



11th September 2026

Weekly Parent Newsletter

Headteacher's Welcome

Welcome to our very first weekly newsletter for parents.

I want to start by reflecting on the positive start to the year. I have thoroughly enjoyed my first two weeks as Headteacher and have been struck by the warmth of the community - students and families have been so kind and welcoming to me in my new role - thank you! I have also been so impressed by the focus, pride and hard work our students have demonstrated so far, not just in lessons, but in clubs and opportunities beyond the curriculum. Individually and collectively, they are an impressive group of young people with so much talent and potential.

The aim of this weekly newsletter is to serve as a central hub for all key updates, upcoming events and school news. We hope that by streamlining communication we can give you a clear and enjoyable round up of everything happening across school.

I am deeply ambitious for John Spence and every child in our care. We have much to celebrate in recent achievements and much to be proud of in school, but I am also excited about how much more we can achieve in the coming years. Working with you will be a critical part of this success and I am grateful to you for the support you have already shown the school. I look forward to working alongside you to ensure that every one of our students can reach their potential and have a happy and successful time at school.

Ms Marshall



Upcoming Events and Trips

Academy Open Sessions

Sport has always been central to what we offer at John Spence and there are numerous opportunities to participate as well as compete. A great place to start, especially for our new pupils in Year 7 is with the Academy Open Sessions next week.

Open sessions are available for anyone in Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9)



- **Thursday 17th September 8.15am - 10.00am session 1**
- **Thursday 24th September 8.15am - 10.00am session 2**

Indoor sports (trampolining, dance, netball, table tennis) meet at the sports hall

Outdoor sports (football, girl's football, rugby) meet at the astro.

You can read more information about Academy [here](#) and this [document](#) will show you all of the enrichment opportunities we have available to your child.

Open Evening

On Tuesday 22nd September between 5-7pm we open our doors and welcome the families of prospective pupils currently in Year 6, who are thinking of joining us next year.



A selected group of our current pupils will be acting as tour guides for the evening. Being chosen as a guide is an important responsibility and those selected should be immensely proud to represent our school community and welcome our future pupils!

Could all guides please arrive at school no later than 4:45pm on the evening and in full school uniform.

Please help us promote the evening by reposting/sharing our social media posts with your friends and family.

Pledge Day

Pledge day is a well loved day here at John Spence and this year it will be happening on Friday 25th September. Pupils will be off timetable all day taking part in various exciting activities designed to expand their experiences of the world around them. You can find more information by clicking the link below for your child's year group (this information has also been email home today):



- [Year 7 - Teambuilding](#)
- [Year 8 - Cragside](#)
- [Year 9 - North East Landmarks](#)
- [Year 10 - Hall to Harbour Walk](#)
- [Year 11 - College visits](#)

You can read all about our Fit for Life Pledge [here](#).

Key Notices

Safeguarding Team at John Spence

Your Child's Safety and Wellbeing Come First

At our school, creating a safe, happy, and supportive environment for your child is at the heart of everything we do. We know that children thrive best when they feel secure, valued, and listened to.



Our dedicated Safeguarding Team is here to ensure that every student has a trusted network of support whenever they need it, whether they are navigating friendship challenges, feeling overwhelmed, or facing more complex personal difficulties.

Who to Contact: If you ever have a concern about your child's wellbeing, or another student's safety - please don't hesitate to reach out. No worry is too small.

Click here to meet the [Safeguarding Leads at John Spence](#)

Ready to Learn Routines: Phones and Equipment

We would like to thank all Parents and Carers for your continued support in ensuring that your children arrive at school every day, fully equipped and ready to learn. Next week, all teachers will be focusing on equipment in lessons - please ensure your child has their **pencil case**, **blue book** and **school bag** with them every day.



We have been particularly impressed by how well students have adapted to the new morning phone pouch routine, and we are already seeing a positive impact across the school, with students more focused, engaged and ready to begin their day. Thank you for your support.

Please also remember that students need to arrive in enough time to be in their form class by **8.35am**. As the school site can be very busy in the morning, we strongly recommend arriving by **8.25am** to allow plenty of time to enter school following the checks and get to form on time and avoid a pastoral lunch detention.

