

# Teaching and Learning Monthly Newsletter

SHARPLES  
SCHOOL



May 2026



## Welcoming Summer!

Welcome to the May edition of the newsletter!

If April was about watching our Year 11 students step up, filling the library every night, discussing their revision, and preparing for the countdown, then May is the moment where all that hard work meets reality.

It is an incredibly intense time for the Y11s, but it is lovely to see them emerging confident and happy after finishing each exam.

Despite the focus on the Y11s, this newsletter focuses on the challenge of supporting Y11 towards the finish line, whilst simultaneously ensuring the routines and consistency can be felt across all classrooms.

Younger students take their emotional cues from us. Therefore, we keep our routines tight, our standards high, and our environments predictable, so that they stay focused.

May requires a huge amount of professional stamina from every single member of staff. In order to maintain the 'Sharples Standard' throughout the school, it is up to every single staff member to show up and be consistent for every single pupil.

Enjoy the newsletter, and let's make these final weeks of the year count!

In this newsletter you can expect:

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**Article on Attendance**

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**Sharples Shoutouts and Celebrations!**

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**Sharples Staff Section**

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**CPD Book Recommendations**

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**X / Twitter Shoutouts**

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## May Madness

May is arguably one of the most challenging and complex months in the academic calendar for a secondary school.

Alongside the challenges of Y11 and pushing all students towards the finish line, this is where our transition programme begins. This isn't only for Y6-Y7, but also the transition for our Y9s to Y10 and of course getting Y10s ready for Y11 through mock examination preparation etc. With all that considered, it isn't a surprise that when the Friday of May half term hits, staff and students are absolutely ready for a break in the sunshine.



However, on the return back to school, we need to understand that whilst the Year 11s are facing the high-stakes, high-intensity reality of the GCSEs, simultaneously, in the rest of the building, our Key Stage 3 classrooms must remain vibrant and focused. They need to be completely resistant to the natural "seasonal drift" that warmer days and bright mornings can bring.

Navigating this challenge requires our commitment to consistency, inclusion, and routines, therefore, every single staff member is responsible for holding the line for our lower years while simultaneously the Y11s over the ultimate finish line.

So how can we make sure this happens?

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### **Routines and the "Warm Welcome"**

For years now, we have seen that during exam season, the school's collective energy is focused on Y11. However, the KS3 pupils still require the exact same rigorous boundaries and high expectations today as they did in September.

First of all, we need to use our routines as an anchor. To anchor us in a consistent direction, our morning line ups and corridor transitions are more important than ever. Not only are they important to ensure a quiet environment near the exam halls, they also provide the predictable structure that keeps our younger students feeling secure and settled during an unsettled month. With displacements and cover lessons necessary for Y11 provision, the use of our routines such as silent starters and high expectations create an inclusive environment for all pupils, the consistency that we create acts as a safety net for all pupils.

It's vitally important to remember that Inclusion doesn't stop because exams have started. The simple routine of greeting students at the door remains our most powerful tool. A positive greeting, specifically acknowledging a student's presence and making them feel valued, is what lowers the barrier to learning. It ensures our school culture stays steady, welcoming, and warm, even when the exam pressure is mounting down the corridor. It is especially important for the Y10s to see this consistency and for it to be acknowledged as they begin to ready themselves for their own mocks. Seeing the relentlessness of all staff will hopefully push and urge Y10 in the right direction!

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## May Madness

### **Mental Truancy**

None of us are unaware of the impacts of the summer sun. Lunchtimes have turned into a haven of ice lollies and running around in the sunshine, but when the bell arrives for P5 and students saunter to their next lesson, it isn't uncommon to notice a slight dip in student focus.

Students physically may be in the room, but mentally they are still thinking about the games of lunchtime, they are still acclimatising back to the classroom and adjusting their long term memory to be able to focus on the lesson ahead of them. The solution to this truancy isn't changing what we teach, expectations should still be just as high and students should be held to the same standard. We may need to sharpen up on how we approach and teach our students.

