an enjoyable half term break and we look forward to welcoming students back to school on Tuesday 24th February.

Aston Smith, Headteacher

Ready to learn

Dear Parent/Carers

We are having a drive on being ready for school with the correct equipment every day.

Please find a reminder below of the essential equipment that every child needs in Year 7-11 in order to access the curriculum fully and learn to the best of their ability. **Please be reminded that mobile phones should not be seen or heard in school and therefore cannot be used as a calculator.**

This equipment will now be checked by tutors in morning form time.

Children should have a bag to carry this equipment just as they all had in Year 7.
Your support in ensuring your son/daughter is ready to learn on return from half term is much appreciated.

Mrs Rees

Design Technology Trip to London

‘Design & Disability’ exhibition: trip to the V&A

On Friday 6th February, eight students from Years 7 & 8 attended a DT/SEND trip to the ‘Design & Disability’ exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

With tactile maps, braille/large-print guides, and various interactive elements, the exhibition showcases the contributions disabled, deaf and neurodivergent people have made to design and fashion. There is also emphasis on the adaptations disabled people have made to a whole manner of items to allow them to complete certain tasks or activities (e.g. adaptations to PlayStation controllers).

Some of the students commented on the day, sharing their highlights from the exhibition:

I loved all of it and how inclusive it was – I could do everything. There was lots of feel and braille to read. I could scan the pictures and listen to the audio descriptions. *Year 8 pupil*

The sensory things were good, I liked seeing the braille and learning how others with Visual Impairments are supported. *Y7 pupil*

I really liked learning about how music can be accessible for deaf people through vibrations and devices to help. *Y7 pupil*

It was good to learn about what braille is and how it works. *Y8 pupil*

I liked seeing the deaf rave set! *Y7 pupil*

I liked seeing the changes made for disabled people. *Y8 pupil*

Before heading home, we made a brief visit to see the Raphael Cartoons (tapestry paintings from the Renaissance period) in a very impressive gallery where there were also tactile and audio described versions of the paintings available.

With two buses and a train to catch each way, this trip was also about practicing our public transport skills so we were delighted when we got back to school to hear from Mr Smith that other transport users had been in touch with him sharing their comments.

> We happened to be on the bus in London at the same time as your students who had attended the trip to the V&A. The students were delightful and we were so impressed with the lovely way your staff were interacting with them. The students spoke confidently about what they had learnt at the museum and were real credit to the school. As a parent to a child with a disability, we also thought it was great you were taking them to this exhibition.

Thank you to Mr Romero for organising our trip and to Miss Holman, Mrs Williams and Mr Frost for supporting us.

Rising Stars News - Year 7

Well done, to the Year 7 Rising Stars who achieved their bronze badge for attending Rising Stars after school each week since September!! On Thursday at break time Mr Smith presented their badges, their prizes and they were give a 'cake at break' treat. What great dedication!
Well done: Poppi Turner, Adiel Akioyame, Evelyn Kercishta, Rebel Almeida, Zissel Laryea, Mason Martin, Logan Ferrige, Jack Delaney, Elliott Smith, Max Brockelhurst, Travis Lippett, Henry Blosse, Jaden Derry and Chace Haydon.

Ms G Quinn
Teacher of History/HPA Coordinator

Year 8 Trench Challenge

Ceramics Club

Mrs Broad delivered her 1st Ceramics club to a small group of students. They enthusiastically designed, created and glazed their own heart plate. These made wonderful gifts and the students really enjoyed further developing their new skills in this area.

We look forward to the upcoming ceramics clubs, Mother's Day plate design and the Easter ceramic egg club with sgraffito etching has just been added to ParentPay. Spaces fill extremely quickly!!!

We are also looking forward to using our brand new extruder kindly donated by Charles Darwin PTA more updates to share over the coming term.

The Beagle

The students' newsletter The Beagle is available via student email (outlook) and comes out every other Friday.

Please remind your son/daughter to regularly check their email. We want students to become more independent and use their email more, to get them ready for their world of work or dealing with their personal administration.

