

Wallingford School Newsletter

Spring Edition - April 2025



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Headteacher's Message



Spring has sprung and this term always ends at a hectic pace with trips and visits, mock exams and intense preparation for the public exams, concerts and fixtures, house matches and activities and whole lot more.

The energy that our entire school community brings to all of this is nothing short of remarkable and always a joy to behold. We are fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated staff body who are wholly committed to our students experiencing and grasping as many opportunities as they can and succeeding. We are also lucky to have such focused, polite and responsible young people in our school who have high aspirations, are willing to work hard and are also determined to be part of something and support each other.



This newsletter is full of the energy, colour and life which characterise our school and it is incredible to think that all of the events described have happened over the past three months. Please do enjoy reading it – I always do.

- Mr Marston, Headteacher

A Moroccan Experience



During February half term, geographers from Year 11 and 13 travelled to Morocco to spend five days learning about different cultures and the diverse landscape, from the Sahara Desert to the high Atlas Mountains. The five excursion aimed to benefit students' understanding of geography, culture, and environmental issues.

The trip began in Ouarzazate, known as the 'Gateway to the Sahara'. Here we visited the Atlas Film Studios where world famous films and TV shows such as *Gladiator*, *The Mummy* and *Game of Thrones* were filmed! We even got to make our own!



From Ouarzazate, we ventured through the Draa Valley to the Sahara Desert. As a group, we travelled by camel to a bedouin camp to spend a night in the desert. In the evening, we got to experience the sunset from the dunes, enjoy traditional Moroccan food and slept in traditional Berber tents.

Day 3 included another camel ride and a visit to Tamegroute Pottery Village. We then stopped off at a date farm to learn about the difficulties of farming within an arid climate and how locals adapt to preserving their environment. Following this was a bus journey back to Ouarzazate.



On day 4, we then head towards Marrakesh through the Atlas Mountains. On the way, students got to visit the famous Aït Benhaddou, a UNESCO World Heritage site. We learnt about the significance of the kasbah and even got the opportunity to try out the bartering system. The journey continued through the Atlas Mountains, where we learnt about the challenges of life within the mountains.



On our final day, we visited the Jardin Majorelle, a beautiful botanical garden designed by Yves Saint Laurent. After exploring Jardin Majorelle, we explored the vibrant souks and the medina, Jemaa el-Fnaa, and paid a visit to an apothecary.

Reflecting on the experience, the trip not only benefited my understanding of geography and environmental issues but also allowed me to experience a deeper appreciation for different cultures.

- George Jones-Scott, Year 13

A Brass Reflection



Our Year 13 music students recently finished the performance element of their A Level. This momentous occasion in their musical careers at Wallingford School turned into one of reflection for ***Thea McSweeney, Year 13***, who summarises her journey so far:

After my A level performance exam, I started to reflect on my journey learning the trumpet. This is an accumulation of 10 years of lots of practice and hard work. There have been many benefits and opportunities from playing an instrument as versatile as the trumpet.



I started playing at 8 years old at Cholsey Primary School, and soon joined Cholsey Silver Band. This was my first experience of playing in a group and it enabled me to start playing at Oxfordshire Youth Brass (OYB). This was one of the best opportunities given to me as not only was I able to play and meet some incredible musicians, but I also went on many residencies and trips abroad, where I met friends I still talk to now. The most notable was a tour we went on in 2018 to Cologne and Boppard in Germany. We played at some amazing venues! Whilst playing with OYB and Wantage Academy Brass, I went to lots of competitions across the country which were always lots of fun! And, there have been many opportunities at school as well: brass players are featured in most of the groups available, which means I have played in many groups



with different styles of music, such as Bigg Band, Jazz Collective, Brass Group and Production Band. I think this year's Spring Concert was around my 30th music event for the school!

Playing an instrument at Wallingford is a brilliant way to get involved in the school community and quite often you meet new friends, especially those who you wouldn't usually spend time in class with or socially. The groups and ensembles perform at all concerts and events, including Founders Day and Open Evening, and other important community events too. As well as all the groups offered there are amazing external teachers who provide lessons and the opportunity to perform solo as well. The music department at Wallingford is so supportive and insanely knowledgeable surrounding their subject.



Wallingford always needs new brass players and with a few of us leaving at the end of the academic year the next generation of musicians needs to emerge to keep the music department going, so please consider playing a brass instrument!

Please email Ms Hammond if you'd like to start brass lessons: hammondy@wallingfordschool.com

An Immersive Shakespearean Experience



RSC © Helen Murray

Year 9 trip to see *Twelfth Night* at the RSC Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

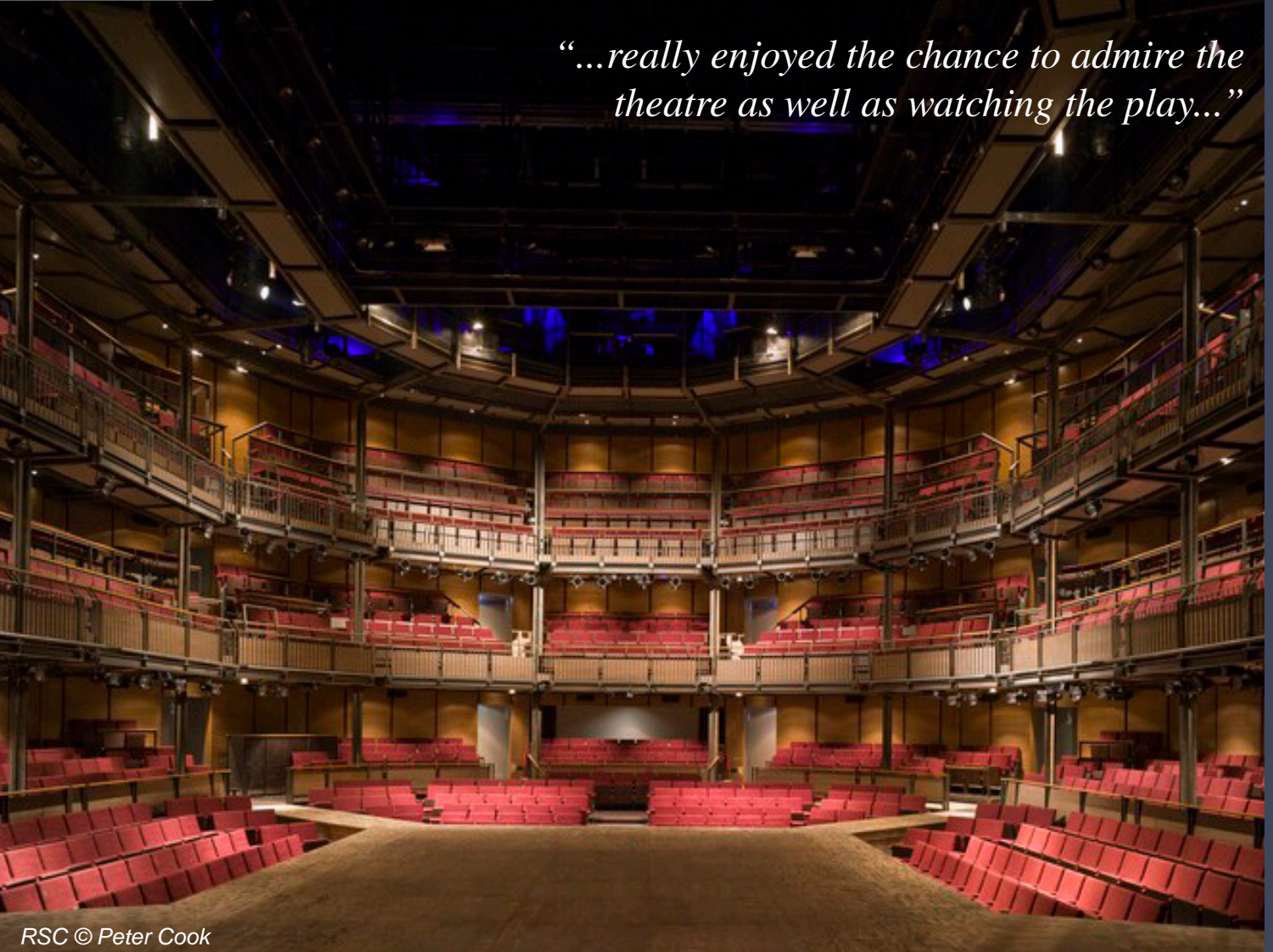
The Year 9 English trip to see *Twelfth Night* in Stratford-Upon-Avon was an interesting, captivating and enjoyable trip and the chance to see a Shakespeare play in the place where Shakespeare lived was really exciting. The play was performed in Shakespearean English which allowed us to focus on not only the lines but also the way it was performed and it was exceedingly impressive to listen to the actors.

