



Ashton Sixth Form College

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN EDITION





WELCOME

Welcome to the first ASFC newsletter of academic year 2025/26. I hope that it gives you an insight into the busy life of the college and the great start that has been made to the academic year.

It has been lovely to welcome back our A2 cohort who are super busy with their course demands and planning their next steps whether this is a UCAS application or thinking about apprenticeships or employment. Our new students have settled in superbly and are now finding their way around college with confidence. Attendance, punctuality and engagement are excellent across all cohorts which is a great sign of a positive year ahead.

I am immensely proud of our 2025 leavers' achievements. The high grades they achieved will open doors to even the most competitive and prestigious university or employment opportunities. Students performed superbly across all qualification types with 4 out of 5 of all A Level grades at A*-C, half of all T Level students achieving the much coveted 'distinction' grade (and none of them achieving less than 'merit') and our BTEC students achieving results that place them in the top 10% nationally. Wow! Our 2025 completers have gone on to some impressive destinations, showing what is achievable with hard work and dedication. We hope they stay in touch as alumni and come back to speak to and inspire future students.

The year has started with a bang in other ways too. Our Speaker of the Month programme kicked off with a talk by TV Cameraman/producer Brian Barnes who spoke about careers in the media. We have many more speakers planned. Our enrichment programme has begun with students signing up for First Aid, Mental Health First Aid, Sign Language, Build and Fix Computers, Young Enterprise and Vocal Group, to name just a few. Our annual EPQ Conference took place in September at which students from ASFC and other invited guests benefitted from talks from a great line-up of university professors and college staff who are involved in academic research. We are deeply committed to academic curiosity at ASFC, reflected in the college being one of the largest centres in the country for the EPQ qualification. I cannot wait to see what this year's cohort of students discover! This year we are also looking ahead to a Physics trip to CERN in Switzerland and our first trip to Thailand through the Turing Scheme, as well as hundreds of other trips and visits across the UK.

Other notable events so far this academic year include our Be Ambitious Awards event where we acknowledged the fantastic achievements of our students in their work experience or employer-set tasks in our Be Ambitious Week in June. 1100 students took part in a range of activities to prepare them for the workplace, and they represented themselves and college superbly well. While they did not all win an award, we are very proud of everyone who took part and hope they found their chosen activity useful. In October, we invited 100 student leaders to our annual Future Leaders Conference at the Etihad Stadium, where they participated in activities to develop their leadership skills as well as hearing from a range of impressive speakers who have achieved success in their respective careers. The questions they asked of the speakers were thought-provoking and insightful and I am sure they learned a lot. I have held the first Principal's Recognition Lunch of the year, where 50 students were recognised for 'making a great start to the academic year'. I look forward to meeting many more students at future events.

We like a good fair at ASFC and have already held our annual Widening Participation Fair to inform students of university schemes that may be of benefit to them. Over 30 local and national companies then came into college for our Apprenticeship Fair to let students know what fantastic opportunities there are to take the work-based approach to further training and qualifications after college. We are holding a Revision Fair in November for students to visit and learn about different ways of studying and revising. While I enjoy all these events, they are there for students so we continue to urge them to read their emails and take up these wonderful opportunities.

All-in-all, it has been a busy half term. I would like to thank both staff and students for everything they have done to make it such a great start to the year and wish everyone a lovely half-term break.

We return to college on Monday 3rd November to what will be another busy half term. I hope as term continues that all our students settled and happy in college. The level and volume of work will continue to pick up but we do balance this with strong academic and pastoral support. However, if any students or parents have concerns about anything at all, please do not hesitate to get in touch. We're all here to help!

With all my best wishes to our students and their families, and a huge and genuine thanks to all those who support our work.

Lisa



Part of  **STAMFORD
PARK TRUST**

FOCUS ON: XL ACADEMY

NEW CHAPTER FOR THE XL ACADEMY

It's the beginning of a new chapter this academic year for The XL Academy, as Damian Windle, current Head of XL, steps down from his role at Ashton Sixth Form College. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Damian for his outstanding leadership, dedication, and lasting impact he has made on our high-achieving students over the last 10 years.

Damian has been an inspiring and dedicated leader of the XL Academy, supporting our most ambitious students to reach their full potential. From championing high-achieving students to guiding them through applications to the UK's most competitive universities and programmes, he has left an incredible legacy. Reflecting on his time at Ashton, Damian said:

"It is with a heavy heart but after 10 years in post, the time is now right for me to move on to a new position of senior leadership at a sixth form college in Sheffield. I have thoroughly enjoyed every moment at ASFC, being able to work in a dynamic college with truly brilliant staff and students.

The XL Academy was set up to level the playing field and meet the need for high attaining students based on the principles of social justice, and it has been a privilege to work with such a talented and hardworking group of students. Throughout my time at ASFC, I have worked with some of the brightest young minds in Tameside and East Manchester and it has been wonderful to see so many students achieve prestigious Russell Group University places, Oxbridge offers, medicine, dentistry and vet places, and secure elite apprenticeships. It has also been a delight to work and form partnerships with local schools in the area through our school visits and in-house conferences. The XL programme remains one of the premier most able programmes in the country and I am proud to have been a part of that. In passing it over to Rob, I know he will continue the excellent work and I am thrilled and excited as to what he has got in store."

Stepping into the role is Rob Murray-Green, current Head of Chemistry at Ashton. Rob brings both passion and experience to the XL Academy and is excited to take the programme forward: "The XL

Academy is an amazing asset to our college and I am delighted to be able to pick up this role from Damian. The work he has done has been nothing short of phenomenal and the programme offers a truly unique experience for our most ambitious and most able students. Through tailor-made tutorials, inspiring lectures and a high challenge academic culture, we will continue to deliver a programme which aims to get the very best out of our students. I am very excited for what's next for The XL Academy and I cannot wait for myself and the team to get started! Expect to see a lot happening for our Oxbridge Scholars, MDV applicants and opportunities for our most talented creative students."

We thank Damian for everything he has contributed to The XL Academy and the wider college community, and we warmly welcome Rob as we look ahead to an exciting new chapter.

Exciting Times Ahead at XL Academy!

This new academic year marks the beginning of a dynamic new chapter for our most able learners, with fresh opportunities designed to stretch and inspire them. At the heart of our vision is a strong focus on developing powerful study habits that will help students achieve the very highest A-level grades possible. We're committed to equipping them not just with knowledge, but with the mindset and strategies needed for academic excellence.

