

Links Journal

Spring Term 2025



LINKS
ACADEMY
ST ALBANS



Dear Parents/Carers

As we approach the end of the Spring Term, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support over the recent months. It has certainly been a busy and short term, filled with a variety of activities that the students have eagerly participated in. The staff at Links Academy continue to demonstrate a high level of dedication and rigour in the educational experiences we deliver, ensuring that our curriculum meets the needs of every student.

Looking ahead, please be reminded that the school will re-open on Thursday 24 April 2025 for Student Parent Review Day meetings. I trust that your son/daughter's form tutor will have already reached out to arrange a meeting for that day. Monday 21 April is a Public Bank Holiday, followed by two Inset Days on Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday 24 April we will hold Student Parent Review Day. Friday 25 April, students are expected to return to school at their usual times, in full school uniform.

The Year 11 Leavers Celebration is scheduled for Friday 9 May 2025, at 11.30 am, with a BBQ for Year 11 and their parents/carers in the afternoon. Years 7, 8, 9, and 10 will finish at 12:30 pm that day.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a peaceful and restful Easter/Spring break. I look forward to welcoming you all back at the start of the Summer Term.

Mrs Brown, Head of School



Links Academy welcomes comments from parents/carers and families about any aspect of school life.

Please contact us via our email admin@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk
www.linksacademy.herts.sch.uk to view Ofsted reports, key dates, journals and school information

School Calendar

Term Ends

Friday 4 April 2025

@ 12.30pm

Easter Break

7 April — 18 April 2025

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BANK HOLIDAY

Monday 21 April 2025

INSET DAYS

Tuesday 22—Wednesday
23 April 2025

No Students in school

Student Parent Review Day

Thursday 24 April 2025

Form Tutors will arrange a
convenient time to meet
with parents & students

Term Starts

Thursday 24 April 2025

Half Term

26 May — 30 May 2025

Summer Term ends
on Friday 18 July
2025 at 12.30 pm

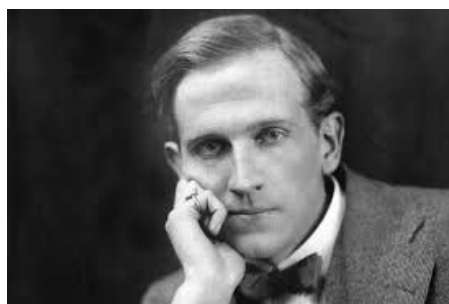
Word of the Week

This term we've continued with our Word of the Week initiative. It's been fantastic to see students not only learning new vocabulary but actively using the words both in and out of lessons.



Reading for Pleasure

As part of our continued focus on Reading for Pleasure, students across the school took part in a short activity to mark A.A. Milne Day. For five to ten minutes during lessons, they read extracts from Winnie the Pooh and explored the gentle humour and charm of the stories. It was a chance to pause and enjoy a quiet moment with a much-loved classic. It offered a quiet moment of reflection and a reminder of the value of reading for enjoyment.



National Theatre Day

To mark National Theatre Day, Key Stage 3 students were invited to take part in a creative activity exploring how theatre productions are promoted. One task involved writing a review based on a theatre poster, encouraging students to use visual clues to imagine the storyline and characters. The activity offered a chance to consider how performances capture attention even before the curtain rises.



Ms Ross, Teacher of English

A busy and successful term at Woollam

What a term it has been in the Inclusion Unit at Woollam!

We have had the pleasure to welcome new students to Links and support them in understanding their new beginning at Links. We have also supported students who have returned to us from Hixberry in need of respite and additional support, as well as

saying goodbye to students who were ready to return to Hixberry. There have been others who we have assisted in the interim who are waiting to move onto their next provision.

Despite the forever changing environment at Woollam, our students have demonstrated amazing ability to role-model the 3 key character traits of Links: responsibility, resilience and respect during their time at school.

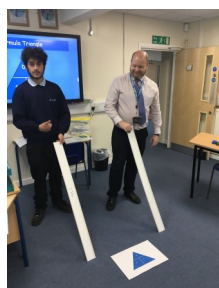
With our Year 11 students nearing closer to their GCSE exams in the summer term, we have ensured our teaching has been focused on their learning that they can apply to the best of their ability, in the hope of achieving the greatest results they can. It has been great to see most of our Year 11's show their responsibility towards their learning with attendance, focus and perseverance in completing their mock exams recently. They should be very proud of themselves for the effort they put in!