Watching the play in Shakespearean English also provided the challenge of translating it into modern English which kept us engaged in the performance. Although *Twelfth Night* is one of Shakespeare's more complicated plays, we were easily captivated. The mixture of dramatic, comical and emotional moments made the play really enjoyable and the body language and confidence of the actors made it easy to understand. The trip also made me think about things we'd learnt not only in English lessons but also in Drama lessons.



RSC © Helen Murray

“...really enjoyed the chance to admire the theatre as well as watching the play...”



RSC © Peter Cook

It was also a great trip to go on because we've read and studied Shakespeare plays in lessons but when they were originally written, they were written as scripts to be performed on stage, not read. So being given the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the play as Shakespeare intended was a great way to broaden our understanding of the works of Shakespeare that we learn about in lessons. Being able to not only hear the lines but see the movements that came in between, the props being used and the setting was really enthralling since many of us, including myself, had never seen a Shakespeare play performed live before.

Another interesting aspect was that the theatre, The Royal Shakespeare Theatre, was similar to how theatres would've been laid out in Shakespearean times; as a theatre in the round. Personally, I'd never been to see a play in a theatre in the round before and really enjoyed the chance to admire the theatre as well as watching the play from a different angle than I was used to.

Overall, the *Twelfth Night* trip was exciting, fun and interesting and was a really great experience that we all really enjoyed.

- Rosie Newton, Year 9



RSC © Helen Murray

Extracting & Profiling DNA





Year 13 Biology students visited the Natural History Museum for an all day workshop about extracting and profiling our DNA.

We met outside the Natural History Museum, where we were let inside to have a quick look around at a few of the interesting exhibits on display before being led into a very secretive corridor to the lab.

In the lab we were taught about a chemical called “PTC” that only some people can taste and began to investigate the differences in our DNA that code for tasting or not. Parts of this involved licking a piece of paper dipped in the extremely bitter PTC (I could taste it), taking samples of our own DNA, multiplying it, making it fluorescent and comparing each other’s DNA under UV light.



The trip was very enjoyable, and I had a great time exploring the museum afterwards, although my favourite part was using the fancy equipment in the lab.

- Claude Doyle-Eve, Year 13



Within Her Eyes

GCSE Dance Workshop: Exploring Contact and Lifts with James Cousins Company

On Tuesday 25th February, Year 9 and Year 10 GCSE Dance students participated in an all-day workshop led by two professional dancers from the renowned James Cousins Company. The workshop focused on developing contact work and lifts, skills integral to the GCSE Dance set professional piece, *Within Her Eyes*.

Within Her Eyes is a captivating love story with an unexpected twist: throughout the 15-minute performance, the male dancer never allows the female dancer to touch the floor. This unique piece was the perfect foundation for students to explore trust and the technical demands of partnering work.

Guided by the expertise of the James Cousins Company dancers, our students learned how to support and communicate with each other through contact and lifts. They worked on strength, coordination, and building trust with their partners. The workshop encouraged students to push their boundaries, develop their confidence in physical contact, and refine their performance skills.





“...invaluable insights into professional dance practice.”

The students made exceptional progress throughout the day. From initial hesitations to executing seamless lifts, their hard work and determination were evident. I was incredibly proud of their growth and the supportive, positive environment they created during the workshop. The experience not only enhanced their technical abilities but also deepened their understanding of the emotional storytelling involved in *Within Her Eyes*.

It was an inspiring and rewarding day for all involved, and the students' dedication to perfecting their skills was truly impressive. This workshop not only contributed to their GCSE Dance studies but also provided them with invaluable insights into professional dance practice. We look forward to seeing how their newly developed skills will shine in future performances and assessments! Students will be performing the piece in the *Spotlight Dance Show* on Thursday 24th April. Tickets can be bought via the main office.



- Mrs Clarke, Teacher of Dance

Spring Concert



The Music department have been very busy this term organising the Spring Concert. What used to be a concert with rows of seats and just a bare stage, with the Bigg Band performing for the majority of the show and only 6th formers involved, has now morphed into a huge extravaganza, which can only be put together as a team effort from the music team and students.

The lights were the best yet, thanks to Ollie and Edward and the Lights Team. The Sound team had to cope with the usual mic issues with no sound working until 6pm! But they were cool and calm and worked as a team and solved the issues, which were of course beyond me! Well done Theo, Harvey and Matthew!



The hall was packed to the brim, and we had 10 VIPs in the audience including Michael Skinner, Merchant Taylor, who had recently celebrated his 90th birthday and was presented with a gift. Michael and his wife Jan enjoyed their evening immensely.

Highlights of the programme were the final solo performances from our Year 13s, Ben Pocock, Thea McSweeney and Noah Liddy. It was quite emotional knowing how far these students had come from first learning their instruments back in Cholsey Primary School. Another highlight was Callum performing his own composition, 1st movement from Piano Sonata No 1.



The first half closed with the KS3 Choir, led by Miss Lovett, giving a fabulously energetic performance of a song from *Dear Evan Hansen*. The second half kicked off with the curtains closed and then a drum roll which started the amazing drum duet from Jacob and Edward, here the lighting team went to town with the lights matching the cross rhythms.

We were delighted to welcome two new ensembles, the Chamber Choir led by Year 12s, Tee and George. And the Wallingford School Brass Ensemble, led by Mr Young on bass trombone. We also enjoyed a folk piece played by the String Ensemble, and a total gear change with the Year 12 guitar group performing a Weezer song with Karishma singing.



A huge thankyou to WSA for providing refreshments and to our wonderful audience who managed to raise over £700 for our new Sound Outreach Project with primary schools, which is supported by a donation from SODC.

Our next concert: An Evening at the Musicals on Tuesday 24th June 2025.

- Ms Hammond, Head of Music



A Spectacular Encounter with Classic Drama

- Mrs Harding, Teacher of English



This term, our A-Level English Literature students had the incredible opportunity to experience two outstanding productions that brought classic texts to life in the heart of London.

Richard II at the Bridge Theatre

The Bridge Theatre's modern production of *Richard II*, starring Jonathan Bailey, provided a fresh and dynamic interpretation of Shakespeare's historical play. Set against a backdrop of political intrigue and betrayal, this performance captivated us with its contemporary staging and incredible acting. The decision to have the action unfold in 360-degrees allowed the audience to feel immersed in the drama and the use of different parts of the theatre really enhanced the tension and intensity of the scenes.



Oedipus at the Old Vic

Next, we ventured to the Old Vic Theatre to watch *Oedipus*, the Greek tragedy by Sophocles. The production brought the age-old story of fate, blindness, and self-discovery to vivid life with powerful performances and an atmospheric set. The raw emotion of the central character's journey from ignorance to the revelation of his tragic fate was further emphasised through incredible dancers representing the citizens of Thebes.