Our Oxbridge Scholars programme is also seeing some changes which includes a re-vamped strands structure! We are really excited about these and can't wait to see the applications come through from the year 1 cohort.

And for our aspiring Year 10 pupils, we have some exciting new conferences lined up—perfect opportunities to experience what XL Academy has to offer and begin their journey toward high achievement.

Our re-vamped calendar for the year is as follows:

26/9/2025 - 'Theology'

Our Theology conference puts your thinking skills to the test with a spotlight on the subjects of Sociology, Law, Philosophy and History.

17/10/2025 - 'Money, Markets and Management'

It's a very exciting time to be an economist! This one is for all students who are excited to study Accounting, Economics and Business.

21/11/2025 - 'The STEM Summit'

This conference highlights the powerful connections between Maths, Physics, and Computer Science in explaining the universe and driving innovation.

30/1/2026 - 'Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science (MDV)'

Calling all aspiring medics, dentists and vets! This conference focusses on the subjects of Biology, Chemistry and Psychology along with more information about these exciting professional pathways.

13/2/2026 - 'The Changing World'

This conference explores how History, Geography, and Politics interconnect to shape the world we live in today.

Rob Murray-Green, Head of The XL Academy



THE XL
ACADEMY

YEAR 10 XL THEOLOGY CONFERENCE

This term, we were delighted to welcome Year 10 students from local high schools to Ashton Sixth Form College for our first Year 10 XL Conference of the academic year!

The opening conference focused on Theology, with students taking part in engaging sessions across History, Sociology, Law, and Philosophy, Ethics & Religion. They also enjoyed hearing from keynote speaker, Revd Simon Oatridge.

Simon, a former teacher of Religious Studies, Theology, Philosophy, and History, holds Master's degrees in both Theology and History. He shared his personal journey of study, faith, and career, delivering an inspiring and interactive talk titled "Theology - The Pursuit of Happiness", where he explored how happiness can be found in God.

Students also had the chance to meet Rob, who gave valuable insight into what life is like as an XL student at Ashton.

It was a fantastic day of discovery, with students experiencing subjects they may not encounter at GCSE, while also gaining a real sense of the opportunities available through our XL Academy for high-achieving learners.



ASHTON APPRECIATES



Rachel Allen

Nominated by Rob Murray-Green

I'd like to nominate Rachel for her work on the EPQ Conference. The design and delivery of this event are truly unique to our college, and the amount of time and effort Rachel invests is outstanding. Feedback from universities, students, and staff has been wonderful, and I'm very grateful that she goes out of her way to organise something we can all be proud to host.



Daniel Arrowsmith

Nominated by Brenda Warnock and Dan Pratt

Dan has been consistently polite and professional in manner. He was always a pleasure to deal with and so courteous and approachable. Nothing was ever too much trouble for him, and his calm, helpful attitude truly made a difference. His respectful and can-do approach didn't go unnoticed — it's rare to find someone who combines such efficiency with genuine kindness. Thank you for all that you've done for the Printroom.



Chris Burke

Nominated by Inclusive Learning

We would like to specifically thank Chris for his assistance with the Read&Write software that many of our students use and need access to. Chris has an enormous amount of patience; he is always willing to help troubleshoot problems and responds to tickets in a timely manner (and always with a clear explanation!). Thanks to his help, more students can benefit from the use of assistive technology which helps remove barriers to their learning and achievement. Thanks, Chris!



Jo Fletcher-Saxon

Nominated by Rachel Allen

A huge Thank You for supporting the EPQ Conference. It is impossible to put on an event of this size without your help and support. Not only continuing each year in delivering a session that inspires and motivates EPQ students with their own research but also providing support with our external guest speakers, especially Professor Kevin Orr whose status in the research world of HE keeps him busy yet he wants to come to ASFC - you were the key link for this! I really could not manage the day without having you alongside, so just wanted to say in the spirit of Ashton Appreciates I really do appreciate your support!



Bobbie Johnson

Nominated by Kirsty Wallace

I'd like to nominate Bobbie Johnson for her unwavering support since I began in January. Her constant encouragement has pushed me beyond my comfort zone, and she's always the first to celebrate my achievements within my role.



Natalie Jones

Nominated by Carol Darwin

I would like to nominate Natalie Jones on behalf of myself and my students. My students have commented on how helpful Natalie has been from the very beginning of enquiring about their courses. Whenever they need advice or guidance, she is always happy to help. They say she does a fantastic job and is a real credit to the college.



Sheridan Lewis

Nominated by Claire Crichton

Sheridan has given, and continues to give, so much time in supporting me as a teacher new to the Drama specification. Your advice and guidance are invaluable, and I feel very fortunate to have a colleague who is so positive, passionate, and knowledgeable about Drama. You make things feel easy by being so approachable and kind. Thank you for all your support and encouragement.



Alex Noble

Nominated by Rachel Allen

I am so grateful for Alex's outstanding support at the EPQ 'Being an Effective Researcher' conference held on Friday 26th September. Alex helped with several external guest speakers, supported students and documented the event through lots of photographs reflecting the day, the activities, the sessions, and captured the speakers' passion for research. Thanks so much Alex you were brilliant and your support in the spirit of this nomination - was very appreciated!

Nominated by Clare Rosie

I would like to nominate Alex Noble who is a wonderful colleague to work alongside. Alex has a wealth of knowledge and is always prepared to provide support with organisation and planning of important enrichment activities for the students that make their experience of ASFC even better. Most importantly, Alex has a 'can do' attitude and is a beacon of positivity. It's an absolute pleasure to work with you Alex, thank you.



Lisa Richards

Nominated by Rachel Allen

Thank you, Lisa, for supporting the EPQ programme and the activities we do for the EPQ students at ASFC. Since the conferences began 3 years ago and more so this year by enabling Allerton Grange Sixth Form to attend with some of their EPQ students - A collaboration celebrating being an effective researcher, as well as bringing 2 AQA Centres of Good Practice together! Your support on the day delivering a session reminding EPQ students of the power of Journaling and reflective practice was really valuable to all the EPQ students! So, in the spirit of Ashton Appreciates - Thanks so much I really appreciate your support!



Sophie Stone

Nominated by Danielle Heathcote

I would love to nominate Sophie Stone from the library. Since taking over this role, she has been a massive help and has supported me with settling in, helping out with anything I was unsure about and reassuring me that I was doing a good job when I felt overwhelmed. She has been the rock of the library and deserves all the praise we can give her!



