

Wallingford School Newsletter

Winter Edition - December 2024



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Headteacher's Message



A former Headteacher I once worked with said that the long Autumn term begins in the heat and sunshine of early September and ends in the dark of the long nights of December as the seasons change, and that has stuck with me. The seasons have changed, and the school keeps moving.

It has been a typically busy term in school with a huge amount going on, from our Year 7 students performing a wonderful version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as the Merry Wanderers to our Year 13 students submitting their UCAS applications – and seeing the offers starting to come in – with a whole lot more in between.



Our school thrives on this energy and activity and, both in the classroom and beyond, it is a pleasure to see our young people learn and develop, be challenged and excel, and have a great school experience.

This newsletter portrays just some of what has been going on at Wallingford School over the past few months and is a great depiction of the life of our school – please do enjoy reading it and I would like to wish all families a happy and relaxing break over Christmas.

- Mr Marston, Headteacher



Livery Academy Awards Heat Win

At the start of the school year, six students were selected to take part in the prestigious Merchant Taylors' Livery Academy Awards. This competition, designed to nurture entrepreneurial and presentation skills among Sixth Form students, also aims to strengthen connections between Livery Company members and their associated state schools. The challenge was to pitch a product to investors, with the goal of raising up to £2,000,000.



The brief was that the product or business would:

- Promote or provide a benefit to their local community.
- Use new technology or find different ways of using existing technology.
- Either be entirely new or add an extra dimension to something that already exists.

Since September, our Wallingford team worked tirelessly to perfect our presentation. With the invaluable support of Ms. McGowan and our mentors, we honed our pitch over countless lunchtimes and after-school sessions. When the big day arrived, we travelled to Merchant Taylors' Hall in London to present our product.

The competition was fierce, with impressive presentations from all the schools involved: Foyle College, Northern Ireland; the all-girls St Saviour's & St Olave's School, London;



Photos: Kris Piotrowski

and Aylesbury UTC (our Trust partner). As the last team to present, our anticipation and nervousness grew steadily. However, as we took to the stage, our nerves turned into a surge of adrenaline. We delivered our best performance yet - far surpassing any of our practice runs. The Q&A session went just as smoothly, and the feedback we received was encouraging.



We also had the pleasure of meeting the guest head judge Evan Davis, a man renowned for his work as a broadcaster, and host of Dragon's Den and Newsnight, whose insights and expertise added remarkable excitement to the day!

When the moment of truth arrived, we were crowned winners of the heats! It was a thrilling achievement and a testament to all our hard work. Now, we set our sights on the next challenge: presenting once again in January at the grand Mansion House, this time competing against teams from Drapers, Grocers and Haberdashers' Livery Companies.

- Wilfrid Venners, Year 12



The Merry Wanderers Project

As part of their transition to Wallingford School the whole of Year 7 took on the challenge of performing the Shakespeare play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In just over two months the Year 7s learnt and rehearsed key scenes from the play culminating in a performance in front of a huge audience. The process started with Tom from Bright Torches running workshops with each form group, helping them get to grips with speaking in Shakespearean English and inspiring the year group with acting games. From there each form group was assigned a scene and they tirelessly rehearsed and impressively learnt lines. The final performance was a real triumph – the students did fantastically well and should be enormously proud of their achievement.

Here are the words of Kaylee, Amelia and Rosie about their experience with the project:

“The rehearsals were fun, amusing and spectacular. Once our roles were chosen we went straight into practising the scene. Every time we practised, we did it on the stage so we got a feel for what it was going to be like when we performed it. When we didn't really know what we were doing it was hard, but when we did it all came together.

“The performance was nerve-racking but exhilarating! Behind the stage we were all buzzing with excitement, some of us were a little anxious and didn't want to go on, but when we were out there nothing could stop us from doing an AMAZING PERFORMANCE! It was great!”