With the new term ahead, this is the month to double down on our high-impact basics:

- The Consistent Starter: Using retrieval for all silent starters ensures every student can access something immediately, experience a small win, and feel involved from the first minute.
- The 5-Minute Catch-Up: Keeping the pace of our lessons high-challenge and low-threat leaves no room for distractions. It gives you those crucial first five minutes while the class is focused on the starter to quietly check in with a returning student, clear any confusion, and bridge the gap before they feel overwhelmed.



### **Attendance! Attendance! Attendance!**

Attendance is on the up and staff are working harder than ever when it comes to ensuring pupils are safe, happy and in school. With the end of the year brewing a few weeks away, students are eager to be in school to ensure they can attend the rewards trip at the end of the year. Despite this, we need to continue this relentlessness. The temptation, for Y9 students particularly, to drift off as they choose their options and seeing Y11s coming towards the end of their time at Sharples means that we need to continue the brilliant work we have done as classroom teachers, form tutors and heads of years.

We need to acknowledge the 1% club and the fact that a student moving from 82% to 83% represents a massive shift in habit and a step away from the "Persistent Absence" bracket, whether they are in Year 7 or Year 11, it means that they have committed to working with us to improve their future life chances.



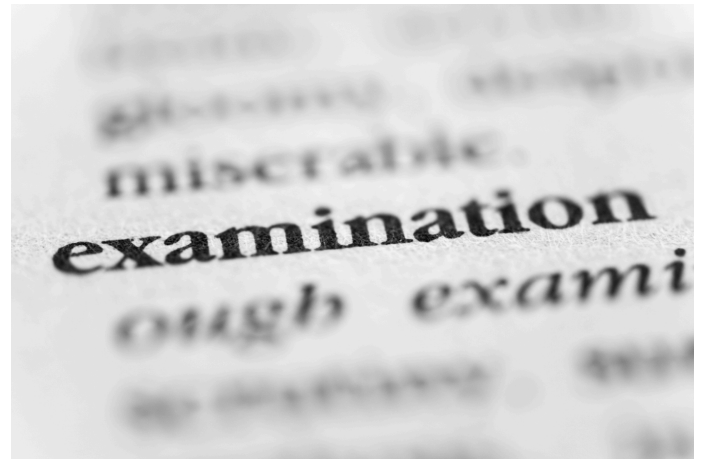
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## May Madness

Just like we've seen with our tutor groups this year, attendance thrives when it becomes a daily conversation point. When we take the time to track those weekly marginal gains together, I read out the attendance each week and acknowledge students that have been in every day, I constantly encourage 100% attendance, taking each week as new goal and I love involving my form in this to ensure they feel we are all working together towards one goal.



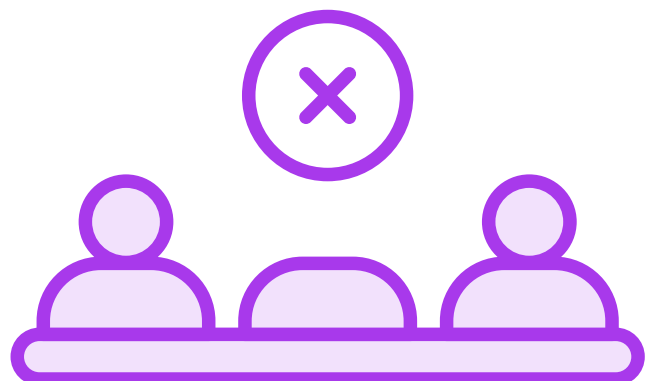
Therefore, as we support our students through the final stretch of the Summer term, our daily interactions are what translate our attendance strategy into reality. It's all about being inclusive: recognizing the unique challenges and hardships that our students face and making sure they feel resilient enough to walk through the school gates.