Year 10 and KS3 students have been busy working on content to support them in their preparation towards undertaking their Level 1 Functional Skills Qualifications in English and Maths. We are confident that the learning environment we create for our young people encourages and nurtures their willingness to pursue themselves towards achieving outcomes that they are going to benefit from in their future lives.

Although academics are important, we believe life skills are equally so! Our students have had many opportunities this term to cook from 'around the world'. Spring rolls, ramen and smash burgers to name a few dishes they have enjoyed! It is crucial for our students to develop into functional adults and provide these opportunities for them. It is with great pleasure to know that our students have thoroughly enjoyed these experiences.

We wish our Year 11 students the best of luck for their upcoming GCSE exams next term, and look forward to continuing our work with the students that we will continue to support this year!

Mr Holgate, Lead Inclusion Teacher

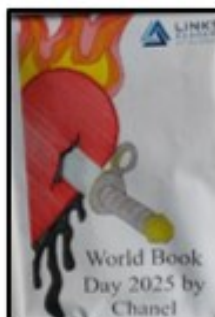


Hixberry World Book Day

Another horrific assembly...



...and amazing student artwork.



Lesson content – Included monstrous maths ratios, learning about Medusa during English, creating book designs in Art, and studying vampiric creatures and genetic disorders during Science.

Themed lunch – The (far from) 'Loathsome Lunch' featured *Vampire Hunter's Chicken*, *Thousand Clove Garlic Bread* and *Bleeding-Heart Cheesecake* - complete with 'blood' filled hearts, which necessitated squeezing jam into the dessert!



Mr Boxer, Healthy Lifestyles Lead

WORLD BOOK DAY 2025

Hixberry celebrated WBD with its theme of *'Vampires, Werewolves & Demons'*.

A range of themed activities were offered, including –

Assembly – Covered lurid horror paperback covers, the history of Dracula, folklore about vampires, werewolves and demons, an AI description and film clip of painful werewolf transformations, an audio book clip on demonic possession, and a celebration of Stephen King (the world's most prolific horror novelist).

Book cover challenge – Ten horror novel book covers were placed around the site and students were invited to match the author's names to the titles. When they returned their completed work sheets they were rewarded with an individual set of 'horror teeth'!

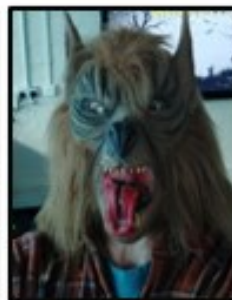


Not so much 'Turkey
Teeth' as
Transylvanian Teeth...



Naturally, the staff seized on any opportunity to don relevant attire...

Dressing-up boxes, wardrobes and mausoleums were raided. Contact lenses, latex masks and monstrous make-up were applied. Miss Coulson even managed to affix 40 snakes to her head!



Church Farm Trip2024

Our Cedars students had a fantastic school trip to Church Farm in Alderley, where they got hands-on experience with farm life. They had the opportunity to feed the animals, pick up chickens, and gather fresh eggs, making it a fun and educational experience. The students were excited to interact with the animals up close, learning about their care and daily routines. It was a wonderful day filled with laughter, curiosity, and memorable moments in the countryside!

Woollam Crescent World Book Day

For World Book Day, our Cedars students had an amazing time bringing stories to life through creativity and hands-on activities. They had the chance to design and build their own unique book characters, showcasing their imagination and artistic skills. The excitement continued in the kitchen, where they took inspiration from Dr. Seuss, making their own version of *Green Eggs and Ham* and fun treats based on *The Lorax*. It was a fantastic day filled with storytelling, creativity, and delicious literary-themed fun!

All students received a free reading book from the National Book Tokens who sponsored the event.



Mr Taylor, Primary Support Base Teacher

Pastoral Hub

Links Outreach Manager Fiona Haynes and Higher Level Outreach Worker Tracy Backhouse attended the penultimate Pastoral Hub of this Academic year in March. The event was hosted by Townsend school with many of the schools we support across St Albans and Harpenden attending. It's always a great networking opportunity and great to see so many familiar faces.

Services for
Young People

Guest speakers this term included Services for Young People, Youth Talk and Mind Hertfordshire Network, With YOUTH and Herts Haven Cafes.