- Mrs Harding, Teacher of English



Photos- Jørn Tomter



Decking the Halls



I was given a *Student of the Term* award by the Didcot Rotary Club for helping my community, Wallingford and the surrounding areas, with tech at various events. The members of the club were all very nice and welcoming.

Some of the events I have helped with were: BunkFest; Wallingford Winter Blues and Jazz; Choko Music Festival in Cholsey; and a village panto which I am doing sound for. I have also had a lot to do with lights and sound in school, for productions, concerts, Open Evening and Sports Day. I love just staying after school and turning the lights on and seeing what I can do with them.

During BunkFest weekend, I was very busy going around the fringe venues. I had set up about 8 or 9 venues with a different sound system on each one. I also met lots of really nice people that were doing the sound with me or they were in a band or on the stage. I really enjoy all of these events, helping out different people all the time.

I do a lot in my village to help with our events. I am one of the few people in our village who know how to use the PA system, so I often get asked to help set it up and sometimes asked to go on the mic, so everyone has to listen to my voice as I go on about pizza for sale, crafts on offer and, "Don't go over the barrier!" (lucky people).

We also have an event called Choko, where I have the pleasure of having my own DJ set for about 40 minutes. The festival gets more and more people every year. This year, along with my set, I had a lot to do with the lighting. When you have a festival, many of the lights require a lot of movement and some of them didn't like being moved on their own, so I was doing a lot by hand!

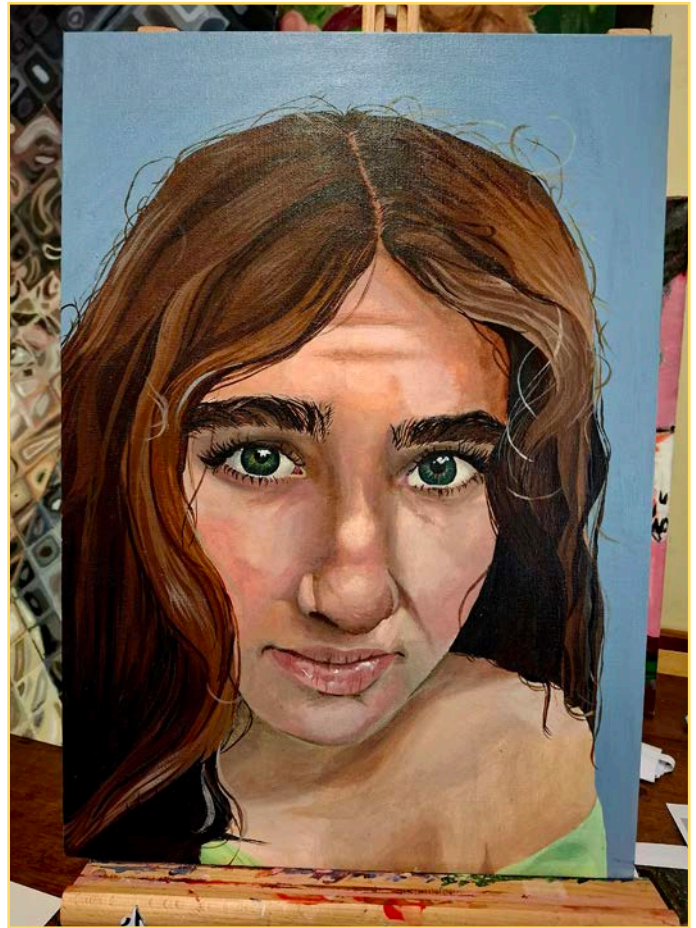
This year on my birthday, I did the sound for our village panto, Cinderella. I started in September and thought, "Okay, this will be good." What I didn't realise was how much work it would be for me! Yet, even while listening to an annoying song on repeat, it is still really fun!

In school, I have been very busy. If I get a chance to get out the lighting equipment, I am there and I am happy to do anything. I often get asked to do events for different members of staff such as open evening. I had some of my own equipment around the school to make the school a bit brighter as the nights were drawing in. I am very committed with the things I do at school with lights or sound. I have been fitting our hired-in lighting ready for the Christmas Concert and Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, which will look amazing with our new lights.

