

news

SUMMER 2026



Celebration Day

For Celebration Day, the entire NCW community comes together to celebrate the achievements of students, reflect on the year and bid farewell to student leavers as they take the next exciting step in their journey.

Families, former students, friends of the college, supporters, patrons and stakeholders gathered on the college lawn before the formal proceedings began with a series of inspiring speeches, including from former NCW student Jack Garner. Jack shared his journey from NCW to university and into the workplace, reflecting on the many adventures he has embraced along the way. From climbing mountains and completing triathlons to taking on new challenges and opportunities, Jack demonstrated that determination and ambition can take you anywhere. His message to students was clear: if you set your mind to something, anything is possible.

Following a wonderful student Musical Showcase and lunch, guests visited subject showcases, highlighting the breadth of learning and

opportunities available at NCW. Students demonstrated their work and achievements, giving visitors a valuable insight into life across the college.

The afternoon continued with a powerful and thought-provoking speech from Darren Harris, England's most-capped visually impaired footballer, sharing stories from his journey from Wolverhampton to competing at the highest levels of sport. Darren encouraged students to challenge their own limitations, embrace opportunities and think differently about what they can achieve.

The day concluded with an awards ceremony, recognising students' achievements, progress and contributions throughout the year.

Trophy Time

This term we welcomed Worcester Warriors Foundation CEO Carol Hart and Matt Cowdrey to school, along with the Elinor Championship Rugby Trophy!

NCW has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with the Worcester Warriors Foundation, whose coaches regularly visit the school to deliver inclusive rugby sessions. Through their support, students can enjoy and access the sport regardless of their level of vision impairment, helping to build confidence, teamwork and a love of physical activity.

The NCW community was thrilled when Worcester Warriors secured the Elinor Championship title and delighted when the Foundation offered to bring the trophy into school, giving

students the opportunity to see and explore the cup for themselves. Having the opportunity to get up close to such an important sporting trophy was a memorable experience and helped bring the excitement of professional rugby to life.

Thank you Worcester Warriors Foundation and Congratulations on winning the championship!



Maths Mentor!



Congratulations to Phil Brookes, Head of Maths, who has been recognised as one of the top five teacher mentors in the UK by Best Practice Network (BPN), a leading training provider for Initial Teacher Training.

The recognition came after a trainee teacher nominated him for the exceptional support and guidance he provided as her in-school mentor

during her teacher training programme. Following the nomination and review process, Best Practice Network selected Phil as one of the top five mentors nationally for this academic year.

Mentoring plays a vital role in teacher development, helping trainee and early career teachers build confidence, refine their classroom practice and develop the skills needed to succeed in the profession.

Congratulations on this outstanding and well-deserved achievement.



French Exploration

NCW Year 9 students have recently completed their FCSE French course, but their language-learning journey didn't stop there. To celebrate all they had achieved this year, Madame Molina, Head of Modern Foreign Languages challenged students to take their learning one step further with a completely open-ended project.

Students were invited to explore, learn about or create anything linked to a French-speaking country. The possibilities were endless – from research projects and travel planning to games, quizzes and even cooking.

Finn created an incredibly detailed travel plan for a trip from the UK to France. His project covered every aspect of the journey, including transport, accommodation, meals and costs. **Aliyah** chose to design a quiz packed

with interesting facts about France, the French language and other French-speaking countries, while **Rory**, a keen board-game enthusiast, put a French twist on a classic by creating his very own version of French-themed UNO. Music lover **Elonia** explored the work of Indila, the French singer, songwriter and record producer. **Zannah** designed a French-language version of the popular game Go Fish, helping players practise vocabulary while having fun with friends.

Meanwhile, **Zaki** and **Ruby** worked together on a culinary challenge, researching and baking madeleines for the group. **Darcy** also chose to explore food and culture, creating a beautiful dairy-free cake while **Zac** took accessibility and creativity to a whole new level by designing a Braille version of Monopoly in French.

What an Experience!

With only around one in four people with sight loss currently in employment, it is more important than ever that young people with vision impairment have opportunities to build confidence, develop workplace skills and explore future career pathways. That is why work experience plays such a vital role in the NCW curriculum.



George Supports Students at Oxted School

One student who embraced the challenge of work experience was **George**, who undertook his placement at **Oxted School in Surrey**, a mainstream secondary school with a specialist Vision Impairment Resource Provision, supporting a Year 7 brailist.