When a student has been drifting, a quick, low-stakes chat can often uncover a barrier—be it anxiety, transport issues, or a morning responsibility at home, it is something that we can help solve before it impacts their progress. Targeted verbal feedback acknowledging their presence ("It's fantastic to have you back in the room, your input yesterday was brilliant") drastically increases their sense of belonging and builds the resilience they need.

Thank you for your continued dedication to these vital form tutor conversations, for driving up attendance, and for checking in daily to create a truly inclusive environment where every single student feels valued, heard, and focused on the finish line.

Don't let the pupil in the middle (below) be excused. High expectations for all!



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# SHARPLES CELEBRATES!



Each month we want to shout out teachers who want to share excellent practice! The first 3 teachers to email [n.ayub@sharplesschool.co.uk](mailto:n.ayub@sharplesschool.co.uk) with an example of brilliant practice will receive a box of celebrations delivered to their classroom!



**Fazaila Haseeb**

Fazaila has become an absolutely wonderful member of staff since she started at Sharples. From running the breakfast club in the morning with fellow TAs, to attending multiple trips within the school year, and just being a positive member of staff, there is nothing that Fazaila would say no to. She has become a great asset to the Sharples family!



**Claire Brook**

Claire has worked extremely hard this year to ensure the Creative Arts department has gone from strength to strength. The Legally Blonde performance was fantastic and she also designed a brilliant board game for the year 7s where they were able to revise their knowledge of music notation whilst also competing against each other! Claire is a great addition to the team and wonderful member of staff.



**Christine Smith**

Christine's unique and ambitious classroom technique has been wonderful for pupils that struggle with English and sometime have low ambitions for themselves. Christine has been relentless in her approach, has tried different avenues to support and has run multiple interventions to give her students the best chance she can.

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## Sharples Staff Section

In this part of the newsletter, we want to discover more about the staff at Sharples and the incredible work they do on a daily basis.

Each month, one member of staff will feature and we will discover more about their background and how they ended up at Sharples.

This month, Hana Stringer has kindly detailed more about her experience in working with our visually impaired pupils.



### **1. How long have you been working at Sharples?**

I started working for the visually impaired unit in 2019. I have really enjoyed my time working here ever since.

### **2. Why did you decide to work in the education sector?**

I have always enjoyed working with children. Before joining Sharples, I worked in a nursery and ran children's karate classes. Working in a school was always one of my career goals, so I was excited to have the opportunity to work for Bolton Sensory services and be a part of the Sharples community.

### **3. Where did you study and was there a module / topic that you were really passionate about during your time in education?**

I started working straight after I attended college. However, I was particularly interested in differentiating physical activities for young children with additional needs.

### **4. What is the best part of your job?**

The best part of my job is watching the students I work with make progress and achieve their goals. It is incredibly rewarding to watch them grow in confidence, develop new skills and become more independent. I love how each day is different and can bring new challenges as all of our pupils are unique!

### **5. What is the most interesting part of your job?**

I really enjoy making learning accessible for our students and being creative, producing Braille and creating tactile diagrams/resources. I love working on a one to one basis with pupils and their families. I also find supporting mobility sessions interesting, which helps students to develop their cane skills, navigate their surroundings and build independence and travel in public spaces.

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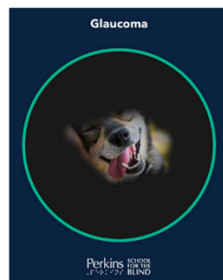
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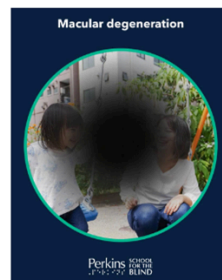


### 6. What do you wish the teaching staff knew about your job?

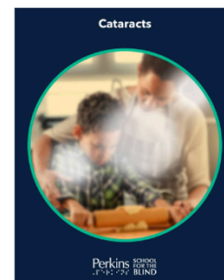
Blindness is a spectrum. Individuals with a visual impairment have different needs, abilities and ways of accessing information. Please see below for example:



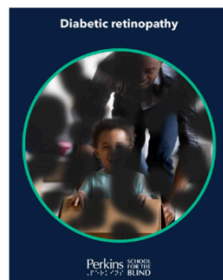
An image of a dog, with much of the surrounding area darkened and blurred, creating a pinhole view, representing the effects of glaucoma.