I started getting into this when I was 8 years old and there were many people who have helped me through that, and now I have started doing events for myself like discos and village events. In the future I hope to have my own self-employed business where people hire me to do events like parties, weddings and outdoor festivals.

Year 13 Portraits





Friends. What are they for? You can share the good times with them and they can be there for you in the not-so-good times. They can also be your muse when it comes to painting a stunning portrait!

Here are three outstanding paintings by three outstanding Year 13 artists of three outstanding friends.

The artists are Evie, Lola and Rosa. The friends are Molly, Elyana and Ava.

Wow. Just wow.

Art and Photography Trip to the TATE MODERN!

Year 10 and 12 artists and photographers had a brilliant time in London's premier Art location today. We saw light sculpture. We saw Kandinsky. We saw a lot of motorway. But we filled our senses with the sights, sounds and trying to touch light that only the Tate Modern can provide.

We love this place!



Merchant Taylors' Company Photography Competition



Anastasiia Bozhenko

David Bowie famously sang a song called 'Five Years'. Quite obviously, he was writing about our long record of success in the national Merchant Taylors' Company Photography Competition. Thanks Dave. We've won again this year and we've won BIG!

In the Senior Category, **Anastasiia Bozhenko** (Year 13) won outright, fighting off stiff competition from every corner of our proud nation, with her stunning black and white photograph of two avid readers squatting in a bookshop. These reluctant purchasers might make my blood boil - but this beautiful photograph makes my heart sing!

Andrew Goodwin (Year 11) came runner-up with his beguiling photograph of a lightbulb. See how the light plays across the surface! Gorgeous.



Andrew Goodwin

Rosie Pink's (Year 9) stunning photograph of a bee collecting pollen from a flower is also a firm favourite. And the judges thought so too. That's why it came 'highly commended'!



In the Junior category, **Mia Sampson's** (Year 8) calming and detailed photograph of a windmill was also a firm favourite of the judging panel, earning her a much prized runner-up slot. It's a masterclass in composition!

Bella Cockman (also in Year 8) makes us look - and really look - at the innate beauty of keys. Another masterclass in composition - just look at how Bella has used positive and negative shapes for maximum effect!



Mia Sampson



Bella Cockman

And finally, **Iris McCormack** (also in Year 8. My goodness, these Year 8s are talented!) gifts us a stunning photo of Paddington train station. Iris has obviously looked. Then seen the potential. And lastly thought about how best to capture this captivating image.



Iris McCormack

So I'm sure you all agree that when it comes to this prestigious national photography competition... We've won again this year and we've won BIG!

- Mr Bowen, Head of Art

Language Matters



It has been another busy start to the year for the Languages department.

We were very happy to hold another Speed Language Learning event to celebrate European Day of Languages in September. This year we had a fantastic array of languages on offer – Cantonese, Dutch, Maltese, Ukrainian, Polish, Korean, Italian, Mandarin, Spanish, Welsh, Russian, Japanese and Finnish. Eunice in 7ELO won the prize for the most popular language (Cantonese) as voted for by the language learners who attended the event. Thank you to everyone that took part!



Our GCSE and A Level German students took part once again in an Oktoberfest Kneipenquiz at Radley College organised by the Oxford German Network. They ate a German-themed meal and competed against German students from other local schools in a German pub quiz.





We also entered 4 teams into the GCHQ National Languages Challenge in November for the third year running. One of our teams – made up of Colin W, Caleb S, Syrah D and Danica S - came 108th out of more than 2000 teams which is a fantastic achievement! Very well done to them and all the teams. They will receive their certificates for this in Year 9 assembly shortly.



