



BACKWELL SCHOOL

WEEKLY BULLETIN

FRIDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2026



Dear Parents, Carers, Families, and Friends,

As we begin a new academic year, I would like to congratulate all our students on what has been a truly exceptional return to school. Across the site, there has been a real sense of energy, enthusiasm and purpose, with pupils embracing their learning and settling quickly into the routines and expectations that help everyone thrive.

It has been particularly pleasing to see our young people demonstrating our core values of being Kind, Curious and Ambitious in so many ways: showing kindness and respect towards one another, approaching their learning with curiosity and determination, and setting ambitious goals for the year ahead for themselves both inside and outside the classroom. We are incredibly proud of the positive start that our students have made and look forward to building on this momentum throughout what promises to be another successful year at Backwell School.

As we begin the new academic year, I am delighted to introduce the newest members of staff who have joined the Backwell School team.

- ✓ Claudia Alabiso – Head of German
- ✓ Yvette Belcher – Sixth Form Administrator
- ✓ Pascale Dunning – School Business Manager
- ✓ Olivia Emberton – Behaviour Support Room Lead
- ✓ Bev Forsythe – Applied Science lead
- ✓ Lukas Gentle – Teacher of Science
- ✓ Lucy Hegarty – Head of English
- ✓ Chethi Mathangadeera – Data and Attendance Assistant
- ✓ Charlotte O'Rourke – Assistant Pastoral Leader
- ✓ Jess Van Der Walt – Teacher of Science
- ✓

We have also successfully returned to a five-period school day, which students have embraced with remarkable ease. It has been wonderful to see them adapt so positively, maintaining the focus, enthusiasm and commitment to learning that has characterised such a strong start to the year.

Alongside this, we are delighted to have opened our new Dining Centre, which has transformed the lunchtime experience for our school community. The fantastic, enhanced menu offer from Aspens provides a wide variety of nutritious and appealing choices each day, ensuring that every student has access to a hot, high-quality meal at lunchtime. With so many excellent options available, there is no need for the early morning rush to prepare a packed lunch. Quite simply, let us take care of lunch while you focus on the rest of the school day! The feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive, and we are excited to continue developing this excellent provision throughout the year.

Over the summer, there was much to celebrate, not least another set of outstanding examination results at both A Level and GCSE, which once again place Backwell School amongst the highest-performing schools in the local area. Our Sixth Form students achieved an impressive average grade of B-, exceeding their target grades and making, on average, almost half a grade more progress than expected. This was followed by an excellent set of GCSE outcomes, with students achieving an average grade of 5.25 across all subjects. These results are a testament to the hard work, dedication and ambition of our students, supported by the exceptional teaching, guidance and care provided by staff across the school.

As a result of these successes, we are delighted to welcome a record number of students into Year 12 this September, with over 185 students beginning their Sixth Form journey with us. This reflects the confidence that students and families place in our Sixth Form provision and is yet another endorsement of the outstanding educational experience, teaching and support that takes place at Backwell School every day. We look forward to seeing this new cohort flourish as they embark on the next stage of their academic and personal development.

Equally, there was much sporting success to celebrate over the summer. We are incredibly proud of Olly F in Year 13, who represented England at the European Youth Touch Rugby Championships in August. Playing for the Mixed Under-18s team, Olly helped England secure victory in every match to be crowned European Champions and return home with a well-deserved gold medal. His summer success did not stop there. Representing the Southwest Saxons Under-17 Boys team at the National Youth Championships over the Bank Holiday weekend, Olly was also recognised for his outstanding performances by being awarded Most Valuable Player for his team.



Over the summer, our Backwell School Equestrian Team continued their outstanding season at the National Championships in August. Clem E, Lola B, Holly M and Hattie M delivered exceptional performances, securing 2nd place in the 70cm competition and 3rd place in the 80cm competition, finishing ahead of local schools including Millfield and

Stonar in both events. The team came agonisingly close to becoming national champions, missing out on the 70cm title by just a single fault. Individual success followed for Holly M and Hattie M, who both represented Bristol and Somerset and achieved an impressive 5th-place finish in their respective height categories. These remarkable achievements are a testament to the dedication, skill and resilience of our equestrian athletes, and we are incredibly proud of their success on the national stage.



