



# CHADSGROVE EDUCATIONAL TRUST SPECIALIST COLLEGE

## SPRING 1 NEWSLETTER 2026

### Welcome to our Spring 1 Newsletter!

This half-term has been an inspiring celebration of community inclusion, independence and real-world learning across the college. Our students have been growing in self-confidence as they challenge themselves to explore new environments and embrace new experiences — from taking part in a fully staged mock District Council meeting to exploring exciting work-related learning opportunities, including writing for a local magazine. Alongside these community experiences, learners have been developing their communication skills through a range of personalised approaches and deepening their independence as part of our Preparing for Adulthood curriculum. It's been a busy and empowering half term and we are proud to share just some of the incredible achievements and progress of our dedicated students and staff team in this newsletter.

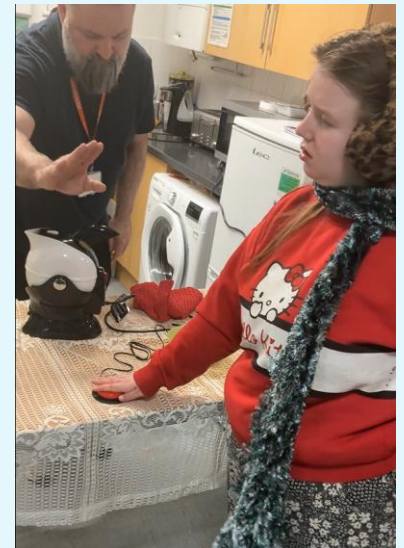




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## COMMUNICATION

This half term in communication, student sessions with Sonia our Speech and Language Therapist and college Communication Champions have been based around exploring new personalised ways of communicating. This has included the use of italk2 switches, Vocas, symbols and Signalong.



Students have also continued using a new weekly core word at college, see below:





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## COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

### Mock Local Council Meeting

Following a visit from local Councillors during Parliament week, student Ellie had mentioned that she would like to help people. In response to this, students were invited to the Bromsgrove Council house for a 'mock council meeting' where students had the opportunity to experience firsthand, how meetings run and what is involved in holding a council meeting.

Students were asked to come up with a question to ask the local Councillors during the meeting. They also had the opportunity to have an 'employer encounter' whereby they were able to ask Councillors questions about their jobs, how they help the local community and how they include people with SEND.

We had a very warm welcome and hope to be invited back in the future. Bromsgrove District Council have shared a reel on their Facebook page of our visit, you can check it out [here](#).





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## COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

### St John's Spire Appeal Success!

Students from our Seeker Pathway were invited by our Community Champion, Jo Slade, to visit St John's Church to hear about the amazing success of their 'Save our Spire Appeal'.

Originally installed in the 1850's, the top 2.25m section of the Spire has needed repairing for some time. Now, after an incredible fundraising campaign, the new Spire is in place.

Students visited St John's back in June 2024 where they first learnt about the project to repair the Spire. Since then, students have been involved with the project and had even chosen to kindly donate some funds from Enterprise projects to support the appeal. Jo and the Spire Project Manager said *"It was wonderful to welcome students back to St John's to show them the rebuilt spire apex. Our collaboration with students has been an important part of the project and we were enormously grateful for the contribution they made following their visits to the church"*.

Huge congratulation to the Friends of St John's on such a wonderful appeal – what an inspiring legacy for both the Church and the wider community.

The old spire will be turned into a permanent fixture outside the church for all to visit.





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## COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

As part of their work-related learning and community sessions, students from the Explorers Pathway have been busy exploring a variety of shops, cafés and businesses in and around Bromsgrove. They visited Webbs and Willowbrook Garden Centres, various shops including the cobblers, the post office, Home Bargains and Poundland. Throughout these visits, students have been observing and learning how different people work in a range of environments. They have also been practicing important life skills, such as using self-scanners to scan their shopping and exploring money skills whilst paying for goods in shops and cafés. Students watched how cafés were run and what staff do day-to-day. They particularly enjoyed visiting the cafés for a warm drink and a small treat. During their visits to the Garden Centre's students purchased vegetables and seeds in preparation for their sessions in the college garden. Students will be planting and getting the garden ready when they return after the February half term.



After Half Term, students, in preparation for their next steps during and after college, will be exploring local and relevant Day Centres.



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## STUDENT VOICE

### Design for Local Authority Vision

Chadsgrove College has had the pleasure of working with Chanika from SEND Co-Productions (Worcestershire Local Authority). Chanika approached us to collect valuable student feedback on 3 images that had been created by an artist for the Local Area Partnership. We were asked that the images needed to clearly show Worcestershire's commitment to improvement and should represent 'The vision for children and young people in Worcestershire', 'the 'we will' statements, which are what practitioners are going to do to work with families' and 'the outcomes for children and young people which practitioners will use to shape plans and services'. Students were challenged with considering which ones they liked and why, whether they could clearly understand the message they were trying to share, if they like the colours and where things were placed on the image.