Poetry by Heart

Over Christmas all of KS3 were given the task of learning a poem off by heart for the national competition. Our Year 7s, 8s and 9s didn't disappoint! There were some amazing performances in class groups which gave teachers the very difficult task of choosing two students from each form group to go into the year group finals. These were incredible – the standard of performances was amazing and we had poems about all sorts of topics from jaguars to Russian dolls. The KS3 finals took place at the end of February with three students from each year group performing not one, but two poems off by heart. Once again the standard was spectacular and we now have three finalists whose performances are being sent off to the national competition so watch this space! Congratulations to everyone involved. Here are three pieces from students who took part:

"I really enjoyed Poetry by Heart and I'm really glad that I had this opportunity. I made it to the second round and everyone was very supportive. I thought it was an amazing chance to learn a new poem that many kids my age would not do by choice. I learnt the poem, Invictus by W.E. Hendy, and it was very fun. It really gave me the chance to express my feelings into words. As someone who finds it hard to get on stage, I was really glad to see how supportive everyone was."

- Cressida Kilby-Birch, Year 8

"Poetry by Heart was a great opportunity for me to understand poetry in a greater depth than in lessons as I could focus on just one or two poems for months rather than spending only a week or two on them. It also helped me build my confidence in public speaking, which has become more necessary as I get further up the school and have to do presentations. It helped me to practise patience, as sometimes it would take ages to get a line to stick in my head. As well as this, it was a really fun way to share the poems, and just poetry in general, that I loved. It was also interesting to see how others interpreted the same poem and helped me to become more open-minded."

- Lizzie Sandland, Year 8

"How do I start? This was the best experience (so far) of my Wallingford School life. The feeling of standing up there and giving a poem to a waiting crowd felt exhilarating and rather thrilling. Being in year 7, I honestly thought I stood no chance against the older years. Despite this, here I am, writing a paragraph for the newsletter after being entered into the nationals! It is definitely worth trying to go for the gold for any young-wannabe-poets out there. It's a great way to have fun with your friends while doing something that may help your future study. At the time of writing, I am awaiting the results of my progress; this time I am certain I will not get through but I got this far. Never say never!"

- Jacob Reynolds, Year 7

To the Absence of Pain

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Yet thou art not so bright or forgiving
Instead shall I compare thee to the early frost of winter
Or the darkening of the autumn sky
The temperate beauty of crying waves
Or the ghostly kiss of ice on my warm skin
Perhaps instead I shall compare thee to the unattainability of a rose
Or something less cliché like the ambiguity of hyacinths

Shall I compare your eyes to sapphires
When really I mean they hold me, *own me*
Should I tell the world you're my other half
When really I mean you are my salt, my pen, my constant humming
Maybe instead I should compare you, my love,
To the absence of pain

Or
Actually
How about
I just don't compare you
At all.

- **Laura Miles, Year 13**

This poem was provided by the **Wallingford Student Express**, published earlier this term, by the students, for the students. Thank you for your contribution.

Maths Challenge

175 students completed the Intermediate Maths Challenge from year 9, 10 and 11, achieving 61 bronze, 25 silver, and 18 gold certificates! 12 students qualified for follow-on rounds.

Daniele Massera, Keizo Somarakis, Caleb NG, Joseph Rhodes, Raihan Horvat, Annabel Flynn, Joshua Skeels, Jessie Clayton, Grace Smyth, Douglas Blake and Sophia Bishop all qualified for the intermediate Kangaroos. Callum Reynolds qualified for the Hamilton Olympiad by achieving an impressive score. We eagerly await the results.

Well done to all students who took part in the UKMT challenges this term. Next up is the Junior Challenge for Year 7 and 8 on 1st May.

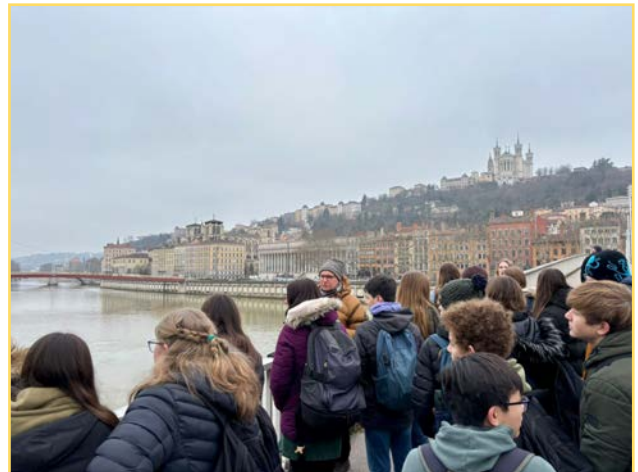
- **Miss Pratt, Teacher of Maths**

Language Exchange



In February, a group of Year 10 and Year 12 French students were lucky enough to take part in the annual French exchange to Grenoble. Wallingford exchanges with Lycée les Eaux Claires, a school which is located in the heart of the city.

Upon our arrival in Grenoble on Monday evening, after a long day travelling on the Eurostar and the TGV, we met our exchange partners at the train station. It was a daunting but also exciting experience, as many of us had only spoken to our partners online beforehand. We then went back with our partners to their homes, whether they lived in the city itself, or a short drive away in the mountains or the countryside.



On Tuesday, our first full day in France, we went on a day trip to Lyon, where we toured the city with a very knowledgeable guide, who provided us with lots of interesting information about the city. Here, we saw Vieux Lyon, with all of its beautiful and ornate architecture. This renaissance district of Lyon is in fact a listed World Heritage Site, due to its historical significance in France. Later in the afternoon, we visited the Roman Museum of Lyon, where you can see the ruins of the Roman city of Lugdunum. The amphitheatre was particularly impressive, and it was interesting to see how sound could travel from the stage to the highest seats.



Our second day on the exchange consisted of a scavenger hunt in the city of Grenoble, followed by the afternoon free with our host families. We had the opportunity to spend quality time getting to know our partners and their families.

On Thursday, both the French and English students went on a day trip to Vercors, where we visited the Resistance Museum and went on a snow walk in the afternoon. This was a really lovely chance for all of the students to be together and socialise. The trip to the museum was very moving; for many of us it was the first time learning about the resistance fighters in France during World War II, and their role in the war. The snow walk was an amazing opportunity to see some beautiful views and truly appreciate the landscape of the region.



On Friday, the students from Wallingford spent the morning in the French school. We were able to take part in different lessons, including new subjects such as Italian, Economics and Politics. It was really interesting to see how the French school system differs from our own and we even got to try a typical French lunch (which I think we could all agree was more exciting than our own). In the afternoon, we climbed Le Bastille, which is a large hill with a fortress at the top. The views from the fortress were fantastic, we could even see Mont Blanc in the distance! It was a tiring walk, but



definitely worth it for the beautiful views.

Our final day in Grenoble was spent with our exchange partners and their families. My exchange family took me sledding at a ski resort in the mountains, which I really enjoyed. Other students were able spend the day doing activities such as shopping, bowling, or skiing with their host families, all of which sounded like a lot of fun!

Our exchange ended with a sad farewell at the train station on Sunday morning, saying goodbye to our host families after a brilliant week. We very much look forward to repaying the favour and hosting our exchange partners in Wallingford in June.

As a Year 12 student studying French, I can safely say that the exchange has massively improved both my confidence and ability to speak French; it is amazing how much difference a week of immersion can truly make. I was apprehensive to take part at first, especially having not gone on the exchange in Year 10, but I was pleasantly surprised by how comfortable I felt during the whole trip, particularly with the support of our French teachers who accompanied us. To anyone considering going on the exchange, I cannot recommend the experience enough.