Luke Warren

Nominated by Tamzin Sinclair-Sivins

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to an exceptional colleague whose unwavering support—both technical and emotional—has been instrumental to our department's success. Your dedication to developing resources, enhancing facilities, mentoring students, and collaborating with staff has shaped the department profoundly. Your integrity, resilience, and passion have inspired progress and sparked meaningful conversations, while your behind-the-scenes efforts and commitment to excellence in teaching have left a lasting impact. You will be deeply missed—not only for your contributions, but for the warmth, energy, and heart you brought to everything you did. Thank you for everything.

OUTSTANDING LONG SERVICE

Before the summer break, we were delighted to celebrate three members of staff who have each dedicated 20 years of service to the college

Angela McGibbon

Vicky Clough

Anna Harvey

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

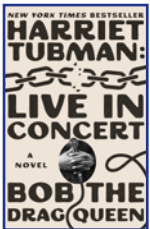
Danielle Heathcote, our Learning Resources Manager, gives us some book recommendations. All of these books are available from the college library, so stop by and borrow one of these fantastic books!

Bat Eater - Kylie Lee Baker



Bat Eater by Kylie Lee Baker is a horror novel on the surface but it also dives deep into powerful themes like xenophobia, isolation, and the stigma surrounding Chinese identity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The story follows Cora, a Chinese-born woman living in America, who's torn between honouring her ancestral traditions and navigating the pressures of modern life. After her sister is murdered, Cora is faced with a choice, should she honour the Hungry Ghost Festival, an ancestral tradition when spirits are believed to walk among the living, or refuse to feed the hungry ghosts and risk inviting one into her life? I loved every second of this book, and wish I could read it again for the first time, it's eerie, thought-provoking, and perfect for this time of year.

Harriet Tubman: Live in Concert - Bob The Drag Queen



Written by activist and drag icon Bob the Drag Queen, it reimagines Harriet Tubman as a time-traveling musical visionary who teams up with a modern-day producer to create a hip-hop album that shakes up history and identity. It's bold, funny, and full of heartfelt moments between all the characters as they show pride in who they are and what they have achieved, blending Afrofuturism, satire, and powerful moments of connection. This book is unlike anything I've read before, I listened to the audiobook which included 2 tracks named "Now I See" and "Queen of the Underground" which really added to the storytelling and immersion I love the way this book celebrates Black creativity and resilience in such a fresh, imaginative way. It's a great reminder that history can be told through joy, music, and bold storytelling.

The Shattered Truce - Donna Brown **Recommended by Louise Brown**



This book was written by my cousin. The story begins with Fran and his Mother Annerin who have become isolated from the settlement of March since Annerin's husband was killed by the Chief of the village. Annerin's life is in danger when Gareth the son of the Chief is badly injured and Annerin is wrongly accused. Annerin makes a lonely journey to seek the help of Arete who is believed to be a witch. When Fran realises his mother is missing, he goes after her.

Throughout the story the reader learns about the characters of the families in the March settlement and how the past has shaped the social structure of the village. As the events of the story unfold, everything is about to change, as goodness conquers evil...

The Shattered Truce was a finalist in the Wishing Shelf Book Awards 2024 in the Adult Fiction category. Donna's other achievements include, winner of the Winchester Writers Festival Short Story Prize 2018, one of the winners of the Fish Short Story Prize 2019/20 and winner of the short story category of the Cheshire Prize for Literature in 2025.

KEY DATES FOR PARENTS/CARERS

A1 EXAMS TIMETABLE 2025-26

Week	Term		
AUTUMN TERM			
WC03/11/25	GCSE Resits - English Language & Maths		
SPRING TERM			
Fri 02/01/26 - 19/01/26	BTEC Exams & Set Tasks		
WC09/03/26	Art Mock - Week One		
WC16/03/26	Art Mock - Week Two		
WC23/03/26	BTEC Exams		
SUMMER TERM			
WC20/04/26	A1 Mock 1	WC04/05/26	BTEC Exams
WC27/04/26	T-Level Exams	WC22/06/26	Criminology CA Unit 1
	BTEC Exams & Set Tasks	WC29/06/26	Criminology CA Unit 1 Mop-Ups
WC11/05/26 - 26/06/26	GCSE Resits - English Language & Maths		
	T-Level Examinations		

Key:



A1 Mock 1

Criminology
Controlled
Assessment



A1 Mocks

BTEC Exams
& Set Tasks/
T-Levels

A2 Online Parents/Carers Evenings - Thursday 6th and Wednesday 12th November between 4:30 and 8pm

A1 Online Parents/Carers Evenings - Wednesday 21st and Thursday 29th January between 4:30 and 8pm

A2 EXAMS TIMETABLE 2025-26

Autumn Term		Spring Term	
WC03/11/25	GCSE Resits English & Maths	Fri 02/01/25 - 19/01/26	BTEC Exams & Set Tasks
WC01/12/25	Mock 2 - Start Fri	WC09/03/26	A2 Mock 3 - Start Fri
	Art Mock 2 - Week 1		Art Mock 1
WC08/12/25	Mock 2 - Continued	WC16/03/26	A2 Mock 3 - Continued
WC15/12/25	Criminology CA Unit 3		Art Mock 2
	Art Mock - Week 2	WC23/03/26	BTEC Exams
Summer Term			
WC20/04/26	Art - Group 1	WC04/05/26	BTEC Exams
	BTEC Exams	WC11/05/26 - WC22/06/26	Public exams Incl A Level, BTEC, T Level & GCSE
WC27/04/26	Art - Group 2		
	BTEC Exams & Set Tasks		
WC04/05/26	Art - Group 3		

Key:

GCSE Results

Criminology
Controlled
Assessment

Art

Art Mocks

A2 Mocks

Public Exams

BTEC Exams &
Set Tasks

Assessment	Week Commencing
CAP 1	6th October
CAP 2	24th November
CAP 3	2nd February
CAP 4 (Mock 1)	20th April
CAP 5	8th June

A2	
Assessment	Week Commencing
CAP 6	22nd September
CAP 7 (Mock 2)	5th December
CAP 8 (Mock 3)	13th March
CAP 9	27th April



STUDENTS TERM DATES 2025-2026

Autumn Term 2025

(Welcome days for new students 2nd or 3rd September)

Thursday & Friday	21 & 22 August 2025	Enrolment - New Students
Thursday	04 September 2025	Teaching Begins
Friday	17 October 2025	First Half Term Ends

Half-Term (2weeks)

