



Friday 30th January 2026

Mobile phones in the news

The Australian government's ban on social media for under 16s, the Secretary of State for Education's letter to Headteachers advising that phones should be banned in schools, and the national debate on whether we should be following Australia's example all mean that phones and social media are very much in the news at the moment. It is worth remembering then, that it is now nearly 10 years ago that at Marden we established our current arrangements with regards mobile phones in school which is that students should not use them during school hours. We do not use the word 'ban' in school as it has connotations of prohibition and sanction and this is an unhelpful framework when supporting youngsters in how best to engage with technology. Instead, what we have always emphasised with our students are the reasons why we should not be using phones between 8.45am and 3.15pm, namely that they can be a distraction to learning in the classroom, and that their absence encourages us all to engage in face to face conversation with each other during unstructured time. Our students are generally excellent in understanding and respecting this arrangement, which goes a long way in supporting the calm and purposeful atmosphere we enjoy in school.

Young Mayor

Leadership within our students is a key asset we are proud to see each day around the building. Indeed, as noted in our last Ofsted report; "*Opportunities for student leadership are varied and meaningful for all those involved. Pupils are proud of what they do. They know their opinions make a difference within the school. The student council, prefects and pupil cabinets are an important part of school life*". One such Leadership opportunity on offer each year is that of North Tyneside Young Mayor. Having seen two previous students go on to become Young Mayor with a further two finding positions on the National Youth Council we are very proud to see one of our Year 9 students take part in this year's Young Mayor application process. Voting by students across North Tyneside takes place next week.

Holocaust Memorial Day

This week's assembly was prepared and delivered by the History Department to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. On 27 January, we commemorated the 81st anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The assembly was based on this year's theme Holocaust Memorial theme, *Bridging Generations*. This theme highlights the importance of remembering and retelling the stories of survivors as time passes, ensuring that future generations continue to learn from the past. As part of their work for the Holocaust Memorial Event, Year 9 students researched the experiences of children who survived genocide and shared these powerful stories with the school community. The assembly included reflections on the life of Elie Wiesel, the Windermere

Boys who arrived in Britain through the Kindertransport, and Grace Mukasekuru, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide. By sharing these stories, students helped to bridge generations, ensuring that these voices are not forgotten and reminding us all of the importance of learning from history so that such events are never repeated.

Student Voice Survey

We will be conducting a student survey next week. The survey will be shared with all students, to be completed during form time. This is a really good opportunity for us to collect student views through a formal process so that we can continue to positively engage with everyone. We will follow this up with our usual student focus groups where students are invited to come and discuss their thoughts and views on a whole variety of aspects of school life in more detail.

Marden House Championship

As we enter the final few months of this year's House Championship, the race is tighter than ever. Alnwick House currently lead with an impressive 331,857 points, but Dunstanburgh are hot on their heels with 327,749 points. Could this finally be the year Dunstanburgh secure their first-ever House Championship title?

There have already been some important point swings. In the recent Maths Sparx competition, Warkworth claimed the full 2,000 house points, shaking up the leaderboard. Looking ahead, excitement continues next week with the launch of the Science Competition. The top twenty students in each year group will earn 100 house points each, meaning there are plenty of points still up for grabs as we head towards the finish line.

Sports

Wednesday saw the U13 girls Futsal competition held at John Spence. This competition is part of the Northumberland County Cup series, and attracts some of the best players in the county to showcase their skills. On the evening, the Marden team faced tough opposition from Valley Gardens, St Thomas More, North Gosforth and the hosts, John Spence. All of the games were competitive, and the Marden girls gave a great account of themselves, but came away with 4 defeats. There was a great team spirit from the players throughout the competition and the team worked extremely hard in every game.

Also on Wednesday, our table tennis teams made an impressive competitive debut at the North Tyneside Tournament, hosted here at Marden. Our Year 8 and Year 9 teams went head-to-head with four teams from King's and John Spence, showing fantastic skill, determination, and sportsmanship throughout the event. Both teams enjoyed an unbeaten run, winning all of their matches until the tournament built to an exciting all-Marden final. In a closely fought showdown for first and second place, both sides battled hard, but it was the Year 9 team who proved too strong on the night and were crowned champions. Congratulations to all pupils who took part and represented the school so brilliantly. We look forward to welcoming more schools and hosting many more tournaments in the near future.

The U14 Basketball team travelled to St Thomas More on Thursday, with pupils from Year 8 and 9 competing in the North Tyneside Schools event. Despite having a relatively short time together as a team, the boys played some exciting basketball, beating John Spence in a close game 10-9 before coming up against the more experienced St Thomas More team. Despite playing valiantly, the Marden team lost this game 21-9. Their win in this round of the competition was enough to send them through to the next round of competition after the half term break. Well done to all players.

Upcoming dates

Wednesday 4 February 2026 - Diphtheria/Tetanus/Polio/Meningitis - Year 9 vaccinations

Thursday 5 February 2026 - Year 9 Guided Choices Evening

Thursday 12 February 2026 - Year 9 POW Evening

Tuesday 24 February 2026 - Parent Forum

Tuesday 24 February 2026 - Year 9 Parents Evening



Mr M. Snape
Head Teacher