

— A Student Newspaper —

# THE HIGH SOCIETY

October 2024



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# Get to know your teacher!

## An interview with Mrs Williams

Get To Know Your Teacher is a new segment where we introduce a new teacher every issue and find out about their role and experiences at AHS. We also delve deeper and discover their interests.

This issue we are focusing on Mrs. Williams, a teacher of Religious Studies, as well as the Head of Year for Year 8.

### What do you like about teaching RS?

I like to make topics that students find less engaging more interesting to get the students excited about why people believe and think what they do.

### What do you like most about AHS?

I like the community feel of AHS, everyone is lovely to each other. There's a nice rapport between staff and students. And all of the events in Fundraising Week are the best.

### How are you finding being a Head of Year?

It's really, really good. I'm lucky I have a lovely Year 8 year group. It's nice to interact with the students in a different fashion as well as being a subject teacher.

### What is your favourite part of the RS curriculum?

Philosophy is my favourite part, and introducing it to students in KS3 then seeing how much we can expand and hurt their brains in one hour is interesting.

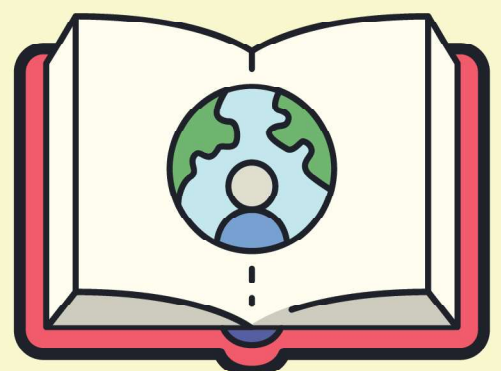
### Why did you decide to go into teaching?

I always wanted to be a teacher because my RS teacher at school was a little bit wacky, a little bit off the wall, and made a subject that I found boring before really interesting, and I wanted to bring that to other students. And I think as an RS teacher you have to be a little bit eccentric!

### Do you have a nerdy RS fact to share?

One of my favourite quotes is The unexamined life is not worth living. A Year 8 student once said 'my brain is melting' during a philosophy lesson!

Amy, 12J



# Representation In Reading

As SEND ambassador, I am hoping to raise more awareness and acceptance for a wide range of conditions. It's crucial that we are careful when viewing media as a lot of the time representation is not accurate. Stereotypical ideas of conditions are spread, encouraging people to make judgements about others that are not true. I will be sharing a recommendation once a term so you can access realistic representation of different conditions.

'A Kind of Spark', a novel by Elle McNicoll, tells the story of an autistic girl as she fights for change in Juniper. The main character Addie is 11 years old and seeks to create a memorial for the women mistreated as 'witches' during trials in her hometown. The book allows for a realistic insight into an autistic mind and portrays different ways in which autistic traits can appear. It includes topics such as sensory sensitivity, burnout, special interests and masking. Elle McNicoll has also written other books focused on the neurodivergent experience. The book 'Keedie' takes place before 'A Kind of Spark' and tackles bullying, navigating friendships and lots more!

A filmed version of 'A Kind of Spark' can be found on BBCiPlayer/CBBC. It is based on the novel and is full of adventure, emotion and authenticity! There are now 2 seasons highlighting diverse experiences through the characters Addie, Keedie and Bonnie.

I would recommend 'A Kind of Spark' to anyone who wants a realistic insight into Autism in females!



Zahra, 13E



Image courtesy of BBC



# L&GALLY BLOND&

**With excitement in the air surrounding the upcoming joint school production, we spoke to some of the key players involved in Legally Blonde.**

**First, the stars themselves. Akshaya and Ele play Elle Woods, the iconic main character of the musical. Here are their opinions on the show:**

**With so many people auditioning, how did it feel to be cast as the lead? Do you have any tips for people auditioning in the future?**

**Ele:** It was definitely an exciting experience and I felt ready to come in and act as Elle Woods. My absolute top tip would just be to be confident. You just have to own it and remember that everyone will be feeling a little nervous.

**Akshaya:** It felt amazing! I love the original movie and musical, and feel incredibly grateful to be cast as Elle. My tip for people auditioning in the future is to revise what you're auditioning for beforehand. Practice is the main thing, don't be afraid to do multiple takes and be confident!

**How does doing this musical complement the rest of your life at school?**

**Ele:** The musical is definitely a break from Sixth Form work. Sometimes with a lot of exam pressure school can feel overwhelming, but I feel like performing truly distracts me from this and is something to look forward to in the week.