I'm delighted to share that four Backwell School students achieved outstanding success at the JKS World Karate International Cup in Brazil at the end of August. Liam M (Year 13), Oli H (Year 10), Ben G (Year 7) and Luke M (Year 7) all returned home with medals, and remarkably, all four were crowned World Karate Champions in their respective age groups.

Their achievements included gold medals for Oli in the Male Team Kumite (14-16 years), Liam in both Male Team Kata (17-19 years) and Male Kata (16-17 years), and Ben and Luke in Male Team Kata (11-13 years). Ben also secured individual gold medals in Male Kata (10-11 years) and Male Kote Kata (8-12 years). In addition, Ben and Luke earned a silver medal in Male Team Kumite (11-13 years), while Liam claimed bronze in Male Kumite (16-17 years) and Luke added a bronze medal in Male Kote Kata (8-12 years). This is a phenomenal achievement on the world stage and reflects the dedication, talent and commitment of all four students. We are incredibly proud of their success and look forward to celebrating their continued achievements in the future.



Mariella B in Year 12 has also continued to excel on the international golfing stage. Over the summer, she proudly represented Great Britain and Ireland in the Junior Vagliano Trophy against Europe in Dublin, helping her team secure victory in the prestigious fixture. Her success has continued into the new academic year, with Mariella recently winning the England Golf Champion of Champions event at Woodhall Spa, where she represented Gloucestershire County. In addition, she has made four further appearances for England and has earned invitations to compete in both the Faldo Junior Final in Dubai this November and the Justin Rose Tournament in Portugal later this autumn.



We are delighted to continue supporting Mariella, Olly, our Equestrian Team and the many other talented athletes within our school community, including students competing in international and regional swimming competitions and those representing elite development pathways and academies such as Bristol Bears, Bristol Flyers, Bristol City, Bristol Rovers, Newport County and Exeter City. The breadth of sporting talent across Backwell School is truly remarkable. Balancing the demands of elite-level sport alongside academic studies requires exceptional dedication, resilience, organisation and ambition, and our students continue to demonstrate these qualities in abundance. They are outstanding ambassadors for our school, embodying our values of being Kind, Curious and Ambitious, and we are immensely proud of their achievements both on the field of play and in the classroom.

Finally, a reminder that school will close early at 1:30pm this Thursday, with coaches departing at 1:45pm, to allow us to welcome prospective families to our Main School Open Evening. We look forward to showcasing all that makes Backwell such a special place to learn, grow and belong. In addition, Friday 18th September is our third INSET Day of the year, and the school will be closed to students on this day.

Thank you once again for your continued support in helping us make such a positive and successful start to the academic year. The partnership between school and home is one of our greatest strengths, and by working together we can ensure that every young person is supported to thrive, achieve and flourish. We are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and look forward to all that we will accomplish together in the months to come. It is this shared commitment to our students and to one another that lies at the heart of our community and the spirit behind the words I so often say and write: *We Are Backwell*.



Will Penny
Headteacher

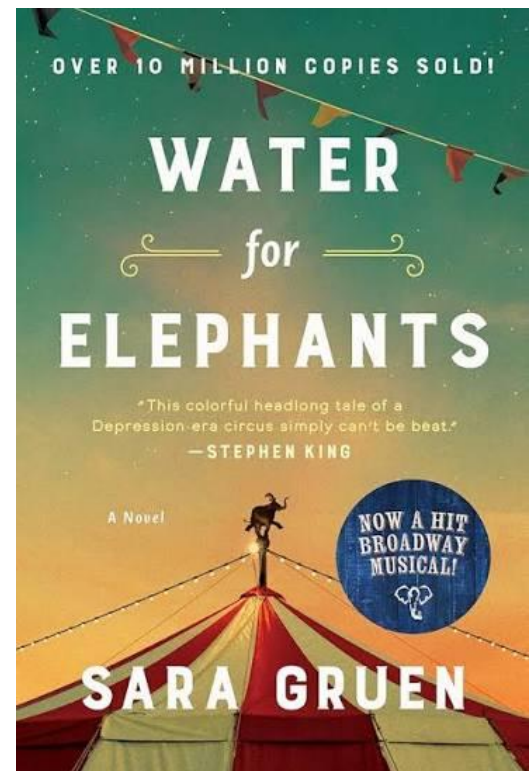
Book of the week

Water for Elephants by Sara Gruen

The Great Depression, 1929.