Ahead of the placement, George carefully prepared for the role by planning activities and producing resources in Braille. During the week, he took part in Science and French lessons, shared advice about Braille technology and accessibility, and supported a French teacher by discussing ways to make lessons more accessible for a Braille user.

The QTVI at Oxted School praised George's contribution, describing him as a *"wonderful person"* and saying that *"it is a pleasure to have him on the team this week."*



Len Inspires Young Learners at Stanford-le-Hope Primary School

Another student who made a significant impact during Work Experience Week was **Len**, who completed his placement at **Stanford-le-Hope Primary School**.

Throughout the week, Len worked alongside staff and pupils across a range of year groups, gaining first-hand experience of teaching, supporting learners with vision impairment and using assistive technology. The placement provided him with valuable insight into education while allowing him to share his own experiences as a visually impaired young person.

Music played a central role in Len's week. As a talented cellist, he led music sessions with nursery-aged children, including pupils with vision impairments. His enthusiasm, confidence and natural rapport with younger pupils helped create engaging and inclusive learning experiences.

Len also planned and delivered two whole-class music lessons to Year 1 pupils speaking about his own educational journey, explaining how people with vision impairments access information through touch, sound, Braille and mobility aids.

This year, students took part in an exciting and varied Work Experience Week, with placements that reflected their interests, aspirations and talents. From gaining practical skills in real workplaces to contributing to their local communities, students embraced every opportunity that came their way.

Work experience offers far more than an insight into a particular job. It helps students develop independence, communication skills and self-advocacy. It provides opportunities to explain their accessibility needs, demonstrate their abilities and challenge misconceptions about what people with vision impairment can achieve.



Emma's Full-Circle Moment at Birmingham Children's Hospital

For **Emma**, Work Experience Week has been particularly meaningful with the **Play Specialist team at Birmingham Children's Hospital**, gaining first-hand experience in a career she has long dreamed of pursuing.

Emma's ambition to become a Play Specialist stems from her own experiences as a patient. Over the years, she received incredible support from the Play Specialist team during hospital visits and treatments. Their kindness, creativity and compassion helped make challenging situations easier to navigate and left a lasting impression on her.

Working alongside experienced Play Specialists has provided Emma with a valuable insight into the role, from helping children prepare for medical procedures to creating positive and engaging experiences that support emotional wellbeing. She has been able to observe the breadth of the role and the difference these professionals make to children during what can often be difficult times.



Keziah Explores Music, Community and Employment Opportunities

Keziah enjoyed one of the most varied placements of the week, experiencing a range of roles across music, community work and supported employment services.

For much of the week, Keziah accompanied a self-employed music tutor, gaining valuable insight into how music can bring people together and support wellbeing. Alongside her music-based experiences, Keziah spent time working with her local church community supporting a toddler group, helping to engage with children before assisting with tidying up by washing and organising toys. She also spent time helping in the church kitchen, gaining practical experience in supporting community activities behind the scenes.

Keziah also explored future employment opportunities through discussions with **Realise Futures**, an organisation that supports people to develop skills and access employment opportunities. This gave her the chance to learn more about different career pathways and the support available for visually impaired people entering the workplace.



Waitrose Worcester Supports the Next Generation of NCW Students

Malek, Lily-Grace, Tamzin, Kacey and Tora all completed their work experience placements at **Waitrose Worcester**, one of NCW's long-standing supporters and a valued partner in our work experience programme.

Throughout the week, the students fully immersed themselves in every aspect of life at Waitrose, embracing a wide variety of roles and responsibilities. They gained hands-on experience serving customers on the tills, watering and caring for plants, replenishing stock on the shop floor and supporting staff with kitchen duties.

By working across different departments, students developed important workplace skills including communication, teamwork, organisation, time management and customer service. They also gained valuable insight into how a large retail business operates and the many different roles that help keep it running smoothly.

Placements such as these play an important role in helping young people develop independence, explore potential career pathways and prepare for the world of work.

Zac Thrives at Tesco St Peter's

Zac spent his work experience week at **Tesco St Peter's in Worcester**, another valued supporter of NCW and our work experience programme.

During his placement, Zac embraced every opportunity that came his way, gaining hands-on experience in a variety of roles across the store. He worked alongside different teams, helping with replenishing stock in the freezers and produce departments, supporting customers on the tills and learning about the Click & Collect service. Every day brought something new, allowing Zac to build confidence and develop valuable workplace skills while experiencing the fast-paced environment of a major retailer.