**Akshaya:** I take very STEM based subjects, so whilst focusing on academics is really important to me, I also value doing something outside of it that I enjoy, like both music and theatre, and I have participated in events with the music department often over the years, so it's nice to continue this into my final year with the school as well.

**How have you found the rehearsal process? What has been your favourite part of doing this show?**

**Ele:** Rehearsals have been particularly fun because you get to work with other people who like theatre. My favourite part of doing the show has definitely been the acting. I love when scenes come to life and I get to embrace the character of Elle.

**Akshaya:** The rehearsal process has been great so far! I've loved getting to know the other cast members more, and being able to see the musical slowly be put together (which) is such a rewarding experience, and I'm so excited for the performance. It's also been great being double casted with my friend Ele, as we can both work together to practise lines and pieces and cover for each other whenever needed, so I'm really thankful for her.

**What are you most excited about for the performance?**

**Ele:** I'm definitely excited about all the outfits Elle gets to wear. After all, pink is my signature colour!

**Akshaya:** I think what I'm most excited about for the performance (no spoilers!) is going to be the audience's reaction and interaction with the songs and the storyline. The whole musical is so lively and being able to perform with such talented and lovely people will be a wonderful experience.





# L&GALLY BLOND& Cont.



**What are your thoughts on the proposed set/props and costumes?**

**Ele:** I've seen photos of the set and I was definitely impressed. It's very PINK.

**Akshaya:** Some of the costumes have been ordered in, so expect to see some classic Elle Woods costumes included! The amount of costume changes is insane, but hopefully it'll all go well.

**Next we spoke to Mrs Hughes, the director, and Mr Warner, the musical director.**

**How would you say the musical is going so far?**

**Mrs Hughes:** I think it is going really, really well and it is really exciting to see it coming off the page! We are on schedule, it is fantastic that everyone has learned all their lines so we can go through scenes really quickly and stage them when we meet to rehearse at lunchtimes.

**Mr Warner:** Our big run through at the end of the summer term went amazingly and so we are in a really good place. The whole cast has worked SO hard learning all the songs before summer and all their parts, and so we hardly ever see scripts - so I would say things are going really well. The set is booked, costumes are booked, a new sound system is being installed with more radio mics - so I'm quite happy!

**How was the decision made for the school musical to be Legally Blonde?**

**Mrs Hughes:** We talked about shows that we thought students would be interested in and excited about (and might know), we wanted something quite modern with good, catchy songs, opportunities for dance, and something that has a big cast with opportunities for chorus as well.

**Mr Warner:** We have to look at cast sizes, appropriateness and what is available to be licensed for schools to produce. We all felt that Legally Blonde was a really fun (and funny) show - even if it is VERY hard - and that the students would really get behind Elle Woods and her journey of female empowerment.

**What are you most excited about in terms of the performance?**

**Mrs Hughes:** I am most excited to see the set, costume and lighting in the final weeks where everything comes together - everyone's performance is lifted because all the pieces are in place, it lifts their confidence!

**Mr Warner:** Everything. Every member of the cast is amazing and has really embraced the show's ethos.

**What is your favourite song in the show?**

**Mrs Hughes:** Probably Chip On My Shoulder. I'm always singing whatever song we focused on in the rehearsal for the rest of the day!

**Mr Warner:** This question is too hard! My favourite song? Maybe Ireland? Maybe Legally Blonde? Maybe So Much Better? It depends on my mood.

**Do you have a favourite line?**

**Mrs Hughes:** I love your top, it's so fatigue chic! Elle to Enid.

**Mr Warner:** When Warner shuts Elle up in 'Serious' near the start of the show. Or possibly How's THIS for a personal essay!

**Come and watch Legally Blonde at AHS on the 9th, 10th and 11th of December!**

**By Nathalie Y 12K**



# Diversifying the English Literature curriculum

To gain an insight into what the English Department has done to implement a diversity of texts into the curriculum, I interviewed the head of the English department, Mr Elgin. I discovered the multitude of ways they have integrated works of literature that are representative of different groups of people, beliefs and ideas as well as issues that should be brought forward and discussed.

## **Key Stage 3:**

The English teachers have worked hard to introduce a spectrum of different perspectives, voices and views. For example, a key text taught in Year 7 is 'Girl. Boy. Sea.' which features a Muslim main character and in Year 8, 'Iridescent, Adolescent' presents a multitude of different backgrounds and ideas. It is important to include characters that represent different cultures also found within our student body to make them feel more included.