When Jacob Jankowski, recently orphaned and utterly adrift, jumps onto a passing train, he enters a world of freaks, grifters, and misfits in the

'Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth':
a second-rate travelling circus struggling to survive by making one-night stands in town after endless town. Jacob, a veterinary student now unable to finish his degree, is put in charge of caring for the circus menagerie. He meets Marlena, the beautiful young star of the equestrian act, married to August, the charismatic but twisted animal trainer. He also meets Rosie, an elephant who seems untrainable until he discovers a way to reach her.



Illuminated by a wonderful sense of time and place, *Water for Elephants* tells a story of a love between two people that overcomes incredible odds, in a world in which love is a luxury few can afford.

Dolly Parton stated this book was one of her favourites in multiple interviews.

Frog Parent Portal/My Child at School App/School Catering

We understand how overwhelming the start of the school year can be for parents and carers. Please find a list of helpful links below to help you with school life admin.

- [Frog Parents' Portal](#)
- [My Child at School Site & App](#)
- [Rent My Locker](#)
- [Backwell School Uniform](#)
- [Aspens Streateries - Main Dining Centre Price List](#)

PE Uniform

We have taken the decision to phase out the skort from our PE kit over the course of this year, a change that many schools have also made in recent years.

If your child has a skort, they can continue to wear it for the rest of this school year.

Information Evenings

The Year 11 Parent Information Evening was superbly attended on Thursday evening by well over 200 parents! Thank you to all who attended.

Presentation slides for all information evenings will be available on the website following the event. Please check the quick links section of this (and future) bulletins.



Home Learning at Backwell School

We set home learning in all key stages to enable students to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and to build good study habits and routines. All home learning is set on Frog along with details of deadlines and any resources students will need to complete their work. Thank you for your support to help students complete their home learning each week.

Computers and study spaces are available before and after school in the library, as well as at breaks and lunchtimes to support students to complete their home learning. In addition, Kitchen Table runs Tues-Thurs after school with staff on hand to support students as required.

Student Photographs – Years 7,10, 12 and other new starters

On Tuesday, 15 September, Tempest Photography will be visiting to take photographs of students in Years 7, 10, 12 (along with any other new starter who have joined Backwell in the last 11 months). Please ensure students come to school prepared to have their photos taken. Following the event, Tempest will send a link will be sent out to parents/carers with an opportunity to purchase photographs. If you miss a link email, please let us know and we can ask Tempest to send this.

Co-curricular Clubs

Welcome to our Year 7s! We hope that all Year 7 students will try at least one club – it's a great way to meet new friends and connect with like-minded peers.

Please find the clubs booklets and schedules on the [website](#). Clubs will start w/c 14 September. The booklets will be distributed to Years 7 to 9 in tutor time next week. We will signpost Years 10 and up to the website.

There are a couple of fee-paying clubs (Photography Club and Clay Club) which start next week. You can sign your child up to these via ParentPay. There are limited spaces, so it is a first-come, first served basis. If your child doesn't get in this term, there will be other opportunities each term.

If your child is in receipt of Targeted FSM funding and would like to take part in a fee-paying club, please get in contact with Student Services (studentservices@backwellschool.net) and we will help facilitate this.



Personal Development

In Personal Development at Backwell School, we work together to nurture the whole child, preparing them to be responsible, respectful, active citizens for life in modern Britain, focusing on character, resilience, wellbeing, and developing readiness for the next steps in education, training, or work. Students complete some of this work in specialised timetabled sessions and in tutor time.

Personal Development covers all aspects of Relationships and Health Education, as well as Careers and wider Learning Skills and British Values and Citizenship.

This school year we are changing our delivery model for the Personal Development Curriculum. Years 7, 8 and 9 will now be taught Personal Development in fortnightly timetabled lessons.

Years 10 and 11 will continue to be taught in tutor time, twice weekly as well as in fortnightly SMSC lessons.

Years 12 and 13 are taught in tutor time sessions.

As a result of the new Relationships, Sex and Health Education guidance for Years 7-11, and in response to our Parent consultation, we have updated our curriculum plans. Please find

the outlines for Term 1 lessons below – this should help in developing conversations at home as required. We are in the process of updating our website so that Parents will better be able to track what their child is learning about across the full school year, and this should help us all to work together in supporting your child.