Services for Young People

Services for Young People is part of Hertfordshire County Council and provides youth work projects, information, advice, guidance, work-related learning and wider support for young people in Hertfordshire. Services for Young People provides youth work projects, careers education, information, advice and guidance, work-related learning and wider support for young people in Hertfordshire.

Hertfordshire County Council Services for Young People delivers youth work projects and programmes; careers education, information, advice and guidance; work-related learning; outdoor education and wider support to young people in Hertfordshire.

Advisers and Youth Workers are professionally trained to provide the highest level of support and work closely with partners to provide counselling, mentoring and access to other services.

They run a wide range of youth work projects across the county in which young people can get involved. Through these projects they meet new people, learn new skills and take part in challenging opportunities. They are encouraged to develop their personal and social skills by taking part in activities including sports, drama, dance, music, workshops, outdoor education, DofE, forums, residencies and volunteering.

Services for Young People help young people with the issues which are important to them such as jobs, careers and education, relationships, sexual health, confidence, self-esteem, substance misuse, staying safe, housing and independent living skills.

Please explore their website <https://www.servicesforyoungpeople.org/> to see the diverse range of opportunities and support they offer to young people of different ages and needs.

For full details of all the projects for young people available in your local area, please visit the Youth work projects in your area section.

Information, advice and support for young people is available at our SfYP young people's centres.

Youth Talk

Youth Talk provide free, confidential psychodynamic counselling for young people age 13-25 in St Albans and surrounding areas.



Since 1997 thousands of young people have trusted Youth Talk to help them. Young people face unprecedented demands, disruptions and uncertainties and the demand for their free, confidential counselling service has reached unprecedented and worrying new heights. As a result Youth Talk have launched a new strategy to respond to the significant challenges we are facing, which includes:

- * Vision
- * Every young person can talk to someone who can help with whatever's worrying them
- * Mission
- * To provide the best possible mental health support to young people in St Albans and surrounding areas
- * Values
- * We are open and accepting
- * We always give our best
- * We are stronger together

For more information, please visit: <https://youthtalk.org.uk/>

Mind Hertfordshire Network



Mind Hertfordshire Network deliver essential mental health support in Hertfordshire, providing a diverse range of services from our eight Wellbeing Centres and other locations across the county.

Funded locally, our services are available to all residents in Hertfordshire over the age of 18 and we offer separate services for 5-18 year olds.

They help individuals experiencing mental ill health to make choices, find their solutions, build resilience and manage their wellbeing. They offer opportunities for individuals to get support to allow them to recover from or live with mental ill health.

Each year, they help 15,000 people experiencing mental ill health.

WithYOUth

With YOUth is a digital well-being service with Mind Hertfordshire Network. The resources are designed to help with mental health issues.

With YOUth instant messaging is a safe, supported online space for young people to talk about the things that are important to them.

The service is available to those between the ages of 5-18, or a parent/caregiver of a 5-18 year old, who can message to get support with any mental health concern.

With YOUth can talk about what issues young people are experiencing and offer support, information and advice.

Are you or your young person experiencing a dip in your mental health?

Are things difficult with school, family or friends?

Are you or your young person stressed, worried, anxious or overwhelmed?

Is there something impacting you or your young person's wellbeing that you would like to talk through?

Instant messaging is open every day 2pm-10pm.

You can contact them <https://www.withyouth.org/how-we-help/instant-messaging/> or By Phone: Call us on 0208 189 8400.



Herts Haven Cafés

Herts Haven Cafés are a free welcoming drop-in space for children and young people across Hertfordshire to access support for their emotional well-being.

If you are a young person seeking support, they are here to help!

These cafés are safe spaces where young people can get the emotional wellbeing support they need.

Herts Haven Café's main goal is to create a non-judgemental environment where young people feel comfortable sharing their concerns. They believe it's important for individuals to have a space where they can freely express their thoughts and emotions without fear of judgement. That's why their compassionate team are there to listen and support.

The team consists of trained workers who can provide practical help and emotional support to anyone who visits, with no referral required.

Practical help may include guidance on coping strategies, stress management techniques, and problem-solving skills. The staff have the knowledge and resources to provide relevant information and tools to help young people navigate their mental health challenges. The cafés also provide a safe space to access digital support including The Sandbox, and Lumi Nova, as well as talk through alternative services.