One of Zac's favourite discoveries was Tesco's famous "rumble hour" – the process of ensuring shelves are tidy, organised and fully stocked. It quickly became one of the highlights of his week and gave him an insight into the many behind-the-scenes tasks involved in keeping a busy supermarket running smoothly.



Dylan Explores Innovative Technology at Dolphin Computer Access

For **Dylan**, Work Experience Week provided the perfect opportunity to immerse himself in a field he is passionate about – technology.

Dylan completed his placement with **Dolphin Computer Access**, one of the UK's leading developers of assistive technology for people who are blind or partially sighted. The company creates software and solutions that enable people with vision impairment to access computers, education and employment independently.

As NCW's resident computer whizz, Dylan was excited to gain first-hand experience of the technology sector and learn more about how accessibility software is developed and supported. Throughout the week, he worked alongside professionals with a wide range of expertise, exploring different aspects of the business and gaining valuable insight into careers within the technology industry.

The placement allowed Dylan to see how innovative technology can transform lives by creating greater access to education, work and everyday activities. He had the opportunity to learn more about assistive software development, customer support and the important role technology plays in empowering people with vision impairments to achieve their goals.



Luca Impresses During Work Experience Placement with The Vertical Group

NCW student **Luca** has completed a successful work experience placement with **The Vertical Group**, where he spent a week gaining valuable insight into a range of business functions and making a genuine contribution to the team.

During his placement, Luca completed the company's induction process, learning about its values, policies, and employee handbook before spending time with colleagues across a variety of departments. He listened in on sales and customer service calls, collaborated with the marketing team to develop ideas for social media content, and carried out research into potential letting agency partners in Liverpool and Durham. Luca also began work on a coding project to create a new webpage, further developing his growing technical skills and demonstrating his enthusiasm for web development.

For NCW students work experience is a chance to discover what is possible, advocate for themselves and demonstrate the valuable contribution they can make to their communities and future workplaces. Through determination, talent and a willingness to embrace new opportunities, students like George, Len and Emma are helping to challenge perceptions of vision impairment and inspire others to do the same.

What an Experience!

Award for **Victoria**



This year we are bidding a heartfelt farewell to Mrs Victoria Ward, who retires this summer after more than 26 years of dedicated service to the college and the wider vision impairment education sector.

Throughout her career, Victoria has been many

things to many people – a fantastically talented musician and specialist in Music Braille, an inspiring teacher who has transformed the lives of countless young people with a vision impairment, and a wonderful colleague and leader. Her kindness, approachability and fabulous sense of humour have made her a hugely valued member of the NCW community, while her commitment to inclusion and accessibility has been second to none.

In recognition of her exceptional contribution, Victoria was recently presented with a **High Sheriff Award** by **Maynard Burton, High Sheriff of Worcestershire**.

The award citation read:

"In recognition of her exceptional dedication to enriching the lives and educational opportunities of children who are blind and vision impaired, through her specialist work in Music Education and Music Braille and for her valued service to New College Worcester and the wider community."

As Victoria begins her well-earned retirement, the entire NCW community extends its sincere gratitude for her outstanding service, leadership and advocacy on behalf of children and young people with vision impairment.

Visit from Dame Harriet Baldwin MP

This June we welcomed Dame Harriett Baldwin DBE, MP for West Worcestershire, for a visit to meet with students, staff and employer partners to learn more about the college's work in preparing students for independent living, further education and future employment.

Given Dame Harriett's strong interest in business, industry and the economy, conversations focused on the vital link between education and the workplace and how young people with vision impairment can be supported to access meaningful employment opportunities. A key part of the visit was an



employability panel, where students spoke about their experiences of work placements and preparing for their futures. Students **Ghaalib, Dominic, Dylan** and **Toby** shared their aspirations, as well as the importance of gaining real-world experience.

The visit highlighted the importance of specialist education in supporting young people with vision impairment to achieve their ambitions, develop independence and transition successfully into further education, employment or training.

Emerging Technologies

Students recently had the opportunity to explore some of the latest developments in assistive technology, as we welcomed a local optician to deliver a series of interactive workshops.

During the sessions, students were introduced to Meta smart glasses – an emerging piece of wearable technology designed to support everyday tasks in new and innovative ways. The workshops provided a hands-on experience, allowing students to learn how the glasses work and consider how they could be used to support independence in daily life.

Meta glasses combine classic eyewear with built-in technology, including a camera, speakers and voice-controlled assistant. Users can take photos and videos, listen to audio, make calls, and ask questions using voice commands—making them a potentially useful tool for navigation, accessing information, and staying connected on the go.