As I write we are putting together the final details of our annual German Exchange to Bad Wurzach, Wallingford's twin town. We are also looking forward to taking our A Level French and German students to a Literature Masterclass at Oxford University at the start of next term and our annual French Exchange to Grenoble at the start of February. This year all students in Year 8 have the opportunity to visit France on a day trip to Boulogne in June and July, so plans are well underway for those trips too.

Joyeux Noel / Frohe Weihnachten

- Mrs McGarrick, Curriculum Team Leader for Languages

November in Berlin!



Earlier this term, I was lucky enough to win a place on a teacher training course for German teachers from the UK in Berlin, which was run by the Goethe Institut and funded by the Department for Education. I set off for Berlin on a Sunday morning in November and I don't think the sun came out from behind the clouds the whole time I was in Berlin, but this did not stop me from having a fantastic time!

The group I met up with in Berlin was made up of 15 German teachers from a range of state schools across the UK; there was even a teacher from Orkney! We spent all day both working on our German language skills and planning lesson sequences in small groups. We also visited a German school outside of Berlin and observed some English lessons. This experience provoked some really interesting (and sometimes heated!) discussions in German about teaching styles and approaches. Our German hosts were adamant that there are too many rules in schools in the UK, whereas my British colleagues and I felt that a more rigorous approach to behaviour leads to better student outcomes!



In the evenings we were able to explore Berlin and we took the opportunity to visit as many of the incredible historic sights the city has to offer as possible. The last time I had been



in Berlin was for my 21st birthday in 1999 and the city has changed so much since then. A particular highlight for me was a visit to the Tränenpalast which was used as a departure hall at Freidrichsstraße station for passengers crossing from East to West Berlin. There were many tearful goodbyes in the building hence its name “Palace of Tears”. I was 11 when the Berlin Wall came down and I still remember my mum crying in front of the news on the TV saying “I never thought this would ever happen”. I’ve been really interested in this period of German history ever since and it was incredible to visit key sites which played such a pivotal role in the Cold War, such as Checkpoint Charlie and Bernauer Straße.



All in all, this was an incredible opportunity and one that I won’t forget in a hurry. It was amazing to be in Berlin, working on my German, but also a real privilege to spend so much time discussing teaching and learning with such a dedicated and experienced group of teachers. I came home with a suitcase full of Lebkuchen and a head full of ideas for the Languages department!