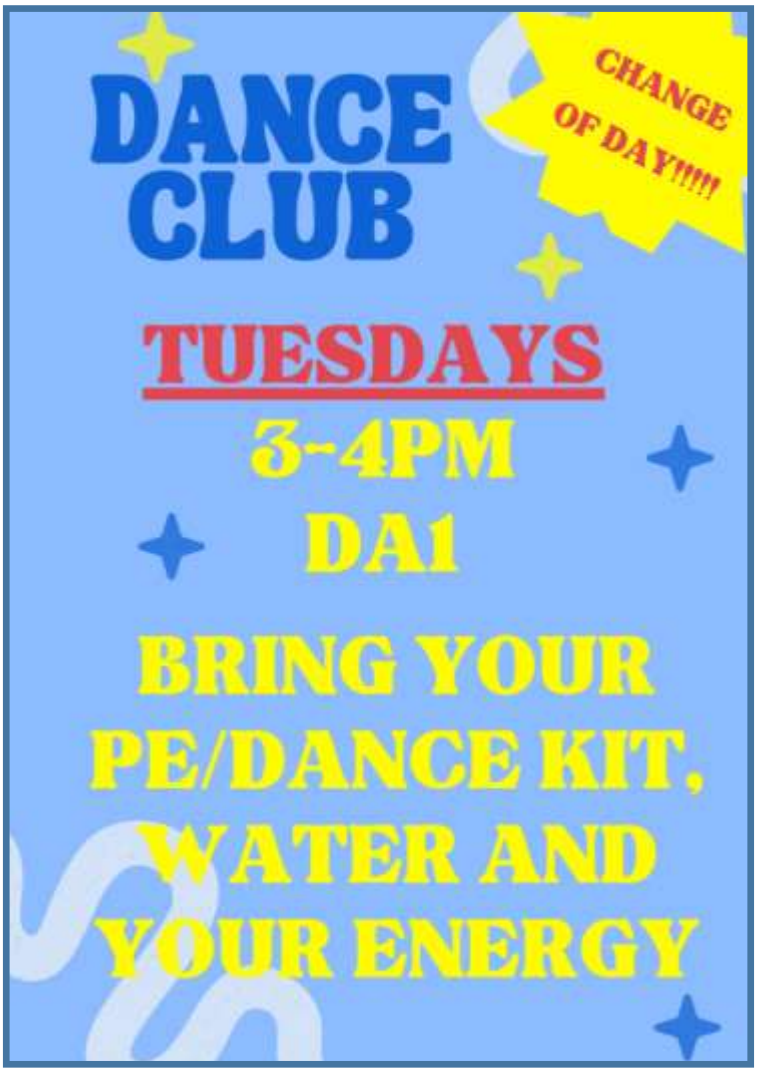
The Beagle provides lots of opportunity for students to contribute and improve their own Personal Development.

Mr R Jones

Extra-Curricular Clubs

Spring term clubs and activities
We have a variety of clubs and extra curriculum activities being run this term.

Details can be found on our website or click the link Charles Darwin School - Clubs



Dance Club is changing day in the hopes that more students will be able to attend both Dance and Drama clubs.
See you on Tuesday!

Miss Winter

Jack Petchey Speak Out Challenge

On Friday 6th February, six students: Daisy Pointer, Emily Whitby, Millie Ford, Niamh Paton, Catherine Seidler and Edie Pinston, delivered impressive speeches on a wide range of topics to members of the English Department. The standard was exceptionally high, making the final decision a very close one.

Congratulations to Mille, who was selected as the overall winner, with Catherine finishing a very close second. Millie will now go on to represent Charles Darwin School at the Jack Petchey's Speak Out Challenge regional round in Bromley.

We wish her the very best of luck and congratulate all participants on their confidence, creativity, and hard work.