Students were fascinated by the possibilities and quickly put the technology to the test, asking the glasses a variety of "Meta" questions. Impressively, the device responded accurately each time, sparking curiosity and plenty of excitement in the room.



Aequalis Education Trust

It has been formally announced that NCW is joining the Worcestershire based Aequalis Education Trust's (AET's) family. The decision follows an extensive review by NCW's Governing Body, in a move supported by both the RNIB and Worcestershire County Council.

This involves transferring the NCW charity through a change of control process to carry on operating as a non-maintained special school under the control of Aequalis Education Trust, continuing to be a national specialist school for young people with vision impairment and follow the Curriculum Framework for Vision Impairment.

We are confident that we have found a partner who will help us to go from strength to strength, whilst preserving NCW as an essential asset for the VI community. We will continue to be a specialist school for VI, whilst exploring opportunities to expand our remit for as many young people to benefit from our specialist expertise as possible.

Being a part of the Aequalis community will enable NCW to support a number of new developments, including the growth of post-19 education and training pathways, as well as a limited expansion of its provision beyond vision impairment to meet a wider range of SEND needs. The partnership will also see existing estate buildings on NCW's campus being utilised, such as creating a satellite hub for Chadsgrove College (also part of the AET family) to support young people with physical disabilities and complex medical needs.

NCW and AET are confident that the new partnership will enable us to better meet the government's recent SEND policy priorities, for example around local collaboration and inclusive provision. It follows the recent SEND White Paper, which was published earlier this year.



Leavers' Prom

NCW Prom 2026 was our best one yet!

Students, staff, family members and friends came together for a truly memorable evening celebrating the achievements, friendships and successes of another fantastic year.

The evening began with students having photographs taken alongside a stunning **vintage Rolls-Royce**, creating the perfect start to a very special occasion. Guests then enjoyed a drinks reception with family

and friends before travelling to the venue, where everyone gathered to enjoy a delicious three-course meal in a wonderful setting.

A delicious three-course meal followed, giving everyone the chance to relax, catch up and enjoy the occasion together. As always, one of the highlights of the evening was the much-anticipated Prom Awards, which recognised the unique personalities, achievements and contributions of students across the college.



Of course, no NCW Prom would be complete without a party, and this year's celebrations certainly did not disappoint. The dance floor was busy throughout the evening as students made the most of the opportunity to celebrate together and create lasting memories with their friends.

Events such as Prom are an important part of life at NCW, providing students with opportunities to build confidence, strengthen friendships and celebrate their achievements in a supportive and inclusive environment. This year's event perfectly captured the spirit of the NCW community and was a fitting way to mark the end of another successful academic year.



Anyone for **Cricket?**

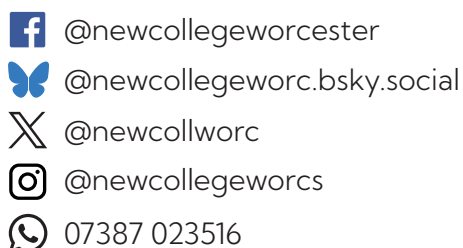
Each year, NCW is privileged to host the Marylebone Cricket Club for a fully accessible visually impaired (VI) cricket match – a long-standing tradition. Many MCC players return year after year, becoming familiar faces within the NCW community and strengthening this special partnership.

The weather was on our side, providing a beautiful day just ahead of the recent heatwave, and setting the perfect scene for a competitive and enjoyable match. MCC posted a total of 74, with NCW narrowly missing out after a brilliant effort, finishing on 65 – just 9 runs short.

A highlight of the day was Daniel being awarded the prestigious Chance to Shine cap for his outstanding batting performance.

Students and players also enjoyed a traditional cricket tea afterwards in the dining room – because cricket, of course, deserves fine food!

And with such a close result, preparations for next year's match have already begun... we'll be coming back even stronger!



History brought to life!

Our Year 7–11 students recently visited Imperial War Museum North in Salford to explore the impact of conflict over the last 120 years.

During the visit, students:

- Explored the museum's main gallery
- Watched a fascinating film about the role of animals in wartime
- Handled artefacts linked to Britain during World War II
- Created their own videos about objects connected to the Second World War

It was a fantastic opportunity to bring classroom learning to life and deepen students' understanding of modern history through hands-on experiences.



Feeling **hot, hot, hot!**

The weather this summer has been so hot we have been looking for new ways of keeping cool. A top tip from our Lower School pupils is to stick your feet in a paddling pool! What a relief!

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