Homework

Independent study outside the classroom directly impacts student success, helping consolidate school learning and build the habits essential for future GCSE revision. Developing these routines early makes preparing for exams far more manageable down the line.

Key Benefits of Homework:

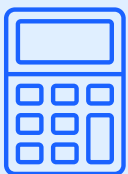
- **Academic Impact:** Deepens subject knowledge and improves GCSE performance.
- **Revision Readiness:** Builds early habits for independent exam preparation.
- **Life Skills:** Teaches vital organization, time management, and self-discipline.



How we set Homework:

- If your child is in Years 7-9, they will receive regular homework for most subjects from this point onwards. For the core subjects of maths, English and science, it will be weekly. For other subjects, it will be fortnightly or less.
- If your child is in Year 10 or 11, they will receive weekly homework for most subjects.
- Notification of all homework and deadlines will be posted on Google Classroom.
- Additionally, students will be encouraged to write their homework in their **blue form books** which should be in their school bags at all times.
- Support and guidance will be offered in school to assist. If your child has a SEND diagnosis, they will be guided to specific homework support.

Maths Calculator Requirements (All Years)



Recommended Models: Casio fx-85GT CW+ (latest standard) or Casio fx-85GT CW (older model).

Where to Buy: Widely available at Amazon, Argos, and major supermarkets (older models are often discounted).

JED Talks Return This Term!

Looking for a great opportunity to inspire your child beyond the standard curriculum? We're thrilled to announce the return of **JED Talks**—our very own TED-style presentation series where staff members share their personal passions and unique expertise with students.



It's a fantastic way for students to discover new hobbies, gain fresh perspectives, and get inspired by their teachers in a relaxed setting.

Event Details

- **When:** Every Tuesday lunchtime, starting **September 15th**
- **Where:** School Library
- **Tickets:** Free, but space is limited. Students can pick up a ticket from **Mrs Morgan in the library**.
- **Week 1 Highlight:** Mr. Patterson is kicking off the series with an exciting talk on **climbing!**

Encourage your child to grab a ticket from Mrs Morgan this week so they don't miss out!

Connect Mental Health

PARENT/CARER VIRTUAL MONTHLY SUPPORT SESSION

'Understanding Anxiety and Strategies to Support Your Child'

Connect MHST invites Parents and Carers supporting children and young people with social, emotional, and mental health needs to a virtual support session.

The monthly session is held on Zoom on the last Wednesday of the month at 5.30pm.



September's support session topic will be 'Understanding Anxiety and Strategies to Support Your Child' on Wednesday 30th September - 5.30pm

The virtual session is a place for parents and carers to get information and support from Connect on wellbeing topics identified by parents, share their experiences if they choose to, help and support each other and get information and advice to support them.

Please click on the link below to register your interest and to receive the Zoom invite.

[Connect Virtual Support Group – September Registration](#)

Please register in advance of the Zoom meeting time as our emails are only accessible during office hours 08.30-16.30

Incredible GCSE Results

We are immensely proud of our Year 11 students, whose hard work and determination are reflected in this year's outstanding GCSE results. Overall, the school achieved very pleasing progress across key areas:

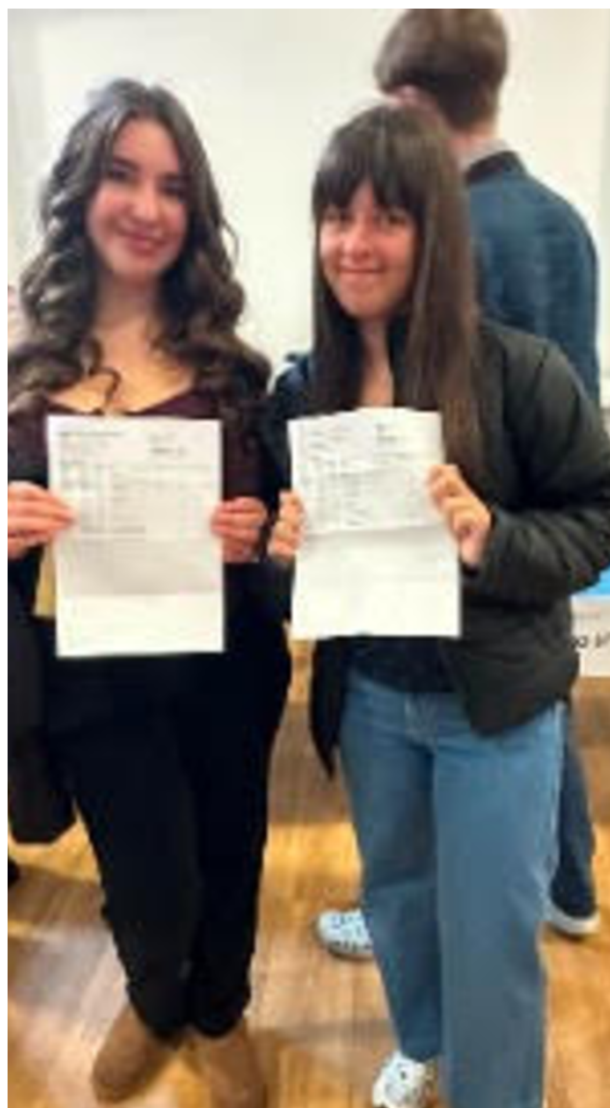
- **English & Maths (Grade 4+):** Up by 10%
- **English & Maths (Grade 5+):** Up by 14%
- **Top Tier Performance:** 15% of all grades awarded were Grade 7 or above

These results highlight the exceptional dedication of our cohort, alongside some remarkable individual success stories.

A huge congratulations to **Maisy Y** and **Niamh R** (pictured below), who achieved the school's highest average attainment with impressive average grades of 8.5 and 8 across all subjects.

Special recognition also goes to **Caleb C** (pictured below with Head of Year 11, Simon Crowe), who earned the highest progress score with an incredible **+3.45**—meaning he achieved, on average, more than three grades higher per subject than predicted based on his prior attainment.

Congratulations to all our students on these fantastic accomplishments!





Success

Starting secondary school is a huge leap, but the Year 7 cohort has stepped up with incredible energy, maturity, and enthusiasm. In just a few short weeks, they have mastered their new routines, navigated the corridors with growing confidence, and embraced the school's core values of **Fit for Life**.

Highlights of Their Transition:



- **Academic Readiness:** Teachers are consistently praising their focus in the classroom, enthusiasm for new subjects, and willingness to dive right into learning.
- **School Community:** From trying out new extra-curricular clubs to making new friends across different primary schools, they are building a strong, supportive community.
- **Independence:** They have adapted brilliantly to managing their timetables, moving between specialist classrooms, and taking responsibility for their daily equipment and homework.

Starting a new school can bring a mix of excitement and nervous energy, but your children have shown remarkable resilience and positivity. Thank you for your continued support at home during this settling-in period - together, we are setting the foundation for a brilliant five-year journey at John Spence.

Success

Inspiring Dedication in Year 10 Maths!

We are thrilled to share some fantastic news about our Year 10 mathematicians. Nineteen students from class 10x1 have taken the initiative to challenge themselves further by working toward a GCSE in Further Mathematics.



To achieve this, these dedicated students are giving up two of their own lunchtimes every week to attend extra sessions. Taking on an extra qualification requires real drive, and we couldn't be prouder of their ambition and hard work.

A special thank you goes to **Mr Hymers** and **Miss Sweet**, whose dedication makes these extra opportunities possible.

Please join us in celebrating these students' exceptional commitment to their education! If your child is in 10x1, give them a well-deserved nod of encouragement this week.



Key Dates

- Thursday 17th September - U16 Basketball Fixture
- Tuesday 22nd September - Y6 open evening
- Friday 25th September - Pledge Day
- Tuesday 29th September - Y7 & Y9 photographs
- W/C Monday 5th October Y8 exams
- Wednesday 7th October Y11 post 16 options evening
- W/C Monday 12th October - Y11 Snapshot 1 exams
- W/C Monday 19th October Y9 exams
- Tuesday 20th October - Y7 BAE Systems STEM Roadshow (P1)
- Thursday 22nd October - Awards Evening
- Monday 26th - 30th October Half term

Links to Key Information and Letters



RSE Education

Please read [this](#) letter from Mrs Winder regarding Relationships and Sex Education at John Spence.

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