Emotional support is also a key focus of the cafés. The team are trained to provide empathy, acknowledgment, and a safe space for young people to express their emotions. Through open and caring conversations, the aim is to create a sense of belonging and connection.

Herts Haven Cafés are open to any young person in Hertfordshire between the ages of 10 and 18 without the need for a formal referral. Just pop in.

Mind Hertfordshire Network believe in providing prompt support without unnecessary barriers. By removing referral requirements, they strive to reach as many young people as possible and address their emotional wellbeing needs in a timely and proactive way.

Herts Haven Cafés are in Hemel Hempstead, Watford, Stevenage and Ware.



Ms Backhouse, Higher Level Outreach Worker



With the start of the new Spring Term, Woollam Crescent's staff and students have collaborated together the design of the new welcome board.

Staff and students provided copies of their handprints by either drawing around them or painting them to convey giving, receiving, connection and trust underpinning the Links values of Responsibility, Resilience and Respect..

Alongside this, we added some posters that students and families may find useful:

Youth Talk - <https://youthtalk.org.uk/>

Youth Talk provide free, confidential counselling to 13-25year olds in St Albans and the surrounding areas.

Beat - <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>

The UK's eating disorder charity. Founded in 1989 as the Eating Disorders Association, our mission is to end the pain and suffering caused by eating disorders.

Mind - <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Mind are here to fight for mental health. For support, for respect, for you.

YoungMinds - <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

YoungMinds are fighting for a world where no young person feels alone with their mental health; to ensure all young people can get the mental health support they need, when they need it, no matter what.

Cruse - <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Cruse are the leading bereavement charity and help people through one of the most painful times in life – with bereavement support, information and campaigning.

Childline - <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Childline is yours – a free, private and confidential service where you can talk about anything. We're here for you online, on the phone, anytime.

Samaritans - <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. We're here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116 123 for free.

Kooth - <https://www.kooth.com/>

Kooth's team of mental health professionals is here to support you. You can talk to us about whatever's on your mind.

NSPCC - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

NSPCC are the UK's leading children's charity. We've been looking out for children for over 140 years. You can contact the NSPCC Helpline by calling 0800 800 5000 or emailinghelp@NSPCC.org.uk.

Shout - <https://giveusashout.org/>

Shout is the UK's first and only free, confidential, 24/7 text messaging service for anyone who is struggling to cope.

Ms Backhouse, Higher Level Outreach Worker



What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic (hijri) calendar and one of the holiest periods of worship for Muslims. The month lasts a period of 29 or 30 days, depending on the sighting of the moon, and appears to shift forward approximately 11 days each year as the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle instead of the Gregorian calendar we commonly use today.

When is Ramadan 2025?

This year, Ramadan is expected to begin on the evening of Saturday 1st March 2025, and end on the evening of Sunday 30th March 2025, depending on the sighting of the moon.

Why is Ramadan important to Muslims?

Ramadan is important to Muslims for a variety of reasons. The most significant of which is that it is one of the five pillars of Islam.

During this period, due to its sanctity, Muslims aim to strengthen their relationship with their creator, read and reflect on the Qur'an, strive for betterment of their character, benefit those in need and the people around them and ask for forgiveness for their transgressions.

How is Ramadan celebrated?

Muslims celebrate the arrival of the blessed month of Ramadan, which offers the opportunity for purification, a revaluation of one's life, and the chance to draw closer to Allah.

Many families decorate their homes in time for Ramadan with lights and banners, to create a special and celebratory atmosphere.

Friends and relatives reach out to one another to offer their congratulations in reaching the Holy month of Ramadan, with greetings of 'Ramadan Mubarak' and 'Ramadan Kareem'.

During the holy month, family and friends also gather at Iftar parties in which they break their fast together. At Iftar time, Allah (SWT) shows special mercy and love to those who have been fasting, and especially to those who have provided food for others at Iftar time.

Why do Muslims fast during Ramadan?

Fasting, or sawm as it is known in Arabic, is compulsory upon every adult Muslim, and is one of the five pillars of Islam.

Fasting provides Muslims with the opportunity to acquire a sense of control over their needs, desires and distractions, giving them room for a heightened sense of introspection and their purpose in life – to worship Allah.

What is Eid ul Fitr and why is it important?