- Jasmine Martin, Year 12



The thing I enjoyed most about the French exchange was living with a French family. Not only were they very kind but they took the time to make it so we could have full conversations together. I spoke French nearly all the time I was over there, and I really felt it improved, especially the more conversational French that you don't particularly learn in lessons. It was great how they were so supportive, and it made me feel like I was part of their family for the week.

You get to enjoy all the French customs in day-to-day life and go on awesome trips with your classmates and exchange partner like La Bastille and skiing. All in all, it was an amazing experience that I would love to do again, and I highly recommend it to any students thinking of going.

- Thomas Pool, Year 10





Tournaments, Trips & Charity Competitions!

What a brilliant second term of sport here at Wallingford! From netball and football, to hockey tournaments, trips to Wembley and Ninja Warrior competitions, we've been jam-packed since January!

Both our netball and football leagues have got up and running, with some excellent performances from students in all year groups throughout the school.

A special highlight of the term was our annual Ninja Warrior competition. This is the ninth consecutive year we have held this competition, and it may have been our best one yet! We had 200+ competitors, with 30 making it through the qualifiers and into the final. 11 of those 30 defeated the course, with Mr. Dodson describing it as "the hardest course we've ever done"! Congratulations to Peter, Herbie and James for finishing on the podium, etching their names into the Wallingford School Ninja Warrior folklore forever. A special well done to Freddie for coming 5th overall, our highest placed Key Stage 3 student! The icing on the cake was the £285 raised for charity and the PE department!! A MASSIVE thank you to everyone who competed, supported and helped run the event!





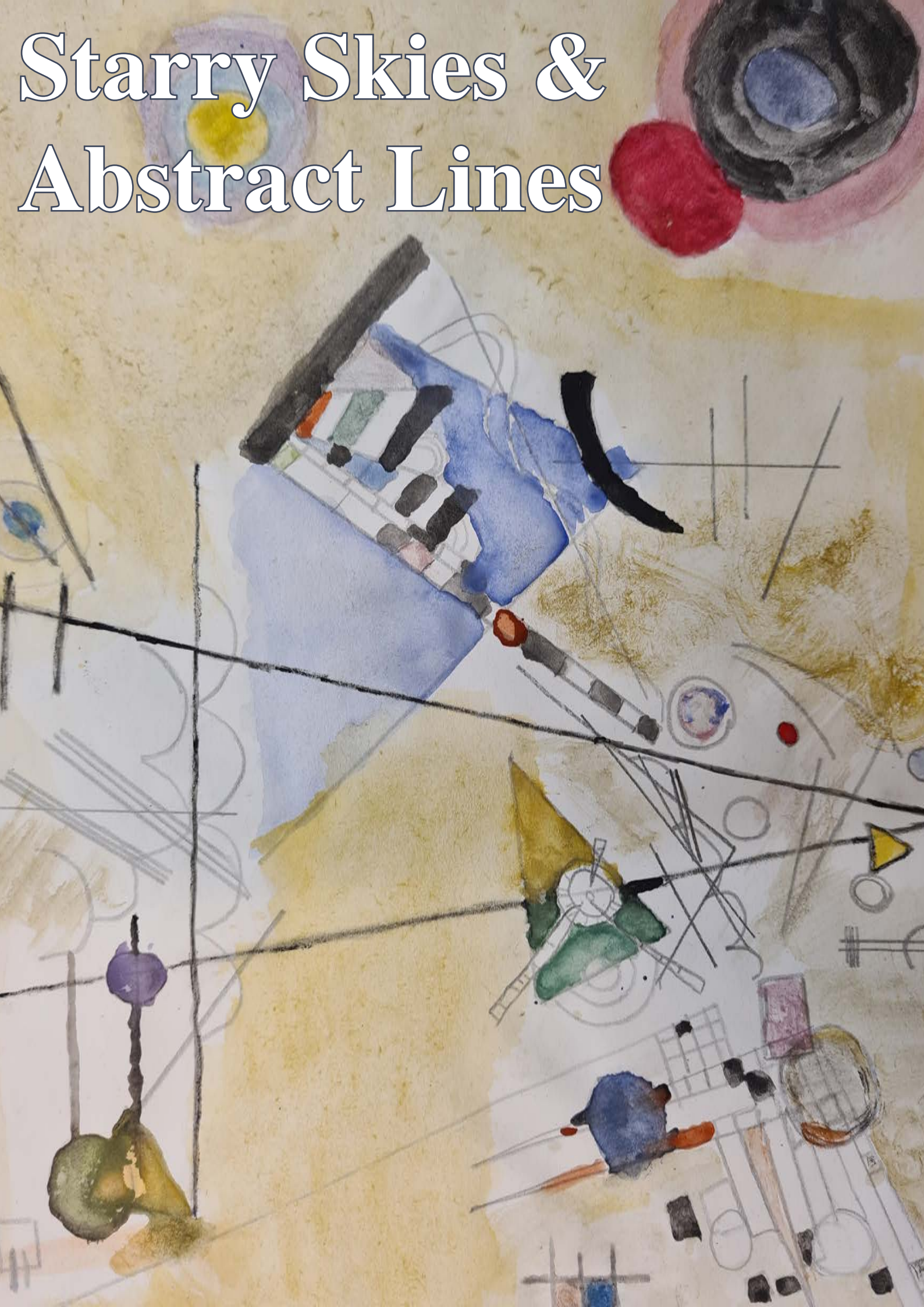
Another highlight came just after half-term when we took a lovely group of girls to Wembley to watch England Women vs Spain Women. Going into the game, predictions were mixed – would the European Champions England have enough to beat the World Champions Spain? The level of football on display was brilliant, the atmosphere was electric, and there was a happy group heading home after England's 1-0 win. Although Mrs. Hedges was disappointed not to be a half-time sub, she said it was the best game of football she had been to! A big well done to all the students who came and were exceptional throughout – we hope you enjoyed it as much as we did!

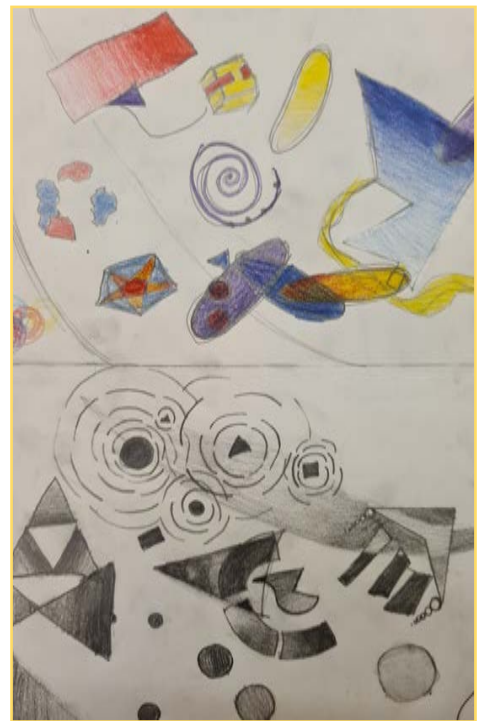
Another sporting highlight was at the Reading State Schools Hockey Tournament. Our Year 9 girls and Year 9 boys hockey teams both did amazingly. Our girls team came second in their group, qualifying for the Cup quarter finals, while our boys qualified for the Plate, getting a bye in the quarter finals as they were the highest placed team in the Plate! Sadly, both teams were knocked out in sudden death penalty flicks – a harsh ending to a brilliant tournament of hockey. A special shoutout to Barnaby and Amy who were our boys and girls Player of the Tournament!



- Mr Ford, PE Technician

Starry Skies & Abstract Lines





For the last two terms, Year 7 students have been immersed in the vibrant world of art, drawing inspiration from two iconic artists: Vincent van Gogh and Wassily Kandinsky. With Van Gogh's expressive brushstrokes and bold use of colour, alongside Kandinsky's revolutionary approach to abstraction, our young artists have explored new techniques and perspectives. From the swirling skies of *Starry Night* to the geometric beauty of abstract compositions, Year 7 has embraced creativity and self-expression in every piece. Now, let's hear from the students themselves as they share their experiences and reflections on this artistic journey!