20 October – 24 October 2025
27 October – 31 October 2025

HALF TERM HOLIDAY

Monday	03 November 2025	Second Half Term Begins
Friday	19 December 2025	Term Ends

Spring Term 2026

Tuesday	06 January 2026	Term Begins
Friday	13 February 2026	First Half Term Ends
Monday - Friday	16 February – 20 February 2026	HALF TERM HOLIDAY
Monday	23 February 2026	Second Half Term Begins
Friday	27 March 2026	Term Ends

Summer Term 2026

Monday	13 April 2026	Term Begins
Monday	4 May 2026	MAY BANK HOLIDAY
Friday	22 May 2026	First Half Term Ends
Monday - Friday	25 May – 29 May 2026	HALF TERM HOLIDAY (Bank Holiday 25th)
Monday	01 June 2026	Second Half Term Begins
Tuesday	30 June 2026	Term Ends

THIS TERMS HIGHLIGHTS



WELCOMING NEW STUDENTS

Following enrolment in August, we began this academic year by welcoming our new A1 cohort into our college community! Over two days, new students participated in Welcome Days, which included a warm introduction from our Senior Leadership Team, opportunities to meet their Senior Tutors and fellow classmates, and a vibrant Freshers' Fair. The events were designed to help students settle into college life, learn more about the support available, explore enrichment opportunities, and start building connections that will support them throughout their journey at Ashton Sixth Form College.



PUBLIC SERVICES CAREERS FAIR

We hosted our annual Widening Participation Fair this term, where our students had the opportunity to speak with universities about Access Schemes and the opportunities available to them. A big thank you to all the providers who attended and engaged with our students – they found the event both valuable and insightful!



BATON OF HOPE

Helen, our Bursary and Attendance Officer here at college, completed an incredible 7.5 mile walk recently as a Baton Bearer for the Baton of Hope walk through Tameside.

The Baton of Hope is the UK's largest suicide awareness initiative, dedicated to raising awareness and opening up vital conversations around mental health and suicide.

Helen carried the baton in memory of her brother Jon and raised an amazing £725 for the Anthony Seddon Fund. We are so proud to celebrate Helen's strength and dedication to breaking down stigmas around mental health. Well done, Helen!



WIDENING PARTICIPATION FAIR

We hosted our annual Widening Participation Fair this term, where our students had the opportunity to speak with universities about Access Schemes and the opportunities available to them. A big thank you to all the providers who attended and engaged with our students – they found the event both valuable and insightful!



ASHTON NEWS

ASHTON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE CELEBRATES EXCEPTIONAL 2025 RESULTS

We were thrilled to have another year of excellent achievements from students on A Level Results Day 2025.

Continuing our tradition of academic excellence across all qualifications and pathways. A Level students achieved an impressive overall pass rate of over 98%, with more than half of all grades awarded at A*-B and 80% at A*-C. Vocational students excelled once again, achieving a 99% pass rate across all courses, with 80% securing the top Distinction and Distinction* grades.

T Level students also performed brilliantly, with 100% achieving at least a Merit and almost half earning a Distinction. Across the curriculum, 30 courses achieved a perfect 100% pass rate, highlighting the consistent excellence across subject areas.

We celebrated five students securing places at the University of Oxford or the University of Cambridge this year, an achievement supported by its prestigious XL Academy. This specialist programme provides high-achieving students with tailored guidance with access to visits to leading universities, preparation for competitive admissions tests, and opportunities to extend their learning through summer schools, national competitions, and the

Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).

Among the many success stories is Cerys Shaw, an XL Academy student who achieved AAAA in Maths, Further Maths, Biology and Computer Science and is progressing to Durham University to study Maths. She said: "I'm so happy with my results. I've loved college so much and made so many memories here – it's given me so many valuable experiences and helped me grow as a person."

Her mum, Renae, added:

"Ashton Sixth Form College has been a fantastic experience for my daughter. The college has provided opportunities such as Oxnet, the chance to visit multiple universities to find the one she felt best suited her, and the opportunity to make lifelong friends."

Another outstanding achiever, Isobel Deakin, studied the Health and Social Care Extended Diploma and achieved an impressive D*D*D. She praised the college for its encouragement and guidance, saying: "I'm really happy with my results. College has been so supportive and the whole process got me prepared for my next stage."

Mo Patel also enjoyed exceptional success, achieving A*A*A*A and securing a place at Durham University

to study Maths. Reflecting on his journey, he said: "I'm very pleased with my results. My journey with Ashton has been amazing and I don't think I would've come this far without the support I have received from my tutors and teachers here. These past two years have been a wonderful experience. I'm sad it has come to an end but thankful for how it has prepared me for the next chapter."

Reflecting on this year's achievements, Centre Principal Lisa Richards said: "What a fabulous set of results from our 2025 cohort. They have worked incredibly hard and I am so proud of what they have all achieved in their A Levels, T Levels and vocational qualifications. These superb grades will set them up well for their next steps, whether that is university,



an apprenticeship or employment with training, and I look forward to hearing about their future successes.

In addition to their qualifications, our leavers have contributed hugely to college life over the past two years and have developed massively on a personal level. I would like to thank them for what they've brought to our community and I hope that they leave us with lovely memories of their time here.

Thanks also to our wonderful staff for their excellent teaching and the many ways in which they have supported our students to achieve their results. I appreciate what they do and I know our students do too."

This year's results are a reflection of the ambition, resilience and talent of Ashton Sixth Form College's students. The college is incredibly proud of the Class of 2025, who have excelled academically while contributing to college life. With outstanding grades across A Levels, T Levels and Vocational qualifications, students are progressing to competitive universities and prestigious universities. The Class of 2025 has demonstrated both academic excellence and personal growth.

EXCEPTIONAL RESULTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS AT ASFC

We're proud to celebrate an exceptional set of results from our Higher Education provision.

Students studying the BA (Hons) Education (Top-Up), delivered in partnership with the University of Staffordshire, achieved outstanding outcomes, with 89% of students awarded a First or Upper Second-Class Honours degree.

The Foundation Degree (FD) in Education also saw excellent success this year, with 100% progression from Year 1 to Year 2, and 72% of final-year students achieving distinctions and merits. Impressively, 90% of the Year 2 group have chosen to progress onto the BA (Hons) Education (Top-Up) course, with a number of students planning to continue onto the PGCE Primary at Ashton, including through the apprenticeship route.

These results demonstrate the strength of our Higher Education provision and the continued success of its partnership with the University of Staffordshire.