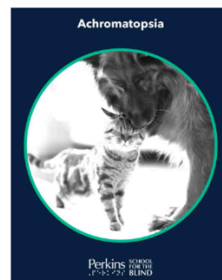
A little girl on a swing next to her mother, with a dark cloud obscuring the middle of the scene, representing the effects of macular degeneration.



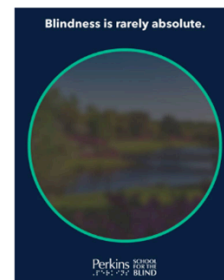
A yellowed scene of a mother and son baking a pie in a kitchen, partially obscured by blurry white spots to represent cataracts.



A scene of a father pushing his laughing young son around in a cardboard box, partially obscured by a series of dark, blurry spots, to represent diabetic retinopathy.



A black and white scene of a dog and a cat snuggling, to represent the complete or partial absence of color vision, also known as achromatopsia.



A dim and blurry scene of a green field, a pond, and trees represents another way that blindness is rarely absolute.

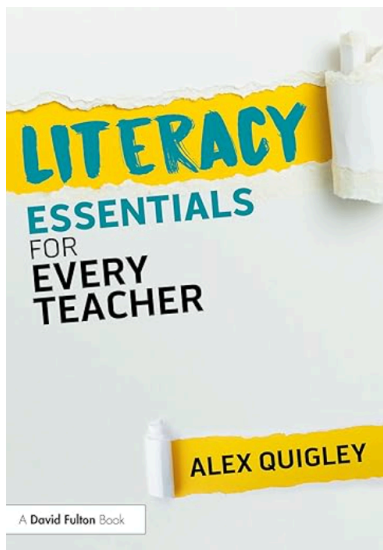
### 7. How can teachers and the school, as a whole, work to be more inclusive?

I believe that staff in school are already very aware of and supportive towards our visually impaired students. They are always included in activities and are very settled in the daily school routine. In order to be more inclusive, staff could try on the simulation glasses which replicate different types of eye conditions. This will help staff to understand how our students cope and have an insight into some of the challenges that they experience on a daily basis.

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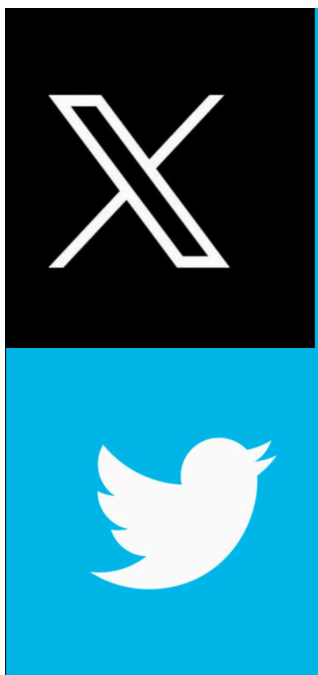
## Book and Twitter (X) Recommendations



### **Literacy Essentials**

Literacy provides some of the most important challenges, and solutions, to learning in the classroom and beyond. However, each year worrying statistics suggest that literacy is in decline, with fewer children reading daily and falling national standards for writing. *Literacy Essentials for Every Teacher* is the definitive guide to literacy, summarising the best of what we know works with reading, writing, talk, and vocabulary development and providing practical solutions for transforming literacy outcomes in the classroom

Please email [n.ayub@sharplesschool.co.uk](mailto:n.ayub@sharplesschool.co.uk) if you would like to borrow!



[The choreography of teaching 30 children at the same time!](#)

**[This link goes to a helpful blog about mastering the choreography of teaching!](#)**

[Click here to view the thread](#)