"Wassily Kandinsky was born in Russia on December 1866. Kandinsky became an artist at 30 years old. Kandinsky was an abstract artist who loved music. He had a condition called synaesthesia which meant he saw colours and shapes when he listened to music. He painted at least 5000 oil and water paintings based on the shapes and colours he saw.

"In art, we listened to music and drew the shapes and colours we felt and saw. This was quite challenging to do but fun at the same time. We then improved these drawings looking at the positioning and the size. At the end of the topic, we replicated one of Kandinsky's abstract paintings which all turned out great."

- Riley and Zoey, Year 7

"Vincent Van Gogh was born in 1853 in the Netherlands. He was a self-taught artist and created over 2000 works of art. He is most famous for *Starry Night* but only sold 1 painting while he was alive. Because of this, he felt that he was a failure. If only he could know now how famous his art work is...

"In lessons, we have practiced various mark making techniques which Van Gogh was brilliant at. We tried recreating a picture of a house in the style of Van Gogh too. This required careful consideration on the types of marks we were making."

- Oscar and Buddy, Year 7

Scholars & Beyond



This term has been a busy one for our Scholars, with Year 8 and 9 taking part in residential trips, Year 8s researching and delivering presentations on a topic of their choice, Year 10s taking part in an Aspiration Day at the University of Cambridge, and Year 12s starting to think about applications to Oxford and Cambridge, and courses such as Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, and Dentistry.

Belgium Residential Trip



35 Year 9 students and 4 members of staff spent four days exploring World War 1 cemeteries and battlefields in Belgium and northern France. Student ***Evelyn Toal*** had this to say about the experience:

“Greeted with sunny, blue skies, this year’s Y9 scholars trip to Belgium was a success! Travelling through France, we stopped off at Vimy Ridge, a striking limestone monument commemorating those who lost their lives in one of the greatest Canadian battles in history. Especially those with no known resting place. Another Canadian contribution was the 800 men from the Newfoundland Regiment who fought

alongside the British and Commonwealth armies, honored at Newfoundland Park. Here, we had a short tour around one of the Somme Battlefields and were told the story of how many of these soldiers were killed. Then on the second day, a short coach journey was taken from

the lodge to Ypres' centre where we visited Flanders Fields Museum, informing us of many different Belgian aspects of the war.

"The weather was our lucky charm particularly when arriving at Tyne Cot Cemetery where the sunlight radiated off each and every one of the 11,954 gravestones, making it the largest Commonwealth military cemetery in the world. I found the rows of vibrant flowers, trees and plants a lovely touch. Thiepval Memorial also shone beautifully, with the rays of sun flooding through the arches and openings - Thiepval was a mostly destroyed fortress village held by the Germans. A surprising shock for me was the size of the Lochnager Crater being the largest crater ever made by man in anger, preserved as a dedication to peace between all nations who fought on the Western Front.



"As wholeheartedly moving as they were, it wasn't just memorials and museums. At Sanctuary Wood, we explored a replica of the muddy, wet trenches dug out using an original layout, adventuring down tight, dark tunnels to the other side of the site. Again in the centre of Ypres, we stood and listened to the Last Post Ceremony under Menin Gate, which has become part of the daily life for residents.

"Finishing off in Bruges, we took a scenic boat trip through the canals of the historic centre, followed by a stroll and some shopping, including large purchases of chocolate all round!

"Overall, the lengthy coach journeys were worth it and I'm truly thankful to have been to and taken part in all of these activities, as a learning opportunity and a great experience with the rest of the scholars."

The students are working in groups on some thought-provoking questions linked to the trip, which they will be presenting to a panel of teachers at the start of the summer term. We look forward to hearing their thoughts!



Year 8 Presentations

Year 8 Scholars were set the challenge of completing a 'personal interest project', and preparing a short presentation to be delivered to their peers (and Ms Haworth-Walsh). Topics covered have come from areas as diverse as sports, famous musicians, literature, space, animals, historic events, and ideas about how to update the school rules.

The standard of knowledge, research, and presentation has been very impressive, and students have done a brilliant job of both engaging their audience, and being thoughtful and engaged listeners.

The students have all received individual feedback on their presentations, and we look forward to seeing them develop these skills as they go through the school.

Looking Ahead

As the end of the term approaches, the Year 8 Scholars are preparing for their trip to York, the theme of which is 'Picturing British History'. We hope to be able to share some of the fabulous work they produce next term.

Other exciting events to look forward to include a competition for our Year 7 Scholars, and further opportunities for exchange and peer support across different year groups.

Magistrates Mock Trial

13 students from across Year 8 and Year 9 took part in the Oxford Heat of the Magistrates Mock Trial competition on 22nd March. The team had been rehearsing since the Autumn term, working hard to prepare their roles as witnesses, lawyers, magistrates, legal advisor, usher, and, of course, the defendant accused of the crime of unlawful possession of an offensive weapon.

They acquitted themselves admirably against schools from across Oxfordshire and beyond: the prosecuting side, who were first up, led by lawyers Valentina Jani and Thomas Carberry, along with witnesses Tilda Santer and Emily Pool, and legal advisor Lizzie Sandland, obtained a guilty verdict – the only one of the day!



They were followed by the defence team of lawyers Rosie Newton and Oscar Brewer, defendant Hannah Wilcox and her defence witness Mia Sampson, and usher Ted Carrington-Rowlin. Despite being faced with the two prosecuting lawyers who won the prize

for best lawyers of the day, our team still obtained a not guilty verdict and avoided a jail sentence for Hannah, who was praised by the judges for her calm performance.

Perhaps the toughest role of the day fell to magistrates Keizo Somarakis, Isabella Else and Daniele Massera, who sat listening to both cases, diligently making notes and then retiring to consider the evidence with students from another school and a real sitting magistrate from the Oxford court.

Although the team didn't win the overall prize for the best performance on the day, we were delighted that Tilda and Emily were jointly recognised as being 'best witness'. **Tilda** shared her thoughts after the event:

'Taking part in the process of mock trials has been so enjoyable, interesting and inspiring and I've really loved it. Getting to learn, act and work with such talented students has been a pleasure and even though some parts have been challenging, I learned a great deal and would definitely recommend it to anyone who is interested.

The day itself was an excellent opportunity to put into practise the skills we had been developing over the past months such as public speaking, thinking on the spot, teamwork and resilience. We were really pleased to win both cases on the day, and I and my brilliant fellow prosecution witness Emily were absolutely delighted to have been presented with the 'Best Witness' award!

I think that everyone involved did outstandingly well and am very grateful to all who made this happen (especially Ms Haworth-Walsh who ran ALL of the sessions and accompanied us all the way to the Oxford Magistrates Court on a Saturday!).'

Thanks go as well to Mrs Woodford who attended numerous practices and whose support on the day of the event was invaluable.

Oxford Schools Debating Competition

We entered four teams in the Oxford Schools Debating Competition, run by the Oxford Union. This is the largest annual British Parliamentary Debating competition in the UK, with over 350 schools and 1000 students participating each year. Due to some scheduling conflicts, our two teams of Year 10 and two teams of Year 12 students joined the virtual round via Zoom – an experience in itself, as they took over four classrooms in K-block until past 8 o'clock at night, brainstorming ideas and debating motions against opponents from across the south of England.

Although our teams did not progress to the next round, they all shared what a positive experience it had been, and the Year 10s are keen to continue next year when they have more experience of how the competition works.

Special thanks to Mrs Harding for practising with the Year 10 teams, and to Mrs Jones who trained the Year 12 teams and ran around for four hours on a Monday evening battling IT issues to ensure everyone could see, hear, and participate fully!