## **Key Stage 4 - GCSE:**

With the GCSE curriculum, it is hard to implement more diversity because of the exam board, however it has improved over the years. A key example of how the English Department has used a text to touch on issues is through Lord of the Flies, which is a long standing text due to its applicability to conflict which makes it a good tool to explore current issues. On another note, a way that the texts are chosen to be reflective of much of the student body is through the Belonging Poetry anthology which features themes on identity and belonging - to each other or to a country which is representative of many students who are British but have cultural roots in other places.

## **Key Stage 5 - English Literature A level**

Although you would think it would be even harder to implement representation into an A Level curriculum, there is still an abundance of opportunities to explore works highlighting different ideas than more traditional texts and reading works from authors that are more culturally diverse.

This can be seen in the case of A Level students being allowed to choose the books they evaluate for their NEA and instead of choosing more traditional pairings, they are encouraged to choose from the Booker Prize list which contains many literary works about different beliefs, identities and backgrounds. Additionally, the two prose texts chosen for the curriculum are 'Frankenstein' by Mary Shelley and 'Never Let Me Go' by Kazuo Ishiguro. It is refreshing to see two authors who are both outside of the dominantly British society being taught in schools as texts that both comment on otherness.

Overall, there has been a lot of essential work put in to make the English Literature curriculum diverse and inclusive to all students from different backgrounds while still bringing attention to pressing issues through the different themes they explore.

**Mary Z 12F**

# Our New Head Girl

In this article, we had the opportunity to talk with Dara Wickremasinghe, our head girl whose passion for leadership and community has made a significant impact on our school. With her strong vision for fostering inclusivity and student engagement, we would like to share her hopes for AHS and what she wishes to do for our school as Head Girl 2024-25.

Her vision closely aligns with the aspirations of the governors and Mrs Forster: to nurture unique and talented individuals. As Head Girl, she aims to foster a positive and engaging environment where every student feels respected and empowered to reach their full potential. Dara envisions AHS as a place that inspires students, hopefully allowing them to one day reflect on their time here with nostalgia and pride.

As part of her role in the cabinet, she is the head of diversity and alumnae careers. This role allows her to further develop her aforementioned visions for the student body. By working together with the ID group on events put on by the school throughout the year, She believes ' it creates an inclusive environment, and really helps to make our school a community, where groups and individuals can all come together to celebrate what makes students unique'.

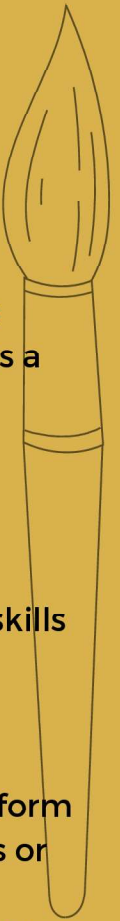
Alumnae and careers is something that she is very passionate about, and is a project that she hopes will really inspire our younger years in exploring various careers and pathways for life after AHS as connecting with alumnae gets easier. Creating these stronger connections with alumnae will lead to more talks, speeches and words of advice to younger years wanting to go down certain routes whether that be in academic or career wise.

Dara, our head girl, acknowledges that whilst her role comes with its challenges, it brings immense fulfilment. She finds that being able to guide her peers, create a positive environment, and implement meaningful initiatives makes all the challenges worthwhile.

**Aleeza M 10C**



# BRONZE ART AWARD



## What is the Bronze Art Award?

The Bronze Arts Award is a qualification which develops young people's artistic abilities alongside their research and communication skills. This level involves them in the arts as a creator and an audience member, encouraging them to take their first steps towards leadership by sharing their learning with others.

The Arts Award is for students aged 11- 14 to grow arts and leadership skills and talents. Through the Arts Award, students will earn a national qualification that will construct confidence through nourishing their individual talents, while equipping them with life skills that will aid their education.