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of the month of Ramadan, a period of month-long fasting for Muslims around the world. Eid is a time for celebration with family and loved ones. Furthermore, it is a period of rest and good tidings! Eid is also a holy day in the Islamic calendar, in which we are encouraged to engage in increased dhikr (remembrance of Allah) as well as prayers, in order to show gratitude.

Ms Backhouse, Higher Level Outreach Worker

March 2025 Mock Exams

As we approach the final stretch before the GCSE exams in May and June, I am pleased to share that students have shown great maturity and a positive attitude throughout the March 2025 mock exams. Their behaviour was in line with school expectations, and they demonstrated a strong commitment to their studies.

Mock exams are an essential part of GCSE preparation, giving students the opportunity to experience exam conditions, identify areas for improvement, and build confidence ahead of the real exams. We encourage all students to reflect on their performance, use teacher feedback effectively, and dedicate time to structured revision.

As parents, your support plays a vital role in helping your child prepare. Here are some key ways to assist them in the coming weeks:

- **Encourage a structured revision plan.**
- **Create a positive study environment.** Ensure they have a quiet space free from distractions.
- **Promote a healthy balance.** Remind them to take breaks, get enough sleep, and stay active.
- **Use available resources.** Encourage them to utilize school materials, past papers, and online revision tools.
- **Maintain open communication.** Check in with them regularly, offer encouragement, and remind them of their progress.

We wish all our students the best of luck as they continue their preparations for the GCSEs. With focus, determination, and the right support, they can achieve their full potential.

If you have any concerns or need further guidance, please do not hesitate to reach out to the school.

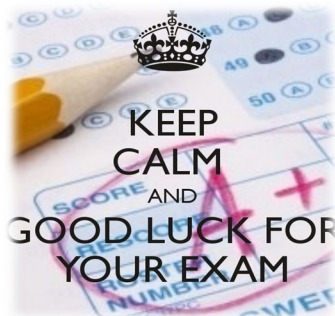


Mrs Ulucay, Exams Officer

Summer 2025 Public Examination dates

DAY	DATE	QUALIFICATION	SUBJECT	TITLE	AM/PM 9 am/1.30 pm	DURATION
Tuesday	13/05/2025	AQA GCSE	Biology	Paper 1	PM	1h 45m
Thursday	15/5/2025	AQA GCSE	Maths (non-calculator)	Paper 1	AM	1h 30m
Friday	16/5/2025	Pearson GCSE	History	Paper 1: Crime and Punishment	AM	1h 20m
Tuesday	20/5/2025	OCR BTEC	Child Development		PM	1h 15m
Friday	23/5/2025	Pearson GCSE	English Language 2.0	Paper 1: Non-Fiction Texts	AM	1h 55m
Wednesday	4/6/2025	AQA GCSE	Maths (calculator)	Paper 2	AM	1h 30m
Thursday	5/6/2025	Pearson GCSE	History	Paper 2: Superpower, Elizabethan	AM	1h 50m
Friday	6/6/2025	Pearson GCSE	English Language 2.0	Paper 2: Contemporary Texts	AM	1h 55m
Monday	9/6/2025	AQA GCSE	Biology	Paper 2	AM	1h 45m
Tuesday	10/6/2025	Pearson GCSE	History	Paper 3: Weimar & Nazi Germany	PM	1h 30m
Wednesday	11/6/2025	AQA GCSE	Maths (calculator)	Paper 3	AM	1h 30m

Mrs V Ulucay, Exams Officer



Attendance at Links Academy – useful reminders

As the wintery cold months move over and make way for spring and summer our thoughts may turn to summer holidays.

Although tempting.....please remember that any leave from school during term time must be requested in writing in advance, and Links Academy will judge each application on an individual basis.

Remember: a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance and will be referred to the Local Authority.



Punctuality remains a focus for Links Academy this term and will continue to be for the Summer Term.

With our Year 11's due to sit examinations and GCSE's during the Summer Term, never has being on time to school been so important, as national exams cannot be delayed or rescheduled because students have overslept or missed the early bus.

Now is the time, particularly for our Year 11's, to find their resilience and be responsible for getting to school on time to squeeze in as much learning, revision and practice as possible, and helping to be prepared to arrive on time for their exams.

Students' can accumulate 'unauthorised' late marks by arriving after the registers have closed, which will impact unauthorised absences and lead to penalty notice fines....for just being really late!