Mr Bowen and Mr Hinchliffe were really pleased to take our Year 13 artists to Slade School of Fine Art this term. What an inspiring school to visit and a big step closer for those students wishing to pursue a career in the arts. Over to ***Mr Bowen, Head of Art:***

Year 13 artists visited The SLADE SCHOOL OF ART!

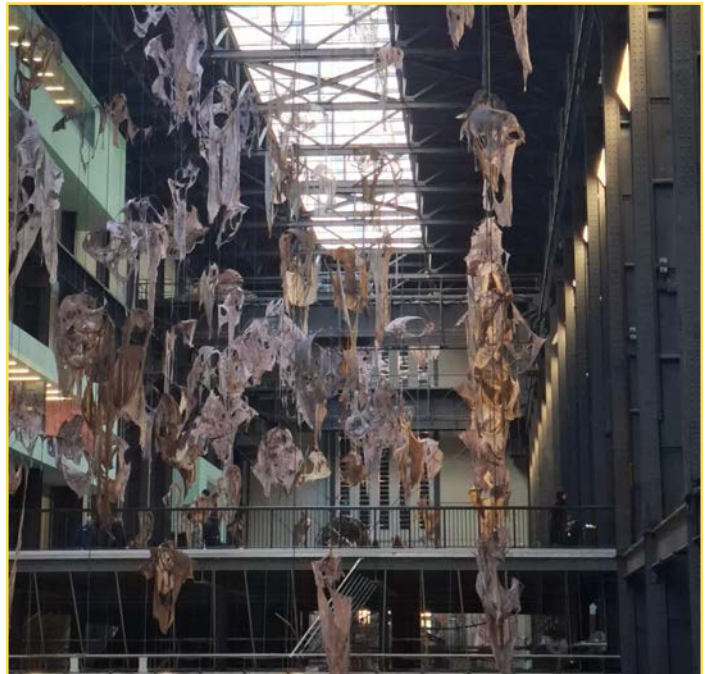
As you know, this is the BEATING HEART of the British Art scene since 1868. Name a British artist of any note and the chances are they went to the Slade. I'm talking about Lucien Freud, Antony Gormley, David Bomberg, Augustus John, Gwen John, William Coldstream, Tacita Dean, Richard Hamilton, Patrick Heron, Paul Nash, Eduardo Paolozzi, Paula Rego, Stanley Spencer, Euan Uglow, Rachel Whiteread...

Everyone came away visibly buzzing about what they had seen - talk about inspiration and motivation. It really hit home that with work - and passion - we can study there too!

And, of course, no self-respecting trip to London is complete without a trip to TATE MODERN. Painting, sculpture, installation, film, the odd dash of performance art; and they're currently displaying some Giacometti sculptures in some very dark rooms. Haunting.

Is this going to be the best day of the year?

Thanks to the Merchant Taylors' Company for supporting this exceptional opportunity.



Life Drawing!



We LOVE Life Drawing... and now, Year 12 artists do too!

This is the absolute, only, really genuine, best, best, best way to learn to draw from observation. Tried and tested over thousands of years. FACT.

These artists took to it like a tornado. Their drawings were far, far better than they had any right to be.

Thank you to Naomi for working with us. Phenomenal work, artists.



Human Careers Library



The Careers Department arranged the above event for the whole of Year 8 on Thursday 13th March 2025. The aim is to broaden career knowledge and aspirations. It helps students to understand the range of options available in their future. The experience of talking to an adult about their job makes it more realistic for students. It also gives students the opportunity to listen and ask questions.

There were 34 volunteers from a wide range of professions and each shared their personal career journey. Students sat in small groups and had 5 minutes to find out as much as possible about each volunteer. The volunteer would then move on to the next group. This makes the event very fast paced and exciting. Each student found out about 8 different career paths in one lesson time.

We asked the students to feedback afterwards what they had learnt about working life:

"You spend a lot of time there so pick something you like."
"Some jobs are repetitive and some are different every day."
"It is stressful but it can also be fun, enjoyable and interesting."
"You don't always have to know what you want to do at a young age."
"Not everything is going to be easy."
"There are many jobs with lots of different skills needed and not all jobs need a degree."

We would like to thank the following Companies for giving up their time for our students:

AWE
Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS)
Creation Theatre
Emma Newman Consulting Limited
Enara Bio
Esri UK
Face2Face
Fugro
Google
Grundon Waste Management
Hawkstone
Lexica
Lightfoots LLP
Max Associates
Milestone Infrastructure
Nuclear Waste Services UK
PACT - Charity - Parents & Children Together
Proctor and Gamble
System C
Tesco
The Football Association
The Justice Department
The Probation Service
Venners Arboriculture
Vesta Software Group
Zoological Society of London ZSL

Careersfest

The Careers Department arranged to take a group of Year 11 and Year 12 students to Careers Fest 2025 at the Kassam Stadium on Thursday 20th March. There were over 80 exhibitors which allowed students to engage with employers, education and training providers. The purpose of the event for students was to:

- Explore and discover the employability skills that the exhibitors are looking for
- Make valuable contacts for your future
- Get inspired by the different options available at 16 and 18

Our students made full use of the opportunity and participated in many valuable conversations. They also experienced lots of hands-on opportunities which showed them the practical skills they might need.

Please see some Year 12 feedback below:

"Interacting with a wide and diverse range of interest, students quickly adapted to the environment and started to explore freely and ask representatives of apprenticeships and careers introductory questions with more confidence. Gathering more information and seeking for future paths. During the event, as the time was limited, everybody was busy and students were trying to find out as much information about apprenticeships and careers as possible. Overall, students were giving good feedback about their experience, a lot of them told that they have found a bunch of useful opportunities and important information that can possibly impact their future decisions about their career path."

- Charlie & Illia, Year 12





This term in the library, we've had plenty of fun activities and events to celebrate reading.

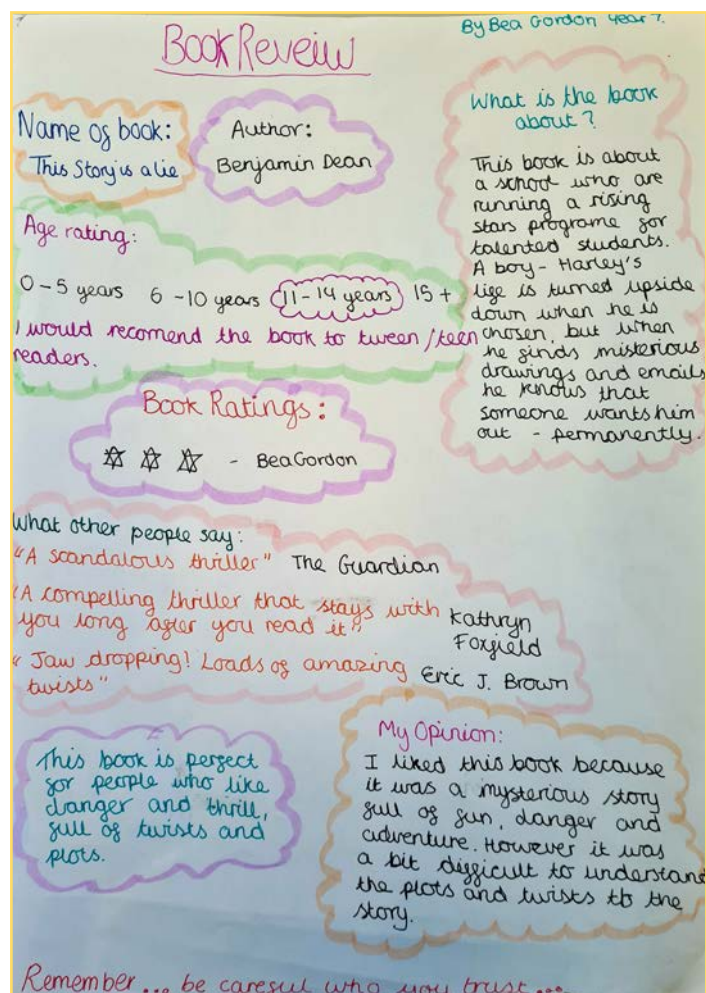
World Book Day in particular was a huge hit! Thanks to Wallingford Bookshop, we gave out some free copies of this year's £1 teen book, *This Story is a Lie*, and received a fantastic review from one of our Year 7 students.