## How do you do this?

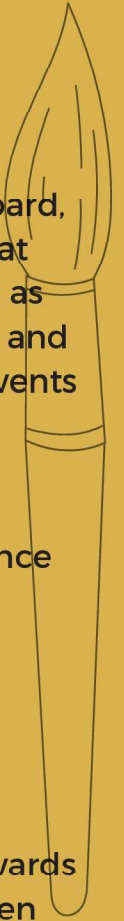
To attain their Arts Award, students will have a Google form where they can pick an art form to concentrate their project on, these options include: Music, Art, Dance, Drama, Textiles or Food Tech. However, if anyone has a creative passion or hobby outside the school, for example Bollywood or Musical Theatre, they could discuss with the course coordinator, Mrs Hughes, to ask whether it is suitable for entry. They would love to hear about it if it is your passion or something you would love to do!

As students go through the school journey, taking hold of their chosen activity as a part of their normal timetable, they should have a record of their work in a sketchbook, scrapbook or even online on a powerpoint/slideshow. This is where they will be making notes and log evidence of the arts subject they are doing. This could be through photos, diary entries, work you did in class, comments or feedback. The portfolio is used to show the student's progress, explaining what they have done and learned along the way.





# BRONZE ART AWARD CTD



They will be reminded to do this in class where they will need to decorate a moodboard, build on their portfolio, research the work of an artist, practitioner or craftsperson that inspires them in a way. The Bronze Arts also accredits students to adventure the arts as an audience member and, to this end, they must note a review of an arts experience and its creative impact on them. Students will be able to evaluate free in-house school events such as text covered in English, equally they can see shows outside of school, like a pantomime.

For a young person to achieve Bronze Arts Award, their portfolio must include evidence of:

- actively participating in an art form
- experience at least one Arts event and reviewing it
- researching the career and work of an artist or craftsperson
- passing on an arts skill to others

Overall, students must deliver their chosen art skill with others. This will be done towards the end of the school year and will depend on which topic areas students have chosen for their projects. They would be able to work with a visiting primary school (co-ordinated by AHS) or teach their peers within a lesson or co-curricular activity.

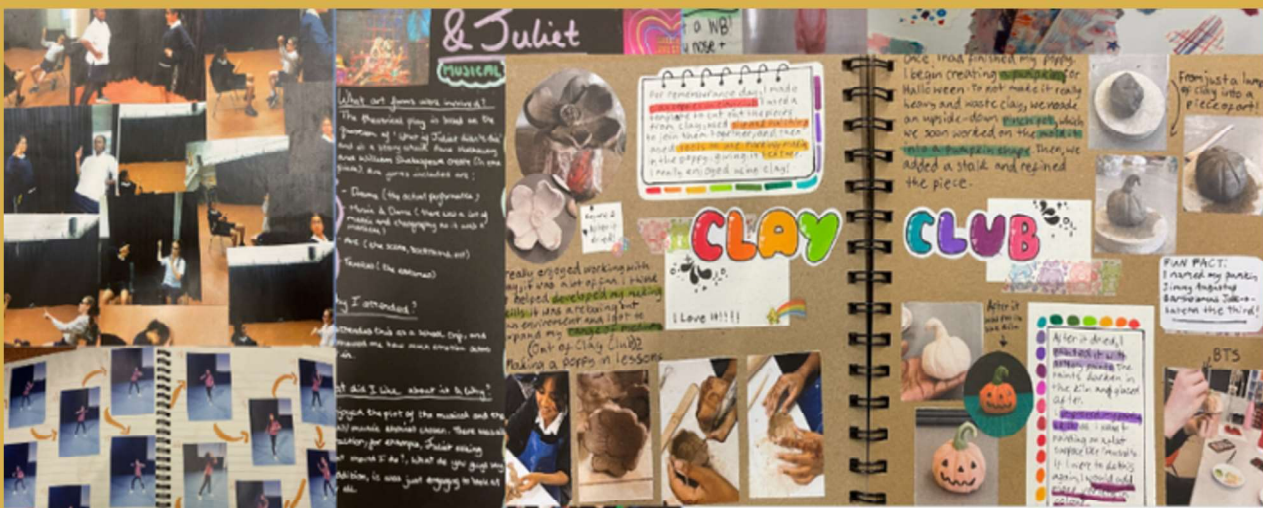
## What happens next?

You send your portfolio to the council who would then decide whether you pass and move on to Silver. Certificates and badges are then awarded in July. Further on, you would be able to do Gold in KS5 and this will support your university application.

## My opinion

I am one of the participants of the Bronze Arts Award 2024/25 and I really love it - I get to experience new things with the arts. To me, the Bronze Arts Award is an opportunity to bring out the inner creativity in you in the creative arts subject you love and have memorable experiences in the portfolio. I love learning new skills and talents especially in art like doing photo manipulation and using many backgrounds in many different ways like bubbles, tie dye and jelly block painting.