Ms Ollier

Second Hand Keyboards for Sale

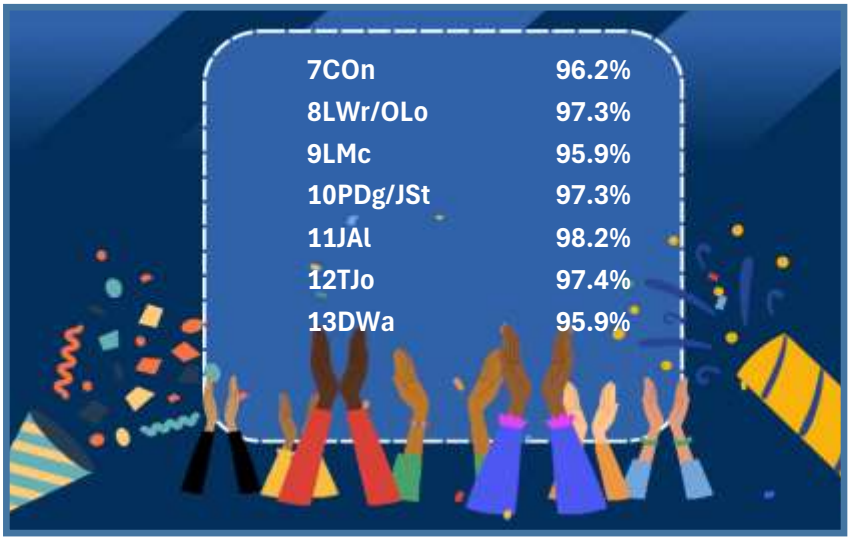
The music department has recently upgraded its music keyboards. As a result, we have 16 second hand keyboards for sale. All are in working order but do have the note names written on the keys for ease of use.

We are asking for a £40 donation per keyboard. If you are interested, please send an email to Miss Mace vmace@cdarwin.com

Miss Mace

January Attendance

Congratulations to the following Tutor Groups who have the highest attendance for week ending 6 February 2026.



As you are aware attendance is linked to a student's attainment and at Charles Darwin we work closely with the parents to keep students' attendance levels as high as possible. Please could we ask that if your child feels unwell in the morning (headache etc.) and they do feel better later on, that you send them in. This will benefit them as they will not miss a whole days learning.

Please can we also remind parents to call in before 8.30am for each day of your child's absence and clearly stating your child's name and form. Please do not rely on receiving a text from us chasing their absence.

A reminder that pupils **should not** contact home if they feel unwell but should be seen and assessed by Mrs Booth, our Health Care Lead.

Parents should be aware that pupils will not be sent home without being seen by Mrs Booth in the first instance.

Students Services Team

Pupil absence line: 01959 574043

Reminder – please can parents call the absence line each day of your child's absence **before 8.30am**, clearly stating your child's name and form. Please do not rely on receiving a text from us chasing their absence.

If you wish to report your child's absence, **OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS**, please call the school on **01959 574043** and when prompted to enter the extension number, please **dial 1** and you will be taken through to the student absence line where you can leave a message regarding your child's absence. This ensures we know your child is safe and their absence is authorised where possible.
Thank you for your support.

Parents should be advised that the school does not provide students with Paracetamol unless it is a medical emergency. We have a limited supply in school and prefer that medication wherever possible is administered at home.

Mrs Booth
Health Care Lead

Charles Darwin School

Headteacher: Aston Smith, BA (Hons), MA, NPQH

Jail Lane
Biggin Hill
Westerham
Kent TN16 3AU
Tel: 01959 574043
enquiries@cdarwin.com

Exam Invigilators
£13.70 per hour

We wish to appoint a number of Exam Invigilators to join our dedicated pool responsible for the invigilation of public and internal exams and tests. Invigilators will be present throughout the whole exam and may also undertake tasks such as checking registers against scripts and packing them at the end of the exams. All successful candidates will receive appropriate training.

We are a "good" school (Ofsted 2023) with an ethos that encourages academic rigour, high expectations and a well-disciplined approach to learning.

Application Forms and further details are available on our website www.cdarwin.com – about us/ vacancies.

Closing date: Friday 6th March 2026

Please note: all applicants must complete the Charles Darwin School application form which is available on our website: www.cdarwin.com (about us/vacancies). CVs alone will not be considered.

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare and safety of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. Any offer of employment will be subject to an Enhanced Disclosure with the Disclosure and Barring Service and full background checks.

Preloved Uniform Shop
Promoting a positive eco-friendly culture of reusing

Did you know we have a preloved uniform shop with a variety of nearly new school uniform and PE kits?

If you are interested in checking stock, please send an email with your requirements (size, gender, specific item) to preloveduniform@cdarwin.com you can also use the link below or scan the QR code.
https://forms.office.com/e/qSR8ju6P5C

Year 8 Duty Pupil

Tilly Edmonds
Viktorija Domkova
Nathaniel Bates
Isla Comley
Sophia Bailey
Billy Visser
Bobby Shipp
Preston Roddy
Eason Vince
Sophia Smith

Student Services Duty Pupils

Elliot Johnson
Lily Ford
Jett Johnson
Nyah Newberry
Bradley Burbeck

They have been fantastic this week, and their help has been invaluable.