Years 7-9 were given £1 book tokens by their form tutors, with extra tokens available on the day. Students also swapped book recommendations for treats, and our book recommendation board was overflowing!

In our Battle of the Books, Years 7-9 chose nine exciting new titles for the library, now available for lending and already proving popular! These include:

- Year 7: Yawns Freeze Your Brain, The Zombie Project, I Survived the Battle of D-Day
- Year 8: Spy x Family, Northern Soul, Hatchet
- Year 9: Demon Slayer, Thieves Gambit, Songlight

Plus, after the inspiring visit from author Larry Hayes earlier this term, we held a Create Your Own Monster competition. We were absolutely blown away by the quality and quantity of entries! Huge congratulations to **Lorna Breuker** (Finnegan is the Monster) and **Archie Hewitt** (Mighty Mitochondrians) for winning £25 Amazon vouchers from Larry himself. Well done also to our runners-up, James Pereira, Martha Redhead, and Harry Young – your entries were fantastic!

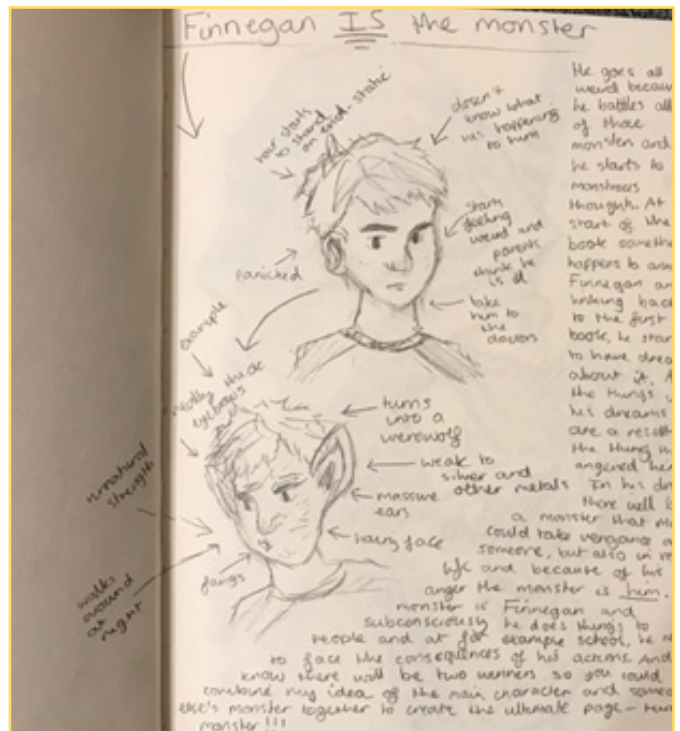




Archie Hewitt's *the Mighty MITOCHONDRIANS* (excerpt):

Monsters transmitted through a computer virus that form a skin of cytoplasm around their victims to control and trap a conscious human inside. Their goal is to take over the youth/ teens of the world with their parasitic membranes. Their mode of attack is to be 'downloaded' through a popular video game (thinking Fortnite style, where you buy 'skins' for your character).

A minor character notices a FREE SKIN on their favourite game and tells all his friends before hitting download (subtitle under the skin- something about being superficial) only for the download to contain millions of cell-sized aliens that sludge along inside the wires and onto his hand and then slowly form an undetectable clear 'skin' of cytoplasm over his whole body. He is then trapped and the alien organism can control him. Once a complete seal is made the Mitochondrian can control the 'contents' (what they call the humans) while the humans remain claustrophobically aware inside the shell but unable to do anything like waking paralysis. The cytoplasmic layer isn't tough but it's almost impossible to detect – only through a microscopic lens can you see the structure differs to skin. And in photos – there is a blueish hue to skin which alerts Finnegan to a common theme between his friends who are acting strangely. Lysozymes break down bacterial walls. Lysozymes are found in egg whites 'tears, saliva and mucus' according to Google, so lots of potential for a gross homemade antidote spray in the story to break down the skin. Cheesy line when the time comes to spray the monsters: 'time to exfoliate', 'mum always did say exfoliation was good for you'...



Lorna Breuker's Finnegan is the Monster

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

that surprises you. You learn to care and give support for you loved one, to fight for the care they deserve and in doing so, you find your own voice. Being a young carer can be a roller-coaster of emotions, filled with love, fear, pride, tiredness, laughter and worry. It shapes you into someone who understands the power of connection, leaving an incredible mark on your heart.

- Ava

A young carer is an individual that faces challenges every day with a family member or somebody close by with any additional needs or disabilities. It comes with so many different struggles from early in the morning to late at night. The whole day can be filled with so much exhaustion adding on that extra weight to your shoulders and that constant continuous worry that something will take an awkward turn at any moment. Many young children, including myself, are young carers and may have this worry daily, adding an additional effect on your mood including at school.

Wallingford School have a support group that provides any support needed that individuals may not necessarily get at home. They also ask you how everything is and allow you to express those bottled up feelings. Having a family member at home with certain needs is also very stressful and can make you go through and struggle with many different stages of anxiety and constant tiredness. It may also make you feel really singled out by many of your friends and people who you are around, as they may not know what you're going through and how tough it can actually be. Having responsibilities an adult should have at such a young age can be very tricky, and you may feel like you have to be more mature than any other teenager you see. Wallingford School is an amazing school for support of a young carer. The support group run by Mrs Emmerson takes place at lunch times on Mondays and is filled with so many other people going through the exact same thing as you, making sure you have all the support you need. There are also treats such as sweets and biscuits provided. As a young carer my experience as a part of the young carers school community has been filled with so much support and encouragement.

- Courtney

It's important that young carers feel listened to, understood, and that they are able to ask for support and help if they need it.

If you think your child may qualify as a young carer, please email Mrs Emmerson emmersonr@wallingfordschool.com

We also work closely with Be Free Young Carers, a fantastic charity who support young carers in Oxfordshire <https://befreeyc.org.uk/>



House Events

As we wrap up another action-packed couple of terms, it's time to reflect on the fantastic events that keeps bringing our school house system to life! From creative competitions to thrilling races, teamwork and house spirit have shone through in every challenge. Here's a look back at some of the highlights from Terms 3 and 4:

The Big Graffiti Draw

Creativity took center stage as students unleashed their artistic talents in The Big Graffiti Draw. This event saw vibrant murals that were only allowed to be in the house colour. Students took to their own space and showcased their unique artistic flair. It was fantastic to see so many students participate, bringing color and energy to our Art room.

Ninja Warrior

Speed, agility, and determination were tested in the highly anticipated annual Ninja Warrior challenge! Students took on obstacle courses with impressive skill and resilience, navigating high jumps, climbing walls, and balance beams. The energy was electric, and the competition was fierce, but most importantly, everyone gave it their all! Well done to Peter who was this year's champion.





Remote Control Grand Prix Races

The excitement revved up for our Remote Control Grand Prix Races, where students put their driving skills to the test. Each house battled it out on the racetrack (main hall), manoeuvring their remote-controlled cars with precision and strategy.