Many of our Higher Education students are already making a real difference in their local communities, working in primary schools as teaching assistants or unqualified teachers, while others are supporting learners in specialist SEND settings. With their Foundation Degree and BA (Hons) Education now complete, many graduates are progressing within their current roles or moving on to teacher training locally.



13 ASHTON STUDENTS ATTEND OXNET'S ACCESS WEEK 2025!

13 Ashton Sixth Form College students completed OxNet's 2025 programme over the summer at Pembroke College, Oxford. Access Week is an opportunity for students to experience life as an Oxford undergraduate through an academically intense summer residential. Students participate in a variety of activities that enable them to prepare for their next steps after college and work with academics leading in their field.

Students from the North West, North East and London have completed one of seven OxNet programmes including: Philosophy & World Religions, Humanities, Social Sciences, Languages, English, Science and Heritage 360.

Throughout the week, students took part in a variety of academic and social activities. Upon arrival, students were welcomed to Pembroke College by Access Fellow and the Director of OxNet, Dr Peter Claus; Dr Claus supported students with an Oxbridge admissions talk, lectures, a mock tutorial and mock interviews.

At the beginning of Access Week, students participated in their first Oxbridge tutorial, working closely with academics on a variety of essay questions and problem sheets. They also had the opportunity to engage with lectures, essay writing workshops and mock interviews to develop their subject knowledge and academic skills further. Science students produced and presented their

academic posters to the whole cohort one afternoon, answering questions on the research done during February's Seminar Series. In the evening, all attended a keynote lecture delivered by Dr. Simona Capisani followed by the annual Joseph Owen Formal Dinner.

Alongside academic sessions and essay submissions, students got involved with quiz nights hosted by undergraduate mentors, trips and visits across Oxford and new to this year's residential, joined either Art or Music workshops. Students produced artwork later displayed in Pembroke's art gallery, whilst the choir learnt two songs with the Musician in Residence, Helen Jones, and performed at Friday's Access Week Awards Ceremony.

"I am so proud of our students – they all pushed themselves out of their comfort zone and made the most of the OxNet experience. Academics were impressed with our students' questions and thoughtful contributions in their tutorials, lectures and mock interviews. It was great to see them engaging well not only with students on different courses to them but the academics supporting the programme." Alex Noble, Realising Aspirations Coordinator.

A huge congratulations to all Ashton students who participated in the programme including: Afsana (Philosophy & World Religions), Blessing (Philosophy & World Religions), Faye (Philosophy & World Religions), Nehal (Philosophy & World Religions), Maddie (Humanities), Eduardo (Languages), Ariana (Social Sciences), Artelia (Social Sciences), Alice (English), Charlotte (English), Wren (English), Ibrahim (Science), and Jeevan (Science). All students throughout the week received exceptional feedback from visiting academics and OxNet Coordinators for their

commitment and attitude to the programme.

2025 Awards for Ashton students:

Pembroke Scholar, English Exhibitioner - **Alice**

Easter Essay Competition winner, Science

Exhibitioner - **Ibrahim**

Easter Essay Competition winner, English

Exhibitioner - **Wren**

Access Week, Philosophy & World Religions

Exhibitioner - **Blessing**

Access Week, Humanities Exhibitioner - **Maddie**

Access Week, Science Scholar - **Ibrahim**

Access Week, English Scholar - **Wren**

Ashton Sixth Form College is proud to partner with Pembroke College and be the host hub school for the Goldsmiths' and Sutherland Centre for Philosophy and World Religions.

STUDENTS GET HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE WITH TV PRODUCTION WITH OUR SEPTEMBER SPEAKER OF THE MONTH!

We were delighted to welcome our first Speaker of the Month for the 2025–26 academic year this week, with a fascinating session led by TV producer and cameraman Brian Barnes. With a career spanning over four decades, Brian shared his experiences in the television industry, providing students with both insight and inspiration.

Brian's impressive career includes roles as a broadcast engineer at the BBC and Granada TV, Head of Technical Operations at Lime Pictures, and freelance work on outside broadcasts. He continues to contribute to well-known shows such as Coronation Street and Emmerdale. In addition, Brian has worked as a sound recordist and kit engineer for companies including Squid Broadcast Facilities, Sepia Visual Arts, and Acrobat TV, and now enjoys freelance

editing using Premiere and DaVinci Resolve.

During the interactive session, students were given the opportunity to get hands-on experience with professional TV equipment. Three students operated cameras, using Brian's own equipment, while another student used a mixing desk to record the talk. This practical element allowed students to apply techniques in sound recording and camera work in a real-world context.

The session provided a unique insight into the TV production process, highlighting the technical expertise and creativity required to succeed in the industry. Students left with a greater understanding of potential career paths in media and television, as well as practical skills they can build on in their own projects.

The Speaker of the Month series continues to offer students opportunities to learn directly from professionals across a variety of industries, inspiring the next generation of talent at Ashton Sixth Form College.





NEW SPORTS BUILDING

We are delighted to announce the new Sports Building will be open to students from **Monday 3rd November**.