Aishaani 8S



# House Dance

The last few weeks have been buzzing with anticipation as students prepare for the upcoming House Dance Competition. To capture the excitement, we spoke to students about their thoughts and insights.

**How does it feel being part of House Dance? How did it feel knowing you had been selected?**

**Baptina:** Being part of House dance is extremely enjoyable and entertaining.

**Erin:** It's been extremely exciting and very fulfilling being a part of House Dance, and I'm so grateful for my role!

**How does House Dance affect your life at school?**

**Baptina:** It really helps give me a break from school work and is quite a fun hobby.

**Erin:** It's been so amazing being able to know more people in older years, it makes school so much more fun.

**Is there a particular happy memory you have of House Dance?**

**Baptina:** I have many fun memories learning choreography with my friends and performing.

**Erin:** House meals on performance nights were so much fun - we would get pizza and go out somewhere.

**Would you recommend House Dance to new Year 7s ?**

**Baptina:** I definitely would, it is so much fun and a great opportunity for you to make new friends.

**Erin:** It can be amazing if you are looking to gain new skills, make more friends and really step out of your comfort zone.

**How are younger year 7s feeling about their first House Dance?**

**Vindya:** It feels really exciting and fun being part of House Dance, and I am looking forward to the competition!

Aleeza M 10C



# BANKSIDE

On the 12th September, the Year 11 History students went on the trip to Bankside. This was to consolidate the lessons we had done on the history of the site at the end of Year 10. We started at London Bridge, a place of much change - the London Bridge of 1968 got moved to Arizona in order to bring more tourists to the desert area!



After that, we went to Southwark Cathedral, previously The Priory of St Mary Overie, and then renamed St Saviour's Church which, in contrast to London Bridge, has managed to outlast even Henry VIII's purge of the monasteries. Then there was a walk around the famous Borough Market, a culmination of international cuisine, ranging from traditional English teas to spicy curries and bao buns.

We then continued along the path until we reached the Golden Hinde, a replica of the ship on which Francis Drake circumnavigated the globe. On the subject of Globes, just further along the bank is the rebuilt Shakespeare's Globe which rests a few metres away from where it was originally constructed (an area which is now residential). A short walk from the Golden Hinde lies the Clink Museum constructed on the site of the Clink Prison, the most notorious prison of Medieval London.

Then, we headed up past Blackfriars Bridge and past a lot of brutalist architecture. Then we got a snack from a nearby market.

A huge thank you to Mr Annat, Mrs Gaunt, Ms Mabey, Mrs Smith and Rosa for taking us on this tour of Bankside!

**Emily 11M, Katy 11H**

## AHS Success! GCSE and A Level Results Day

On Thursday 15th of August at 8am, A Level students all over the country were waiting eagerly to find out their final grades from the exams which had taken place only two months before. The results were amazing! Out of 184 students, 70% of them passed with a grade from A\*-B. Students aiming for university were successful, with 7 going to Oxbridge and the majority getting into their firm choice, which included Russell Group Universities.

One week later, on the 22nd, the GCSE students were in the same boat! The average grade across the whole year group at AHS was a 7.3. Students celebrated with friends and families (as well as discounts and freebies at their favourite restaurants). As a current Year 12 student, I was very proud of my own results and those of my peers and am looking forward to progressing further through my A-Level courses - and going through the same thing again in just under two years' time!

Well done to both the former Year 13s and Year 11s for their excellent exam results!

**Helena 12E**

# How AHS has welcomed

## Year 12 students

With the start of a new year, AHS welcomes an abundance of transfer students from an array of different schools. As a transfer student myself, I have experienced the incredibly welcoming environment as I have gotten used to the new school surroundings and culture. It has been wonderful having a fresh start, meeting new people and embracing the next chapter of my academic journey without feeling excluded at all. I have interviewed the Head of Sixth Form, Mr Skinner, to find out more about what the school has done to make the transition for Year 12 transfer students comfortable as well as any improvements they plan to make for the future from the feedback they collate.