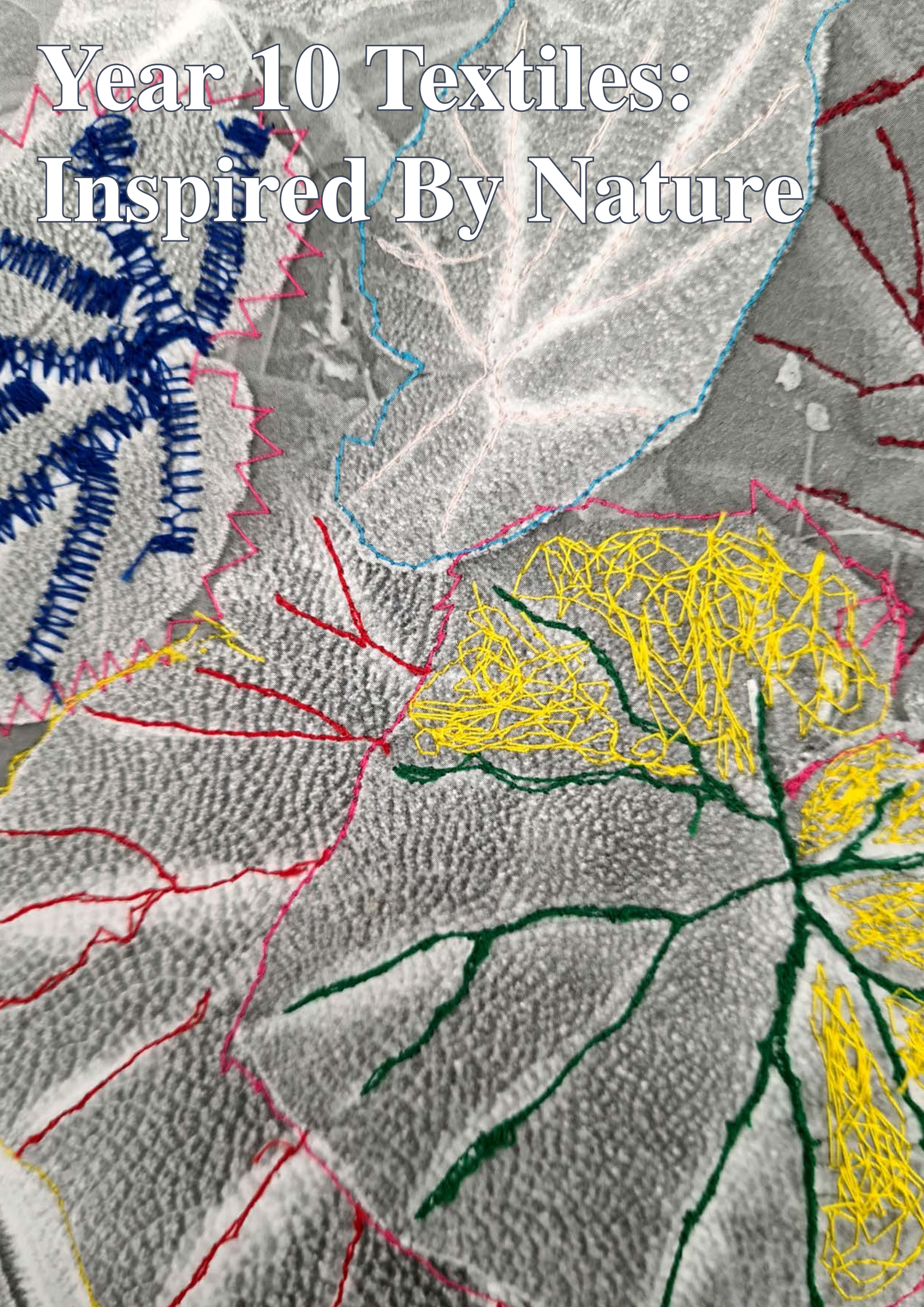
- Mrs McGarrick, Curriculum Team Leader for Languages

German Exchange in Pictures...





Year 10 Textiles: Inspired By Nature





This year, for our Year 10 Textiles trip we went to visit the Oxford Botanic Garden. The purpose of the trip was so that we could explore lots of different plants and flowers and draw them using different pens and pencils onto varied materials, such as card, coloured paper and even tracing paper. We also took lots of photos so that we could use them in future work, as our theme for Textiles this year is “Inspired by Nature”.

We saw lots of unique plants and flowers which aren't usually seen in our everyday life. Some of the plants were amazing to look at: leaves with lots of different patterns, leaves with pink sections, we were even able to go into a little indoor rainforest to draw rainforest plants, which was a great opportunity. There were also lots of new flowers to discover that were amazing to analyse.

We started off exploring part of the garden with the whole class, so we could all sit and attempt to sketch some of the same plants. Then we were given free time so that we could explore the rest of the gardens, drawing and taking photos of those plants which took our interest.

The trip was so much fun as there were so many new, exciting plants that we were able to sit down and investigate. With all the photos we took we were able to attempt new features on the computer: thumbnail prints, negative photo changes and colour change photos. We created a trip report in our sketch book where we included all the beautiful drawings.

It was such a fun day out and I would highly recommend anyone interested in nature to go and visit the Oxford Botanic Garden to see all of the unique and incredible wildlife they have to offer.

- Pheobe Knight, Year 10

Oxford Botanic Garden



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This year for our topic on “Inspired by Nature”, our Textiles class visited Oxford Botanic Garden, to explore the different plants and flowers and draw them for our project. This trip gave us a chance to discover many growing plants we hadn’t seen before.