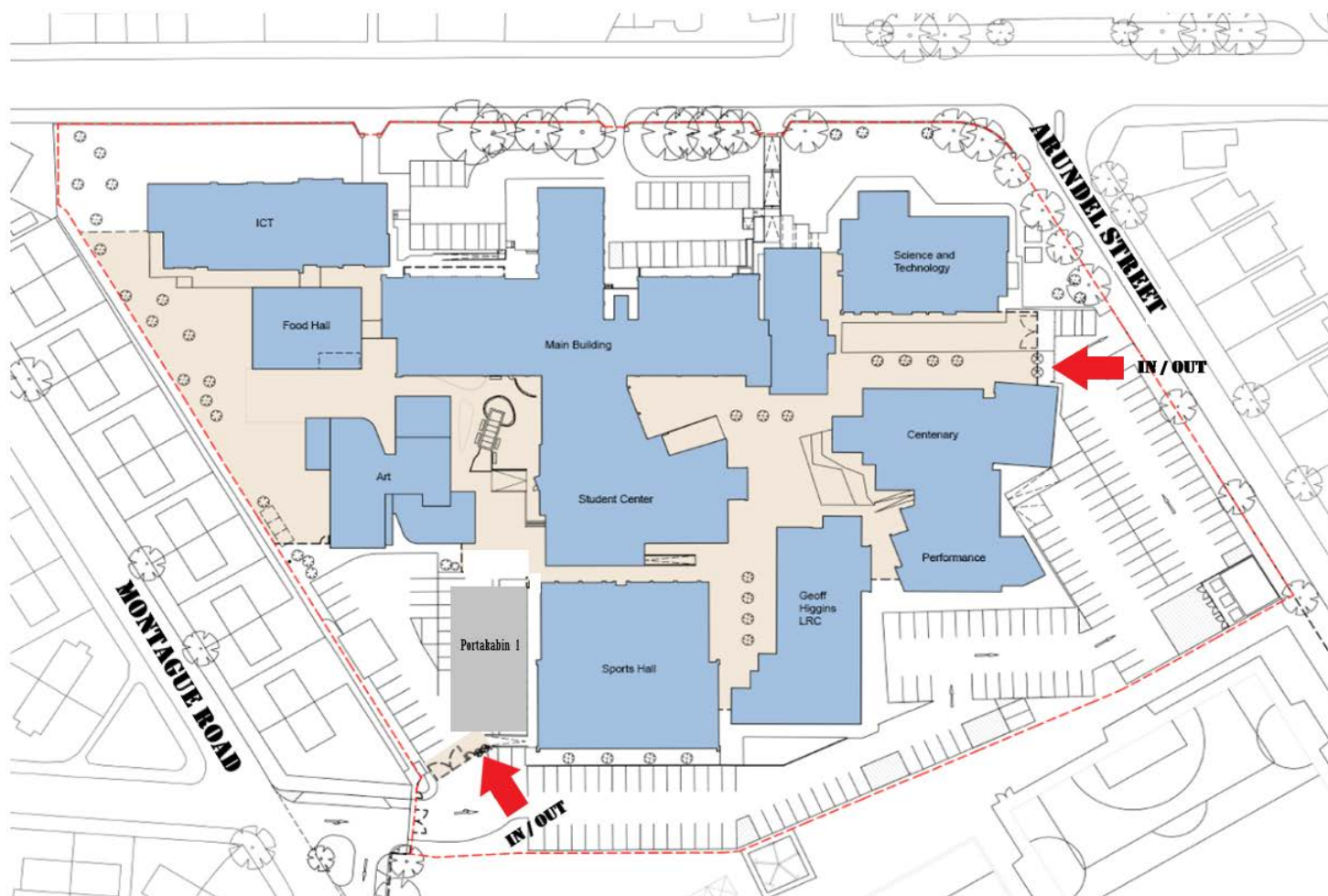
The Sport and Public Services Department and the English Department will be teaching in brand new classrooms and we have brand new changing rooms and facilities for the sports students and sports teams.

We are also reinstating the Montague Road turnstiles for students from Monday 10th November, which will make entrances to and exits from college much easier for students. This will also mean the turning circle and drop off point will be available for parents/carers on Montague Road which should alleviate some of the traffic issues on Arundel Street at the start and end of the day.

Other developments undertaken to improve the college facilities for students include a new Computer Science classroom, a new Study Centre with computers and a new outdoor facility for break and lunchtime to provide significant space with seating for students to have their food.

We will continue working hard to improve the college accommodation and environment for the benefit of students and everyone in the college community.

We thank students, staff, parents/carers and our neighbours for their patience during this building work.





Be Ambitious

AWARDS 2025

Towards the end of the 2024-25 academic year, A1 students took part in our flagship employability programme, Be Ambitious Week. For the third year running, the programme enabled over 1,000 students to develop their employability and transferable skills by completing either a work placement in a range of sectors, an employer-led project where organisations set real-world briefs for students to complete and present at the end of the week, or an employability workshop.

All students worked extremely hard throughout the week, which was sponsored by local company Stamford Products Ltd, and the standard of work they delivered was highly commended by employers. To celebrate their hard work and participation, our

Careers and Employability Team hosted the annual awards event this term.

The event opened with a warm welcome from our Centre Principal, Lisa Richards, who spoke about the significance of the Be Ambitious programme and its role in helping students achieve their goals. She was followed by guest speaker and former student Chloe Clinton, who shared her inspiring journey. While studying at Ashton, Chloe completed a work experience placement with the global technology company Cisco. Her dedication and enthusiasm during the placement led to a permanent role at Cisco, where she continues to work today. Chloe encouraged students to embrace every opportunity for work experience, highlighting how valuable transferable skills can be in shaping their future careers.

Numerous students received nominations from employers and members of staff that supported Be Ambitious Week.

CATEGORIES & WINNERS

Vocational Awards - Health & Social Care

- Darcie Holmes
- Grace Hannon

Vocational Awards - Education

- Jamiee-Leigh Cooper
- Millie Rutland

Vocational Awards - Sports Coaching & Development

- Zach Hardy
- Joe Hampson

Attitude & Commitment Award Winners

- Simra Anwer
- Harry Simensky

Creative Award Winners

- Daniel Alayo
- Isabelle Morris

Design Award Winner

- Tom McLauchlan

Leadership Award Winner

- Courtney Thorpe

Motivation Award Winners

- Ebony Rowbottom

Project Management Award Winner

- Daniel Parvin

Research Award Winner

- Elizabeth Hand

Teamwork Award Winners

- Imogen Rose,
- Lottie Arnthal,
- Milly Harper

Outstanding Achievement Individual Award Winners

- Blessing Marasha
- Robin Bintliff

Outstanding Achievement Team Award Winners

- Charles Davies
- Kai Lowe
- Gracve Martin
- Isabella Ashworth
- Emma McDermott

Outstanding Presentation Team Award Winners

- Luka Drakopoulos
- Nairit Ghose
- Zack Makinson
- Yousaf Moradi
- Saad Sahi
- Mikaeel Khan
- Syed Ahmed
- Joshya Mills



FUTURE LEADERS CONFERENCE 2025

This term, our Careers and Employability Team proudly hosted the second Future Leaders Conference 2025, bringing together a group of nominated students who consistently demonstrate leadership qualities across the college. Hosted at The Chairman's Club, Etihad Stadium, the event was designed to help students collaborate with like-minded peers and further develop their leadership skills through engaging talks and workshops.

The day kicked off with a warm and inspiring welcome from our Centre Principal, Lisa Richards, who shared powerful reflections from her own leadership journey. As the driving force behind our college community, Lisa set an energising tone for the day, emphasising the significance of strong leadership and the value of transferable skills. Her words encouraged students to fully engage with the experience, recognising the personal growth and future opportunities it could unlock.