### **What has been done by the school and yourself to help with the integration of external students into year 12?**

**Mr Skinner:** We have a continually evolving strategy aimed at easing the transition into Year 12 for not just transfer students (we prefer that term to 'external') but all students. Over the last two years we have introduced several measures designed to help from a wellbeing and academic perspective. For example, this year we had transfer students come in on the day before all Year 12 students with the aim of familiarising them with the school, expectations and each other before all 220 students were in together. All students have been contacted by our brilliant Sixth Form wellbeing assistant, Miss Scott, and will all have a face to face meeting with her later in the year as our current Year 13 transfer students have. We have also introduced a new study skills programme for all of our students, with sessions integrated across both year 12 and 13 at key moments. This is designed to help all students adapt to the requirements of A Level study. Furthermore, it can take a while to get used to the Google suite, so we provide the opportunity for all students to complete the Google Workspace Skills Course. All forms are reconfigured in Year 12 with an even number of students from the existing 6 houses and those from other schools - a fresh start for all. Our teaching staff are also aware of all transfer students in their groups.



# How AHS has welcomed

## Year 12 students Ctd

**From your observations, do you believe the transition for year 12 transfer students to be successful?**

**Mr Skinner:** Our transfer students are brilliant. It is no mean feat to start afresh at this stage, and last year (my first here at AHS) I was enormously proud to see transfer students volunteering really early in the year to help out with school events and involve themselves in wider school life. It is amazing to see how students grow in confidence and maturity across their time here. I was delighted to see so many of our current Year 12s helping out on Open Evening last month. It is of course difficult to start anew in a school environment and we recognise that individuals have different needs. We are here to support and help as best as we can.

**How do you think it has improved over the years?**

**Mr Skinner:** Having only been here since September 2023 I don't feel fully qualified to answer this question, but we are listening to feedback and view our transfer strategy as an ongoing process. We will always want to be more effective.

**What ideas do you have for future improvement?**

**Mr Skinner:** We have taken some feedback on the new extra day already, and will think about how we might make the day more effective and avoid any repetition of information across the two days. We will also look to make improvements to the speed and ease with which we can get students familiar with our IT systems and ability to access resources.

**Is there anything else you would like to add in regards to the process of welcoming year 12 transfer students?**

**Mr Skinner:** Transfer students make up roughly a quarter of our Sixth Form; once here, they are AHS students. They came from 25 different schools this year, and this richness of experience really enhances the school. We are proud of them, and delighted to have them on board.

Mary Z 12F





POTS awareness month takes place during October every year, with PoTS awareness day being the 25th of October, however it is not a topic commonly talked about. PoTS itself is a condition that affects many people in society with varying ranges of severity. PoTS stands for Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome, which means a person experiences a rapid change in heart rate (30 bpm or more) with any change in movement. There are a range of symptoms including dizziness, fatigue, nausea and fainting, these are completely different depending on the person.

POTS is a hard illness to manage as there are very little treatment methods available and the symptoms can impact the daily lives of many suffering with this condition, limiting what they are capable of doing without overexerting themselves. In fact around 25% of people with PoTS suffer so severely that this disability means that they cannot physically work, even if they were working and active before developing it.

It is important for us to take the time to understand different individuals' experiences and what they may struggle with in their daily lives. I feel it is important to encourage others to show compassion and empathy towards anyone struggling with anything and it is also essential to take the time to educate ourselves about conditions that do not affect us, so we can have a better understanding of others. Even though this month is PoTS awareness month, it is beneficial for us all to take the time to research into other conditions as well, to better understand the conditions that people in our community may be struggling with.

**Stephanie MR 12B**



# Sports Presentation and Colours Award Evening



The annual Sport Presentation evening commemorated the sporting achievements of students who displayed exceptional dedication, skill and sportsmanship throughout the year.

We were honoured to be joined by AHS Alumna Gemma Collis who delivered an inspiring speech to the audience, recounting her journey and accomplishments as a Team GB paralympic athlete. Congratulations to these teams per key stage for achieving 'AHS sports team of the year' and to all the students who were nominated and achieved Colours.

## Teams of the year :

KS3 - Swim team national finals - juniors

KS4 - Swim team national finals - inters

KS5 - U18 Netball English Schools Regional

The Colours award ceremony celebrated the efforts of students in academic subjects who have been recognised for their outstanding commitment, contribution, and achievements in the classroom and co-curricular activities.

Students were rewarded with either Bronze, Silver or Gold Colours based on their level of engagement and participation in competitions and general contributions.

As the new year continues, hopefully these awards will encourage us all to engage actively in co-curriculars and motivate us to be more involved beyond the classroom.

Look out for competitions, attend clubs and volunteer in different activities! Good luck and enjoy the school year!

## Anushri 10A