We went round the different parts of the garden, took photographs and compared our favourite flowers! Our group experimented with different materials and paper to recreate the plants in front of us. We used pens, pencils, coloured pens and different coloured paper to see which ones looked best. There were many different shapes and patterns on the plants that we drew in detail.

After a little while we looked into the greenhouse area where many more exciting plants grew, including bananas, colourful flowers and more exotic greenery. This is where we took our time to produce even more sketches of bigger, more detailed plants. This was an amazing opportunity to draw even more unique greenery. Later we took our time to recreate the flowers in the lower gardens, sketching them carefully in a lot of detail, zooming in to the interesting colours.

This really helped with our final projects we are creating. When we got back to the classroom, we experimented with something called negative and colour change photos, to test how the filters altered the vibrant colours of the original photos we had taken. We then mounted up our photos and drawings onto a page in our sketchbooks to show how our trip went and what we had done!

This trip to the gardens had really helped us with what we were designing and the topic we are covering currently. We got to experience all the unique and wonderful plants there were in the gardens!



Musical Musings...

Christmas term in any Music department is always busy but this year we've been super busy!

Mr Young took our A level students to a concert at the Sheldonian Theatre where they were wowed with a performance of one of their set works: Mendelsohn's Scottish Symphony performed by Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra.

Waterbear Music College came into talk with our Year 10s on our new GCSE Music Technology course, where they were advised about careers in the music industry, particularly if training in technology.



We had the amazing Christmas Concert which is now a firm staple on our calendar. We raised £345 for our chosen charity Sleigh2Give, which provides gifts for children in hospital over Christmas. During this concert Miss Lovett premiered her KS3 choir with over 40 students squeezing onto the stage. We had some stellar performances from Year 7: Maddie and Bea playing a clarinet and trumpet Christmas duet; Thomas playing 'Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy'...all from memory! Special shout-out to the lighting and sound teams (all run by students) who did a fantastic job.



The day after, Ms Hammond took our A level musicians to Wells Cathedral School for an A level Study Day on ‘An introduction to the ‘isms’’. We had an amazing talk from Gavin Plumley, a lecturer specialising in music and culture of Central Europe. He spoke about The Second Viennese School and focussed on Schoenberg and his music. There was a chance to play instruments in the amazing facilities of the school, where Dr Jonathan James, a specialist in collaborative improvisation, had students improving in orchestral sections and then all 120+ students performed together. At the end of the day, one of the school’s orchestras performed Stravinsky’s Pulcinella Suite with Simon Lloyd analysing the music through the performance. We also heard them perform two other set composers, Schoenberg’s *Notturmo for Strings and Harp* and the Sixth Form female Choralia singing Lili Boulanger’s *Les Sirènes*.

It was a wonderful experience to not only attend a specialist music school with amazing facilities (we counted 6 Steinway grand pianos just in the rooms we went into!), students also enjoyed talking to those who attend the school, and the experience of hearing and seeing live music can never be underestimated.

Henry and Noah said, “It was fascinating and we especially enjoyed the improvising session!” while Ed said, “I enjoyed the Schoenberg talk, it will help me in the Serialism part of the paper.”

We would like to say a huge thank you to the hospitality of Wells Cathedral School for making us feel so welcome and for a fabulous and very useful day. Ms Hammond would definitely recommend a trip to wander round the cathedral, and Cedars Hall offer some amazing concerts in their Event Venue in Wells, Somerset,

Miss Lovett took the KS3 Choir and some wind players to perform to those attending Cholsey Old People’s Christmas lunch at the Wallingford Baptist Church.

Our year was successfully rounded off with some of musicians performing at the Christmas lunch in the last week of term.

- Ms Hammond, Curriculum Team Leader for Music

A Spotlight on GCSE Dance



This term, our GCSE Dance students have made an incredible start to their course, showcasing enthusiasm, creativity, and dedication. They've hit the ground running, working hard on a variety of exciting projects and tasks that are shaping them into confident and expressive performers.