Lisa commented:

"What a fantastic day! As a college, we have a responsibility to play our part in encouraging and developing future leaders. Our student delegates and those from our partner high schools enjoyed hearing from a line-up of inspiring guest speakers who looked at leadership from different perspectives as well as participating in a range of activities to develop their own leadership skills. They represented themselves and their college/school exceptionally well and took a step further along the way to the very bright future I know they will have. A big thank you to our delegates, our guest speakers and college staff who made the day possible."

This year's line-up of speakers was particularly inspiring, featuring Richard Bradley, European IT Director at Kellonova, Ed Darling, founder of Project Charisma and public speaking specialist, Grace Payne, Forensic Psychologist





currently working at Styal prison, and Kathryn Burn, entrepreneur and finalist on BBC's The Apprentice. Each shared powerful insights from their personal and professional journeys, showing the many different paths that leadership can take. Students asked thoughtful, challenging questions and contributed with maturity and curiosity throughout the sessions.

Students also took part in a series of workshops, including a Leadership Qualities session led by our Vice Principal, Sheridan Lewis, alongside sessions run by academic staff that encouraged reflection, collaboration, and goal setting.

Event organiser Tony Payne, reflected: "The Future Leaders Conference 2025 was a huge success, with students fully immersed in every part of the day. The speakers brought leadership to life and inspired students to pursue their ambitions with confidence. It was a proud moment seeing them engage so thoughtfully with our guests — they represented the college brilliantly and are well on their way to becoming future leaders themselves."

Rachel Smirke, Assistant Principal - Curriculum and Progression also commented:

"This was the 2nd year of our Future Leaders Conference, and once again, it exceeded all expectations. The energy, passion, and insight demonstrated by our students truly showcased the incredible potential of tomorrow's leaders. It was inspiring to see so many young minds engaged, motivated, and ready to make a difference."

The Future Leaders Conference 2025 not only enriched our students' learning experience but also reaffirmed the college's mission to empower and equip young people to lead with confidence, integrity, and purpose. Following the success of this year's event, we hope the conference will now become an annual highlight in the college calendar.

ASHTON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE ACHIEVES THE NATIONAL QUALITY IN CAREERS STANDARD AWARD

Ashton Sixth Form College has been awarded the Quality in Careers Standard, the national benchmark for excellence in careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG).

To achieve this prestigious award, recognised as the national kitemark for CEIAG, the college's Careers and Employability Team underwent a detailed and rigorous assessment process. This involved evaluating the entire careers programme against the Gatsby Benchmarks to ensure that every student receives impartial, high-quality guidance.

As part of the process, the team gathered evidence showing how careers learning is embedded across all subjects, from lesson plans and enrichment activities to employer encounters and alumni engagement.

Students, staff and external partners were also consulted to reflect on the impact of the programme and identify opportunities for further improvement. The assessment praised the college for its strong leadership of careers provision, the integration of careers learning across the curriculum, and the wide range of employer and university engagement opportunities available to students.

This achievement reflects the dedication of the Careers and Employability Team, teaching staff and external partners who work together to bring the world of work into college life. It demonstrates that careers education is firmly embedded at the heart of the college, ensuring every learner is supported to make confident, well-informed decisions about their future.



BEING AN EFFECTIVE RESEACHER: EPQ CONFERENCE

At Ashton Sixth Form College, A2 students have the opportunity to take the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). This additional qualification allows students to explore a topic or area that particularly interests them, developing independent research and project management skills along the way.

For the third year running, EPQ students from Ashton Sixth Form College, along with those from Allerton Grange Sixth Form in Leeds, were invited to the Being an Effective Researcher EPQ Learner Conference. The event offered a fantastic opportunity for students to engage with a wide range of research-related topics.

Throughout the conference, students heard from a range of guest speakers. Professor Kevin Orr from the University of Huddersfield discussed the importance of research, while Emily Sharp from the University of Leeds led a session on AI and academic integrity. Also from Leeds, Professor Abigail Harrison-Moore explored the value of using primary sources in research, and Becky Naylor Teece and Lily Bissell from the University of Southampton shared advice on refining research questions for EPQ projects.

The conference also featured contributions from members of the college's EPQ Supervisor Team, including Centre Principal Lisa Richards and Assistant Principal (Teaching and Learning) Jo Fletcher-Saxon.

EPQ Co-ordinator, Rachel Allen commented: "Held annually since 2023, the EPQ Conference was a fantastic collaboration between Ashton Sixth Form College and Allerton Grange Sixth Form in Leeds. The

event created a real 'research buzz' among our EPQ students, inspired by the insight and enthusiasm of our guest speakers.

The day would not have been possible without the wonderful contributions from Professors Kevin Orr and Abigail Harrison-Moore, colleagues from the University of Leeds and the University of Southampton, as well as ASFC Assistant Principal Jo Fletcher-Saxon and Principal Lisa Richards. Huge thanks go to all our guest speakers, their input continues to inspire our students and will no doubt be reflected in their EPQ journeys."



TEACHING & LEARNING 'PEDTECH' SHOUT OUTS

We champion and celebrate innovation in our college community.
This half term we are celebrating:

Tony Payne

For his explorations of Chat Bots that can support both staff and students with timely information and guidance.

Jackie Manning

For her explorations with Microsoft Whiteboard, bringing interactive and creative approaches to classroom collaboration.

Education and Health Team

For their collaborative work in creating a Chat Bot tailored to the needs of their department, improving access to resources and support.

Alex and Megan and the rest of the Careers and Employability team

Outstanding work on the Careers and Employability Canvas (an internal platform for our students), providing students with a comprehensive and engaging platform for career development and guidance.

Students as Digital Leaders

We are also welcoming a number of student Digital Leaders to our Teaching and Learning Community. Students are developing their own digital skills and preparing to share their existing and new skills with other students and also with staff at the college. The Student Digital Leaders enrichment programme is led by Teaching and Learning Mentor Charlene Page.