Please do contact us via the school email - mailbox@backwellschool.net - if you would like to discuss any aspect of our Personal Development Curriculum in more detail.

	Year 7	Key Questions
Autumn Term 1	Relationships: Important Relationships	What does it mean to have a healthy relationship with yourself? How does wellbeing impact our relationships? What strategies are there for building stronger relationships at school? How do relationships change through life?
	Relationships: Friendships	What is belonging and how can it help us? Why might someone feel lonely?
	Relationships: Belonging	How can social media affect our relationships? What are the effects of feeling lonely? What strategies can we use to help someone who is feeling lonely?
	Careers Education at Backwell	What is a career? What skills do I have already?

	Year 8	Key Questions
Autumn Term 1	Health Education: Healthy Lifestyles	How does physical activity affect wellbeing? How does sleep affect wellbeing? What strategies are there for boosting wellbeing?
	Health Education: Puberty	What are the physical changes in puberty? What is a period? How might our hormones affect our moods?
	Health Education: Looking after your teeth and mouth	What is good oral hygiene? How can we maintain good oral hygiene? How do people access dental appointments?
	Careers Education: Going to work	Why do people go to work? What would help me choose suitable work?

Year 9		Key Questions
Autumn Term 1	Online Safety: Boundaries	How do we set online boundaries? What is grooming?
	Online Safety: Cyberbullying	How can we end an online relationship safely? Why might bullying behaviours occur online? What is cyberbullying?
	Online Safety: Social media	How can we respond to something unkind or unsafe online? What causes the pressure of creation online? How do people generate Fear of Missing Out? How does social media impact wellbeing?
	Online Safety: Trust Online	Do we trust people online as much as people we know face to face? What can help us decide who to trust online?

Year 10

Autumn Term 1	In Tutor Time	Careers and Skills: Being Successful in Year 10 and 11	What strategies can we use to ensure success at school? What are our academic goals? What is Work Experience?
		Health Education: Challenging negative thinking	What are negative thinking patterns? What motivates us?
		Health Education: Self Respect and Self Esteem	What strategies are there for challenging negative thinking patterns? What do we mean by Self Respect and Self Esteem?
		Health Education: Drug and Alcohol Risks	How do Self Respect and Self Esteem influence our feelings? What are the risks associated with drugs and alcohol? How does the law classify illegal drugs?
		Health Education: Drug and Alcohol Decisions	What might influence our decisions about whether to take drugs or alcohol? What might be the consequences in law of taking illegal drugs? Why do people misuse prescription medication?
	In SMSC	Health Education: Misuse of Prescription Medication	What are the physical consequences of misusing prescription medications? What are the laws around misusing prescription medications?
		Health Education: Looking after our mental wellbeing	What are the differences between everyday uncomfortable feelings and overwhelming feelings? What supports can we use to help prevent us becoming overwhelmed?
		Health Education: Stigma and Mental Health	What might be the consequences of stigmatising mental health conditions? How can we challenge stigma around mental health?
		British Values and Citizenship: Understanding Democracy	What does democracy mean? Is every country a democracy? What is a representative democracy?

Year 11

Yr 11	In Tutor Time		What can I do after Year 11?
		Careers and Skills: What happens after Year 11	What support can Backwell Offer in helping me make a decisions?
			What helps good decision making?
		Careers and Skills: Qualification Levels	What are the different Qualification Levels?
			How do Levels affect next steps?
		Careers and Skills: A-Levels	What is an A-Level?
			Why might I choose to do A-Levels?
		Careers and Skills: Vocational Qualifications	What is a Vocational Qualification?
			Why might I choose to do a Vocational Qualification?
	In SMSC	Careers and Skills: Apprenticeships	What is an Apprenticeship?
			Why might I choose to do an Apprenticeship?
		Careers and Skills: Post 16 Options	Who influences our decisions?
			What next steps do I need to take now?
		Health Education: Healthy Lifestyles	How do unbalanced lifestyles affect our long term health?
			Who is responsible for our lifestyle choices?
		Health Education: Cannabis	What are the effects of cannabis on the body?
	What are the effects of cannabis on mental health?		
	Health Education: Other harmful drugs	What other substances are harmful to our health?	
		How are the risks to health associated with ketamine use?	
	Careers and Critical Skills: Dealing with exam stress	What might our body responses be to exam stress?	
		How can we manage stressful feelings before, during and after exams?	
		How can we seek support if needed?	