Being on time for school has many benefits as it:

- improves academic performance
- fosters better social skills
- reduces anxiety
- helps develop valuable life skills such as time management and responsibility.



A parents/carers positive support and encouragement with time keeping and punctuality is vital and if on the rare occasion your child will be late to school, give school a call and let the reception team know.

Please remember morning registration is: 8.40am and lesson 1 starts at 9am.

And finally.....

Links Academy will always try to work with students and their families to support attendance and /or improve punctuality.

If you have any concerns, please speak to your child's form tutor at their SPRD appointment in April.

Cedars Attendance Update – Spring Term 2025

As we come to the end of our Spring Term, it is time to celebrate the fantastic attendance for our students at Cedars.

I Love School – Attendance Rewards at Cedars PSB.

Out of the 28 school days for the first half of the Spring Term, 'I Love School' treats and certificates were awarded by Mrs Porritt and Mrs McGleish to all our Cedars students in recognition of their amazing attendance and resilience in attending school.

Freddie and Zayden were rewarded for 28/28 days, and Thomas and Darwin followed closely behind with 26/28 days. Rayyan and Micah also showed great effort and resilience. We are so proud of you all, what a great start to the term!

A special guest appearance was made by Daisy, who was showcasing her wonderful tricks, led by the students.



Hop To It – Attendance Rewards at Cedars PSB.

Our bunnies are currently busy counting the number of days for the second half of the Spring Term 'Hop To It' rewards. Our students' attendance for the second half of the Spring Term have been equally impressive to date.

Students will be receiving their Hop To It prizes and certificates on Friday 4 April 2025.

Mrs Porritt, Trust Attendance Officer



Who gives a Cr*p?

The St Albans and Harpenden hygiene bank kindly gifted Links Academy a supply of toilet rolls by the eco company Who Gives a Cr*p.

Who Gives a Cr*p was established in 2012 when the founders learnt that 2.4 billion people don't have access to a toilet (now 2 billion – yay for progress!). That's roughly 40% of the global population and means that around 289,000 children under five die every year from diarrhoeal diseases caused by poor water and sanitation. That's almost 800 children per day, or one child every two minutes.

So every time you use their products, you're helping the billions of people in need gain access to these life-saving services and all of their products are made with sustainable materials meaning they are good for the planet.

50% of profits are donated and this has helped fund clean water and sanitation non-profits around the globe.

You can collect your 'Who Gives a Cr*p' toilet rolls at the next Student Performance Review Day at Hixberry and Woollam.

Mrs Backhouse, Higher Level Outreach Worker

TOP GOLF TRIP

A Hole-in-One Experience at Top Golf

Our trip to Top Golf was truly a hole-in-one experience! The outing was a complete success, thanks to the patience and respect displayed by all eight students. Though we had to wait over 30 minutes to access our turn, each student remained calm and respectful throughout the wait, showing great sportsmanship from the start. Once it was our turn, the energy was electric as everyone fully engaged in the game. Whether it was perfecting their swing or celebrating a great shot, the students made the most of every moment, turning the experience into a fun and memorable outing.

Ms Coulson, Teacher of Maths




NAME	GAME SCORE	HCAP	NET SCORE	NEW HCAP	H SCORE
Link1	33	26	173	36	33
Link2	55	28	398	36	85
Link3	60	28	200	36	60
Link4	54	28	194	36	54

Pots of Art

On Wednesday 12th and Thursday 13th March, students were fortunate enough to go on some creativity trips. Firstly, we went to paint some ceramic tiles at Pots of Art in St Albans. We used glaze and small brushes to paint lots of really fantastic designs on our work. There were cartoon characters, superheroes and lots of great drawings going on. The tiles were then fired in a kiln at over a thousand degrees centigrade. Once the tiles have been finished, students will be able to take these home and enjoy them. Thanks to all the staff at Pots of Art for their help!

Hertfordshire University

On Thursday 13th March, we went to visit Hertfordshire University Art and Design department. We were lucky enough to find out what it is like to go to university and study creative subjects, and we went on a tour of the many sculptures made by famous artists and then we made our own 3-D art work in clay, which we were able to bring back to school and paint. Many of the teachers at Hertfordshire University talked about their experience of being ADHD / ASD / Dyslexic and the challenges they faced, but also how it helped them to be successful in their creative work.

The photo shows an AI artwork that learns your face and then models your movements back to you.



Ms Daley, Teacher of Art