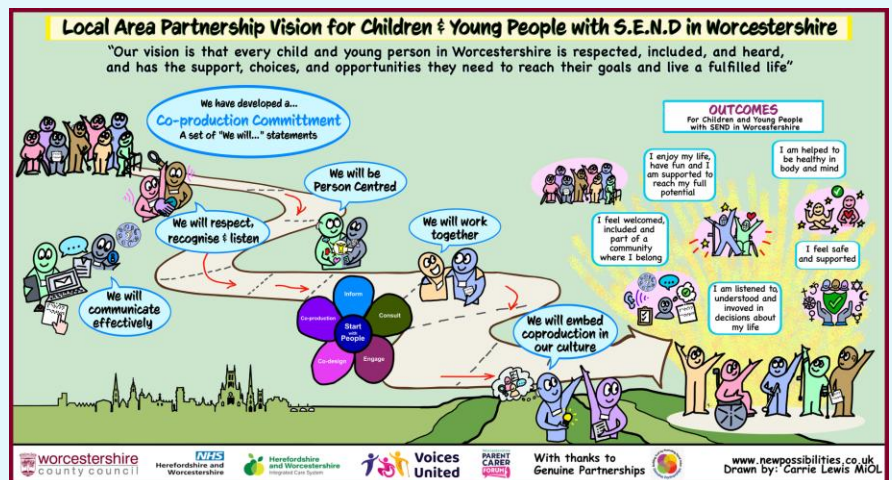
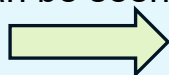
After reviewing student feedback, a final version of the visual has been released. Chanika has shared that they appreciated students' thoughts and had taken on their suggestions about which one was clearer and easier to understand. Feedback about appropriate placement of icons was also positively received.



We are very proud to know that our students have helped to have a

positive impact on influencing Worcestershire's visuals to clearly represent their commitment to children and young people with SEND.

The final visual can be seen to the right



Keep a look out for the visual in communications from Worcestershire Local Authority.



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## **Natspec Peer Exchange Week - Empowering Learner Voice and Celebrating Self-Advocacy**

Each year Natspec, (membership association for organisations that offer specialist further education and training for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 16-25) runs a peer exchange week where member colleges share best practice and exchange ideas.

During this year's Natspec Peer Exchange Week, Leigh and Chloe were delighted to share the exceptional work taking place at college to strengthen Learner Voice, develop genuine self-advocacy, and create meaningful platforms for students to influence their college community and the wider local area.

They shared how students have helped our practice to evolve and how our Learner Voice is proudly student driven. Examples shared included:

- Student self-nominations for ambassador roles, campaigns, or project responsibilities
- Student Chair and Vice Chair positions established and are elected by the Ambassador Board, rather than appointed by staff
- The Business Manager attends all meetings, ensuring learner voice suggestions directly influence operational areas of the college

This approach fosters student confidence, independence and genuine ownership into college. Learner Voice initiatives that were shared highlighted the impactful change students have delivered to add value and continually improve inclusive practice for all included. Here are some examples of what students have implemented: -

- Purchase of our two WAVs
- Developed the college sensory garden
- Installation of mirrors, dimmer switches, and other accessibility enhancements throughout college
- A Health & Safety checklist that builds student understanding of safety and responsibility

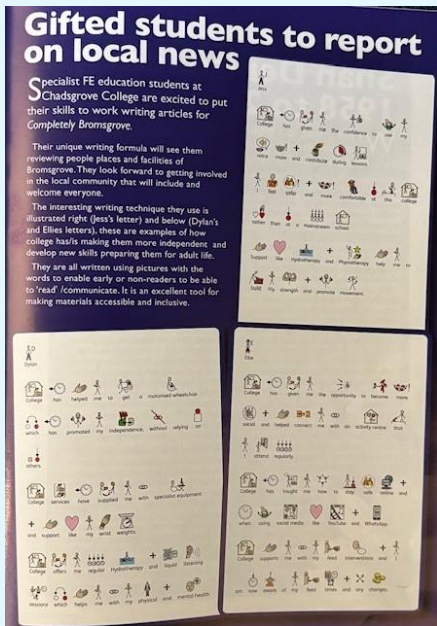
Leigh and Chloe shared powerful examples of self-advocacy such as students being increasingly confident in expressing their needs, aspirations, and rights.



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One powerful example is student Jess who self-advocated for the right to her college placement demonstrating resilience and belief in her own future aspirations.

Student's involvement in local magazine Completely Bromsgrove continues to help elevate student voices in the local community.



Through events such as the Community Champions afternoon and work highlighting The Power of FE Education, students have inspired discussions with MPs and other political figures about inclusion, accessibility, and community representation.

Learner Voice students have also begun reviewing the accessibility of work-related learning, volunteering, and community inclusion opportunities.



Also discussed, was supporting students to shape their future lives through articulating their personal vision of adulthood, where they want to live, how they want to engage with their community, and what they want their day-to-day life to look like.

This ensures every learner's transition out of education is person centred, self-directed, and informed choices are heard and made. Which fully embraces our college ethos of 'nothing about me, without me'.