Pancake Day

A deliciously fun tradition continued with Pancake Day! Students flipped and ran their pancake (tortilla wrap as they are more sturdy) to the flipping zone. This is always a fun event for all the year groups.

Valentine's Hearts

Love and kindness filled the school during our Valentine's Hearts activity. Students exchanged heartfelt messages, decorated heart-shaped notes, and spread positivity throughout the day. It was a wonderful reminder of the supportive and caring community we've built within our house system. The love was spread!

University Challenge

Brains were put to the test in the University Challenge, where houses competed in a battle of knowledge. From history to science, literature to current affairs, students showed off their intellectual prowess, proving that teamwork and quick thinking can lead to victory. A huge well done to all who participated!

Pi Day

What better way to celebrate the mathematical wonder of Pi than with a day filled with pies and cakes in the PI theme? From reciting as many digits of Pi as possible (265 this year!!!) to Pi-themed cakes, it is always well participated in and Maths love to see the creativity.



A Huge Thank You!

A big congratulations to all students who participated in these events, demonstrating house pride, teamwork, and determination. Your enthusiasm and sportsmanship (maybe not Mr Bowen's and Mr Hinchliffe's) have made these terms truly special.

As we look ahead to the final term, we can't wait to see what's in store for the house competition. Keep up the spirit, and let's make the next term just as incredible!

- Mr Lyons, Head of House System



As you already know – AS YOU WOULD EXPECT – it has been another incredible two terms for BIGG.

There are so many types of blue. Ultramarine. Cobalt. Prussian. Indigo. Egyptian. Woad. Cerulean. If there was one I would pick for BIGG now, it would be ELECTRIC BLUE. Blue is the colour of PROGRESS, the colour of the FUTURE and BIGG is ELECTRIC!

The soldiers of BIGG have been working tirelessly on behalf of the house so far in 2025. If you have a skill, it's probably been tested in 2025. I'll give you some examples...

Have you got great special awareness, nimble fingers and a thirst for speed? Then you would have taken part in the REMOTE CONTROL CARS challenge.

Do you enjoy trivia, facts and smashing brightly coloured buzzers as hard as you can onto the table? Then our UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE was for you.

If your talents lean towards the interpersonal, the metaphysical and you actively enjoy the ache of unrequited love, then sending VALENTINE'S HEARTS was probably what you were doing mid-February.

If you hold no fear of fried goods, running is what you do best and throwing food repeatedly in the air is what you dream of at night, then taking part in the PANCAKE RACING was a given.

If you don't feel complete at the end of the day unless you've been creative, you have a deep-seated respect for street art and love the opportunity to work collaboratively with other artists, then THE BIG DRAW was for you.

And last but not least if you still enjoy cooking but always wish there was more of a mathematical twist to your blanching, peeling and soggy bottoms, then I imagine you contributed to the PI PIE DAY in a big way.

We have won a lot of these events - but I have been most impressed by how the Soldiers of Bigg have always just got involved in every way they can.

Next term, again, is full of new BIGG challenges, quizzes, events, celebrations and competitions. These are all chances to get BIGG House points but also an opportunity to grow and try something new. We know 2025 is our year. We can feel it. It's ELECTRIC.

#BIGGISBEAUTIFUL #BIGGERISBETTER

- Mr Bowen, House Leader of Bigg



Happy Spring, Blackstone!

It has been a pleasure taking on the role of House Leader of Blackstone these past few months. Blackstone have shown fantastic participation in the house competitions that have been happening this term. Everything from Racing Cars speedily around the hall, fabulous Pancake Flipping and an abundance of creativity for our collaborative 'Big Draw', not forgetting Ninja Warriors! Thank you for all of the time you have put in to making

our house the best house! It has been so much fun competing in these activities with you! Also, a massive well done to those of you who are showing excellence across the board and collecting house points and badges every week, it does not go unnoticed.

A massive thanks to Lizzie and Wilfrid for being our brilliant house captains and showing fantastic leadership. We are lining up an exciting season of house activities for you to get involved, so please do keep your eyes peeled.

Enjoy the Easter holidays, and I look forward to seeing you all raring to go again after the break!

- Miss Robinson, House Leader of Blackstone



Christie House has truly had an eventful and successful term, filled with achievements, creativity, and camaraderie. From flipping pancakes to celebrating Valentine's Day with love for fellow houses, it's been a term to remember!

Speaking of victories, who could forget our stunning performance in the pancake race? Flipping our way to an impressive second place, we showed everyone that Christie House is always ready to take on any challenge—especially when it involves food!

In the University Challenge, we made it to the semi-finals, showcasing our intellectual prowess and determination. The quiz was fierce, but Christie House has always had a strong spirit of teamwork, and that carried us far. Our victory wasn't just about winning; it was about how we came together as a team.

Christie House also triumphed in the House Grand Prix! Speed and strategy were key, and we raced ahead to take the crown, proving that we're just as competitive in the fast lane as we are in the classroom.

Herbie Potts made an incredible mark this term, coming second in Ninja Warrior. His strength and agility were nothing short of impressive, and though he narrowly missed the top spot, he showed us all that true champions never give up.



In another impressive feat, we took third place in the Paper Tower competition. It wasn't just about the height—it was about the creativity and problem-solving that made us stand out.

Of course, we didn't just stop there! Our Pi-loving geniuses baked Pi Pies, and Callum Reynolds came second in the Pi competition, narrowly losing his title this year. It was a close contest, but his dedication and love for mathematics were clear for all to see.

And let's not forget the incredible artistry displayed by some of Christie's talented

artists in the Big Graffiti Draw. The masterpiece captured the creativity and energy that runs through the very fabric of our house.

What a term it has been for Christie House! We've proven time and again that we have a winning combination of brains, brawn, and boundless creativity. Here's to more successes and shared memories as we continue this journey together—one pancake flip, one Pi competition, and one artistic endeavor at a time!

- Mrs Chamberlain, House Leader of Christie



Matilda House, well done on another enthusiastic and successful term!

It's at this time of year that the sun begins to shine, the daffodils bloom & things start to feel a little bit brighter that you realize just how beautiful the colour YELLOW really is!! It shines, glows, illuminates & ultimately warms!

As a House you really embody that! The positive mindset, the can-do attitude & the bright smiles you give when passing in the corridors! You radiate what we should be as a house and the way

you continue to grow and develop in your learning, continues to make me proud to be your House Leader!

Now for Competitions! The Annual Pancake Race provided some 'Flippin' good fun! With a great turnout not just from Year 7 but from Year 10s & 11s too. Something to be commended in what is a very busy time in the lead up to exams.

Science Week saw us towering above the rest with a win in the Paper Tower competition and a whole heap of other scientific shenanigans across the week. There really is something for everyone in House competitions and while there are always the core group that attend them all, each competition brings a new set of skills to the table and gives different students the time to shine!

THE BIG DRAW got the doodlers out in force with some competitive craftsmanship & Pi day really added to the term with not just the yearly number recital but some culinary pi based pastries too!

I know I write this every time but the sheer passion, enthusiasm and effort that you put into HOUSE events is FANTASTIC! Let's keep it going though into the summer term, with Sports Day approaching, more than ever, the other Houses want to steal our crown!

I wish you all a fun, restful and chocolate-filled Easter break! So we can hit the ground running into the final two terms of the year!

And Remember,

#BEMOREMATILDA #MATILDAMINDSET

#ONLYHASHTAGGINGBECAUSEMRBOWENDIDIT

- Mr Hinchliffe, House Leader of Matilda

Satchel Point Totals

Bigg	34,367
Blackstone	32,281
Christie	30,185
Matilda	29,295

House Totals so far...

Bigg	4595
Blackstone	4375
Christie	4480
Matilda	4830

Have a fantastic Easter holiday!



We look forward to the summer term...





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Cover Photograph: 7ELO artwork inspired by Wassily Kandinsky