One of their key focuses has been choreographing dances inspired by a set stimulus. This creative process has allowed them to explore and develop their own movement ideas while incorporating a range of actions, dynamics, and relationships. The students have impressed us with their ability to interpret themes and translate them into thoughtful and engaging choreography.

In addition to their own creations, the dancers have been delving into the world of professional dance by studying Emancipation of Expressionism, a captivating hip-hop-inspired work by renowned choreographer Kenrick H2O Sandy. Through this piece, they've been learning and performing in the hip-hop style, gaining a deeper understanding of the physical and emotional demands of the genre.





Their energy and precision in tackling this challenging style have been truly commendable.

We're so proud of the progress they've made already and can't wait to see how their skills and artistry continue to develop over the year. Keep up the fantastic work, GCSE Dancers – you're inspiring us all!

If you would like to follow in their footsteps and be given an opportunity to perform on stage, all students from all year groups are invited to attend *Spotlight Dance Show* rehearsals (for our annual dance show happening after Easter) on Thursdays after-school in the Dance Studio behind the main hall 3:05-4:05pm starting Thursday 9th January 2025.

- Mrs Clarke, Teacher of Dance

**SPOTLIGHT
DANCE
REHEARSALS**

**THURSDAYS
AFTERSCHOOL**
Starting
January 9th
3:05-4:05pm
in M18

(Dance studio behind the main hall)
See Mrs Clarke for more Information

Theatre Trip Review



Stranger Things: The First Shadow



On the Friday 4th October, Yr12 and Yr11 Drama students attended the theatre production of *Stranger Things: The First Shadow* at the Phoenix Theatre in London.

The production is set in 1950's America, in a town called Hawkins, Indiana. The play follows the life of spunky teenager Joyce, notorious for dating numerous bad boys, but has a passion for theatre. When Joyce decides to put on a play for a scholarship for a college in Indianapolis, she bands together a group of her classmates to help her. As they become more acquainted with each other, they begin to discover that not everyone is what they seem... And neither is their town...

The production was masterfully crafted with an incredible cast who brought the infamous characters to life, and was filled with romance, suspense and mystery, leaving the audience on the edge of their seats. I thoroughly enjoyed the performance and would definitely recommend it to any Stranger Things or Sci-Fi fans.



- Poppy Gould, Year 12, A Level Drama

Young Carers



On Friday, 15th November, I had the incredible opportunity, as well as a group of young carers from across Oxfordshire, to meet with Ed Davey, leader of the Liberal Democrats. The event, organised by Be Free Young Carers, provided a platform for young people to share their experiences and discuss the support they receive in schools. During the meeting, young carers from different schools gathered to talk about what life is like balancing their caring responsibilities with their education. It was a chance to raise awareness about the unique challenges faced by young carers and to discuss ways schools can offer support. Students had the chance to contribute ideas on improving the representation of young carers in schools, ensuring that their needs are understood

and addressed. It was inspiring to hear the diverse perspectives of other young carers and work together to make sure that the voices of young people in this important role are heard. This event was an invaluable experience, allowing students to connect with others in similar situations, express their thoughts, and engage with key decision-makers like Ed Davey. The discussion was not only insightful but also empowering, showing that young carers can have a real impact in shaping the future of education and support.

- Lydia, Year 11, Young Carer

We celebrated young carers with a trip to see Elf at the cinema on Wednesday 4th December. The trip saw 46 young carers from Wallingford School, Brightwell Primary School and Crowmarsh Gifford Primary School all enjoy a Christmas film and some well-deserved time to switch off from their caring roles and responsibilities. We would like to say a huge thank you to the Corn Exchange in Wallingford for helping us organise the trip, some of our governors for joining us and to all of the young carers for being so well behaved and making it such an enjoyable morning!

The Young Carers support group runs every Monday lunchtime from B12 (at the back of the library). Please come along with your lunch for a chat and some biscuits!