Free School Meal Vouchers

Please remember that due to the December and February vouchers being combined there will be no vouchers for the February half term.

Please also be advised that we are yet to receive confirmation from Central Government, as to whether the Household Support Fund Grant will be extended beyond this financial year 25/26 (end date March 2026). The decision is made by Central Government, and we will notify you once an announcement has been made.

Dates for the Diary

February
16th-20th February - Half term
23rd February - INSET DAY

March
3rd March - Trip: Year 13 Spectroscopy Masterclass, University of Reading
4th March - Trip: Year 12 Poetry Work Shop, Down House
4th March - Year 8 Parents' Evening
6th March - Trip: Year 7/Year 8 Science Live, London
7th March - Bronze DofE Practice Walk
10th March - Trip: Year 10 GCSE PE Cycling Trip, Cyclopark Gravesend
11th March - Year 9 Options Evening
12th March - Trip: Year 10 GCSE PE Cycling Trip, Cyclopark Gravesend
14th March - Bronze DofE Practice Walk
16th March - Trip: GCSE Cycling Trip - Cyclopark
20th March - Trip: GCSE Cycling Trip - Cyclopark
24th March - Trip: Year 12 UCAS conference
27th March - Ski Trip to Austria
27th March - Year 10/Year 11 Geography trip to Iceland
27th March - End of Term
30th March - 10th April - Easter Holiday

April
13th April - Summer Term starts

The SEN team at Charles Darwin:

Mrs L Thom, SENDCo
Mr B Frost, Assistant SENCo
Mrs J Patten, Senior Learning Support Assistant
Miss R Higgins, SEN Administrator

Should you need to make contact with us, please use the inbox below:
send@cdarwin.com

Term Dates 2025-2026

Spring 2026

Monday 5th January – Friday 13th February

Half term: Monday 16th February – Friday 20th February

Monday 23rd February – Friday 27th March

Easter Holiday: Monday 30th March - Friday 10th April

Summer 2026

Monday 13th April – Friday 22nd May

[Monday 4th May Bank Holiday]

Half term: Monday 25th May – Friday 29th May

Monday 1st June – Friday 17thJuly

INSET Days:

Wednesday 14th January 2026

Monday 23rd February 2026

Friday 22nd May 2026

Friday 26th June 2026

Notes:
Good Friday 3rd April 2026
Easter Monday 6th April 2026

Term Dates 2026-2027

Inicio Educational Trust – Secondary Schools

Term Dates 2026-2027

Term 1

Start:	Tuesday 1st September 2026
Finish:	Friday 16th October 2026
Autumn break:	Monday 19th October 2026 to Friday 30th October 2026
	Staff Development Day Tuesday & Wednesday 1st & 2nd September 2026

Term 2

Start:	Monday 2nd November 2026
Finish:	Friday 18th December 2026
Christmas break:	Monday 21st December 2026 to Friday 1st January 2027
	Staff Development Day Monday 2nd November 2026

Term 3

Start:	Monday 4th January 2027
Finish:	Friday 12th February 2027
February break:	Monday 15th February 2027 to Friday 19th February 2027
	Staff Development Day Wednesday 13th January 2027

Term 4

Start:	Monday 22nd February 2027
Finish:	Thursday 25th March 2027
Spring break:	Friday 26th March 2027 to Friday 9th April 2027
	Staff Development Day Friday 12th & Monday 22nd February 2027

Term 5

Start:	Monday 12th April 2027
Finish:	Friday 28th May 2027
Early May Bank Holiday:	*Monday 3rd May 2027*
May break:	Monday 31st May 2027 to Friday 4th June 2027
	**No inset Day this term*

Term 6

Start:	Monday 7th June 2027
Finish:	Wednesday 21st July 2027
	Staff Development Day Friday 25th June 2027

**Term 5 Staff Development Day – to be chosen by Headteacher*

There will be no inset day for CDS in Term 5 – we will hold our inset day on Friday 12th February