PRINCIPAL'S RECOGNITION LUNCH OCTOBER 2025

This term, our Centre Principal Lisa Richards held the first recognition lunch of this academic year. Curriculum areas nominated both A1 and A2 students who have made a promising start to the year! A huge well done to all nominated students:

- Lianna Koo
- Tom McLaughlan
- Heath Bird
- Emily Morgan Jackson
- Anthonia Adejumo
- Jude Benhamida
- Millie Foster
- Chand Patel
- Lily Brown
- Courtney Callan
- Mayesha Piyana
- Mia Walsh
- Philian Emmanuel
- Nat Parkin
- Joe Considine
- Hattie Siddal
- Komal Fazal
- Olivia Derbyshire
- Parul Randev
- Emmanuel Adekuya
- Jamie Pinder
- David Martin
- Ruby Morrell
- Elizabeth Kerr
- Dylan Hyde
- Lucas Adams
- M'Jay Jones
- Paige Rigby
- Phoebe Muir
- Kara Yarwood
- Freya Weston
- Noah Edwards
- Daisy Leach
- Priyonti Das Das
- Hafsa Khan
- Evie Etches
- Cody Hutchings
- Latitia Kotzen
- Harvey Montgomery-Carter
- James Hayes
- Kiya Houson
- Nafeesah Begum
- Freya Jackson-Leafield
- Jody Ramsden
- Artelia Saliasi
- Sam Askew
- Daisy Biggar



SPOTLIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH

We are very fortunate to have an Educational Mental Health Practitioner (EMHP) based in College every Monday. EMHP's are trained to provide short-term CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) informed low-intensity interventions for young people. They are trained to support young people through assessment, formulation, psychoeducation and (brief) treatment, using a range of evidence-based, 'CBT-informed' approaches.

The support they provide is for young people who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health needs and is an early intervention strategy method which can equip young people with the tools they need to manage their mental health difficulties as they arise. This in turn is a preventative measure for young people experiencing more significant mental health difficulties later in life. Typical presentations that the MHST can offer support with are mild anxiety/worry, panic (feeling panicky, mild panic attacks), low mood, low self-esteem and common behavioural difficulties.

Jenny Dixon is our allocated Educational Mental Health Practitioner, assigned to us by Tameside Mental Health Support Team (MHST). She will provide support to students one-to-one and through group therapy for a specific number of sessions (usually 6-8) and Jenny also delivers whole class workshops. Jenny's role has not replaced the existing mental health and wellbeing support at the College; this is an additional resource which enhances the provision. During the year we will also be hosting some support and wellbeing sessions for parents and carers. The MHST can provide advice, guidance, and signposting to parents/carers with regards to their own or their young person's emotional health. Our next workshop will be on Monday 1st December at 12:30 in the Meetings Room near Main Reception and is specifically aimed at our A2 cohort in the run up to their mock exams. The workshop, led by Jenny, will look at strategies on how to deal with the pressure of exams, anxiety etc.

In addition to Jenny, we also have 2 Counsellors, Genevive and Lou, who students can self-refer to using this email address counsellors@asfc.ac.uk. Sometimes our students don't feel confident enough to send the email and in this situation all they need to do is speak to their Senior Tutor and they can refer on the student's behalf. Our Counselling service is confidential and each student is entitled to 6 sessions.

As part of Ashton Explore (college enrichment programme) students can sign up for MoodMaster. MoodMaster is a guided student peer support group where students discuss their feelings and peers

provide coping/support strategies. For information on when these sessions are students should email moodmaster@asfc.ac.uk.

Our Health and Wellbeing Officer, Finlay Holt had this to say:

Hi everyone. If you don't already know, I am Finlay and I'm going to share a little bit of information about why I took on this role. I applied to be the Health and Wellbeing Officer because mental health will always be an issue not only in college but also outside of it, so this has driven me to taken on this role as I want people to look at ASFC and say "this is the place for me" not only in terms of academic excellence but in terms of the level of care we may require throughout our time at college, I want to try and decrease the stigma around accessing not only the Inclusive Learning resources here at college but also mental health services in general.

As the Health & Wellbeing Officer, it is my duty to constantly come up with new ways on how we can improve the different services around college, this could be in relation to mental health issues and the Inclusive Learning team, exam stress during mock season, transition worries and stress moving on from high school to college alongside just promoting a really positive and healthy community both inside and outside of college, which everyone can rely on in bad times. I would personally say that the last part about promoting positivity is really important throughout our time at ASFC as we are essentially entering a new family, who we will be opening up to and working with throughout our time here at ASFC so it's really important that everyone establishes a sense of belonging at ASFC and know that its ok to open up and talk not only about the happy times but also the bad times.

In terms of the care offered around college, I believe that we are one of few post-16 providers, who take on a people-orientated approach as a standard, prioritising our health and wellbeing so that we can continue living happily but also enjoying our short stay here at ASFC. However, nothing can be perfect and that's why I'm here to talk with students and staff about ways we can improve and create both a better environment here at college but, more specifically, consistently improve and adapt the ways in which ASFC professionals approach students struggling with various issues.



Finlay Holt
Health & Wellbeing Officer

RESOURCES

For those who require support from external agencies or out of college hours, the following support is available:

- Your GP
- kooth.com - free online counselling service 12-10pm weekdays and 6-10pm weekends
- Off the Record Young Peoples Counselling, Clarendon Square, Hyde - drop in Wednesday 3-6pm (just drop in for a chat) or phone 0161 355 3553 (self referral)
- The Hive, Katherine St, Ashton-under-Lyne, 0161 330 9223 - drop in 4-8pm every Wednesday
- Anthony Seddon Fund, 12 George Street, Ashton-under-Lyne - 0161376 4439 or Thursday 4-7pm drop-in, including refreshments
- 42nd Street, Manchester - 0161 228 1888 (can self refer)
- CALM - Campaign Against Living Miserably for males experiencing mental health issues
- Freephone 0800 585 858, www.thecalmzone.net
- Themix.org.uk - chat/text support and helpline number on website
- Brook (confidential sexual health advice/treatment) - Manchester branch, 81 Lever St, Manchester, M1 1FL, 0161 237 3001

If you are in a crisis, feeling suicidal, experiencing any distressful/uncomfortable thoughts and feelings, try and confide in a friend or relative or seek help from any of the below crisis services. Most are freephone:

- In an emergency the hospital is your first port for help - present yourself at the A&E Dept anytime or contact Tameside Hospital on 0161 922 6000 for telephone advice and support
- Telephone advice and support for people who are having a mental health crisis and/or feel suicidal is available:
- Samaritans - freephone 116 123, email jo@samaritans.org, 24 hours everyday
- Papyrus - papyrus-uk.org
- HOPEline UK - 0800 068 41 41 for support

If you're worried about being lonely this term there are tips, advice and support available



YOUR GUIDE TO CEDAR



Cedar for parents is an online portal allowing you to become more involved in your child's performance in a way that suits you. It allows you to be engaged in their learning and performance at all times, and helps you to provide the support and motivation that may be needed.

BURSARY & FREE COLLEGE MEALS

The college bursary could provide you with financial support during your time at Ashton Sixth Form College. To check if you are eligible and to download the bursary information pack, please visit www.asfc.ac.uk/bursary