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## WELL-BEING

### Peer Exchange week – Wellbeing

Leigh and Claire were asked to present at a Wellbeing session to share the work we have been doing around using sound as a therapy in the college and developments since winning the Natspec Innovation in Well-being award last year.

They shared how Liquid Listening has progressed to support more students, been used in staff CPD and the continuing benefits for students that has been seen in college. It was explained how the use of a Vibro speaker in a class session can emulate the full body listening experience you get in the water. Obviously, it is hard to share the whole-body vibrational experience felt in the water but we do hope we got the message across of the wonderful benefits of Liquid Listening.

Claire and Leigh also shared the benefits of introducing short periods of silence in-between sessions to allow students time to process what they have learned and support self-regulation. We shared our college plans to increase the use of sound therapy equipment such as more singing bowls and visits from external musicians to compliment the wonderful work our Music Therapist Alison, delivers in weekly sessions.

Learner Voice has been responsible for the introduction of all these initiatives as college students expressed on several occasions how much sound/music in its many different forms helps to support their emotional wellbeing.





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## WELL-BEING

Our recent student well-being sessions have been a wonderful opportunity for everyone to share what they enjoy most about college and their everyday lives. These sessions create a warm and supportive space where students can express themselves, celebrate their interests, and connect with others. In our latest sessions, we have brought both pathways together and been joined by our Speech and Language Therapist, Sonia, and our Occupational Therapist, Jo. Their involvement added a new and exciting dynamic to the conversation, encouraging students to engage more deeply and explore different ways of expressing their thoughts and feelings, including using symbols, communication tools and VOCAs. The students really enjoyed their participation and appreciated the chance to experience an activity with Sonia and Jo in a fun and relaxed setting.





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## INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

Students from the Explorers Pathway have been spending time building on their Independent Living Skills (ILS) through personal care activities, with an emphasis on choice-making and sensory exploration. Participants have had opportunities to explore a variety of personal care products using smell and touch to help them express preferences and make informed choices about what feels comfortable and enjoyable for them.



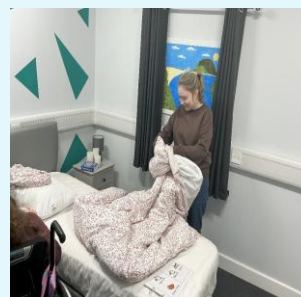
We have also introduced hand and foot massages as part of these sessions to support relaxation, body awareness, and positive self-care routines. These experiences encourage learners to communicate preferences, practice consent and take an active role in their own personal care.

By combining sensory exploration with everyday self-care skills, we are supporting building confidence, independence, and self-expression in meaningful ways.



This half term during Independent Living Skills sessions, students from the Seekers Pathway have been developing skills for working on keeping their private and shared spaces clean and tidy.

Brooke and Belle demonstrated excellent bed making skills. All students took great pride in making college look sparklingly clean!





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## THE ARTS

On Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 3 students from the Seeker Pathway visited The Repertory Theatre to watch 'Search For the Second Star: Reimagined' delivered by the Open Theatre.

The Open Theatre is a company where actors are all neurodiverse and have learning difficulties. The performance featured characters from Peter Pan such as 'The Lost Boys' and 'Tinkerbell'

Open Theatre is unique in the fact that they do not use any verbal words to portray their stories, instead they use body language and facial expressions to get their message across.

They also actively encourage interaction from their audiences – Student Heaven-Leigh took the opportunity to join the actors on stage to help them open a treasure box where she advised them to get a 'bigger key next time'!

The show featured lots of textures, colours, live music and props. The show was thoroughly enjoyed by students and staff.





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## ENTERPRISE

### ♥ Valentines' Day Enterprise sale ♥

Students from the Seekers Pathway have been working hard on the annual Valentines Enterprise sale. They made items to sell including: - bags of love, tea light candle holders, cards and gratitude love tokens. Students decided upon the prices for each item and designed their own poster to advertise when the sale was taking place.





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## GOODBYE TO LAURA

We enjoyed a tea party at college to say goodbye and good luck to Laura who is leaving us to welcome a new baby.

Staff and students are excited for Laura as she starts a wonderful new chapter!! Thank you to Laura for all your hard work supporting our students and being a part of our amazing college team.



Laura will be missed by us all but we are looking forward to a visit from her with the new baby in the near future.





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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- **23<sup>rd</sup> February - College opens for students**
- **23<sup>rd</sup> Feb –12<sup>th</sup> March – Annual Reviews for Year 3 students**
- **17<sup>th</sup> March 2026 – Parent Carer Evening**
- **17<sup>th</sup> March - Student Ambassadors Meeting**
- **16<sup>th</sup> March- ENRICHMENT DAY 4 – Commonwealth (9<sup>th</sup> March) (EDI & British Values)**
- **20<sup>th</sup> March – International Day of Happiness**
- **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March – college closes to students for Easter Holiday**

**Have a wonderful half term break**