GCSE and GCE Post Results Services – DEADLINE APPROACHING

A reminder that the deadline for receiving requests for access to scripts or reviews of marking is Friday 18 September, 2pm.

All the necessary information can be found in the post results leaflets that were emailed to students with their results on results day.

Quick Links

- [School Uniform and Equipment Guidance](#)
- [Financial Support](#)
- [Sixth Form Bulletin](#)
- [Year 12 Parents and Carers Information Evening - 09 Sept 2026](#)
- [Year 11 Parents and Carers Information Evening - 10 Sept 2026](#)
- [Careers Bulletin - September 2026](#)

Letters Home

- [Free School Meals from September 2026 - Important information](#)
- [Welcome letter to parents and carers - September 2026](#)
- [CHANGE OF DATE: Year 10 Parents' and Carers' Information Evening: now Tuesday 22 September](#)
- [Year 8 Parent/Carer Tutor Evening: Thursday 01 October 2026](#)
- [Year 7 Parent/Carer Tutor Evening: Thursday 01 October 2026](#)
- [Sirona Flu consent letter to Parents and Carers - September 2026](#)



Dates for your Diary

13 – 15 September	Year 13 Gold DofE Assessed Expedition: Snowdonia
Tuesday 15 September	Photography Day – Years 7, 10, 12 and other new starters Spanish Exchange Information Evening – 18:00 in Sixth Form Theatre Years 10-13 – Inkling AI Tutoring Programme Information Evening: 18:00 in Main School Theatre
Wednesday 16 September	Year 13 Parent / Carer Information Evening – 18:00 in Main School Theatre (please note change of venue)
Thursday 17 September	Early School Closure for students – School finishes at 13:30. School buses will leave @ 13:45 Backwell School Open Evening: 17:00 – 19:15
Friday 18 September	Inset Day – School closed for students Year 10 Bronze DofE Assessed Expedition: Mendip
Tuesday 22 September	Year 10 Parent / Carer Information Evening – 18:00 in the Main Theatre
Thursday 01 October	Year 7 and Year 8 Tutor Parents' and Carers' Evening (online) 4.00 – 6.45 pm

Free School Meals (FSM) from September 2026

From September 2026, Free School Meals are being expanded to all families on Universal Credit. If you would like to apply for Free School Meals for September, please apply in the summer holidays at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals. If you have any queries or require any help, please email FSM@n-somerset.gov.uk

Please also note, many families already in receipt of free school meals will also need to reapply over the summer – see details below.

When to apply for Free School Meals (FSMs) for September 2026:

- New starters should apply in the summer holidays.
- Children not yet on FSMs who meet the new expanded criteria, should apply in the summer holidays.
- Anyone who has been awarded FSMs through their North Somerset Citizen's account in the past 2 years, will not need to reapply, and they will see their existing application if they log in. When they are reassessed, they will get their result via their North Somerset Citizen's account.
- Anyone who was awarded FSMs over 2 years ago would have applied via North Somerset Council's old system. They will need to apply via their North Somerset
- Citizen's account, as the Local Authority will no longer hold personal details to be able to contact them or reassess their eligibility. If they don't have an account, they can register for one. If they don't reapply, their entitlement will end this academic year as the transitional protection will finish for all children this summer. They should therefore apply over the summer holidays.

Reminder: the link to apply or reapply, for Free School Meals for September 2026 is: www.n-somerset.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals



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Python Club Term 1

Learn to code in Python while building **games**, **apps**, and **simulations**. Develop problem-solving skills that boost creativity and confidence. Explore **machine learning**, and discover how to work with data and visualise it.

Python opens a door to many career opportunities.
Suitable for students in **Years 7–11**.

IN PERSON

5pm – 6pm
WEDNESDAYS

Hangstones Pavilion
Stowey Road, Yatton,
BS49 4HS

HOW TO JOIN

Scan the QR code to book
or visit:

codingbug.co.uk/python-coding-club/



ONLINE

5:15pm – 6:15pm
MONDAYS after school

HOW TO JOIN

Scan the QR code to book
or visit:

codingbug.co.uk/online-python-club/



Python



VISIT OUR WEBSITE
codingbug.co.uk



 info@codingbug.co.uk

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Mental health support for children and young people
Call NHS 111 and choose option 2 for urgent help

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worried?



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