- Mrs Emmerson, Young Carers Lead





What an opening term of sport we've had at Wallingford! There have been riveting rugby matches, honourable hockey performances, and some fantastic footie games! We're blessed to have a fantastic array of sportspeople at Wallingford, all of which have done the school proud over the opening terms.

There have been some incredibly impressive rugby performances, with strong games from the Year 7 and Year 8 team in the Abbey tournament, as well as notable victories for our Year 9s. The girls' team took part in their first ever game of contact rugby; despite being nervous at the start, they grew into it, improving with each game and ending the tournament absolutely loving rugby – so much so that more fixtures have been organised! The Year 7s have taken to school rugby equally brilliantly, playing some splendid rugby over the term.

Mr. Dodson's Year 11s remain undefeated and secured an impressive [12-5 victory](#) over St. Birinus, dubbed as "one of the best games he [Mr. Dodson] has ever seen". As the winners of the South Oxfordshire league, they are due to play the winners of the Reading league at Abbey Rugby Club in January under the lights – good luck! And the 1st XV Rugby side have kicked off their campaign.

Over at hockey, we've seen some brilliant showcases of skill and determination. The mixed Year 11 side produced a standout [8-0 win](#), whilst the Year 10 side have been equally impressive.

Football has started off as fantastic as ever. The Year 8 girls began the season with an excellent [8-1 win](#) in their cup game – we can't wait to see them in the next round! The Sixth Form Girls team put in a brilliant performance in their cup game – a narrow 1-0 loss doesn't tell the whole story.

A special shout-out to Phoebe in Year 10 for winning our September [Player of the Month](#) and Isla in Year 8 for winning our October Player of the Month!

We started up basketball after October half term, with the Year 8 and 9s currently on a [100% winning](#) record! Mr. Choi had special praise for Roman, calling him the "MVP" of their opening games – well done! The Year 10 and 11 side has also done well, winning their opening game of the season.

A major highlight of the year so far came when 12 students attended the annual [duathlon](#), completing a 2km row erg and a 2km run. We are so proud of everyone who competed, achieving 4/4 team medals (including 3 GOLDS!!!). Congratulations to George for picking up Gold in the individual event for the Year 8/9 Boys Team. Also, congratulations to our Year 10/11 individual Girl medallists, Darcy (Silver) and Aurelia (Bronze), and our Boys medallists Arthur (Gold) and Tom (Silver). Not a bad day's work, which was cemented by the team winning our Moment of the Month for November!

We hosted our inaugural [HYROX](#) race, with 40 students from Year 11 and [Sixth Form](#) competing! Everyone gave 100% which was great to see. A huge congratulations to Annabel, Daisy, Phoebe, Tom and Lewis who each won their respective categories! A special thank you to Charlie Botterill for coming along and helping with the event!

Students from Year 7-11 competed at the annual [cross country event](#). Our teams did admirably, with the Year 10/11 Boys and Year 7 Girls both earning Silver medals! An extra special congratulations to Erin in Year 7 who ran a remarkable race, finishing in Silver to bring home an individual medal for the School.

Our opening terms of sport were wrapped up with Fletcher (Year 7) awarded the Boys [Player of the Month](#), and Darcy (Year 11) Girls Player of the Month for November – massive congratulations to both!

Finally, a huge thank you to our amazing Year 12 and 13 Active Leaders who have assisted in organising, refereeing and helping at primary school games hosted at Wallingford.

It's great to see so many students throughout school getting involved with sport, both the girls and boys are participating and performing brilliantly, so a big "well done" from all of us from the PE Department! We're really excited to start football and netball next term – so keep up the hard work and participation!

- Mr Ford, PE Technician

PE & Fixtures in Pictures...







A Busy and Exciting

This first term has been incredibly busy and exciting in the library! Our **Summer Reading Challenge** was a huge success, and we're thrilled to see so many passionate readers, especially with many Year 7 students getting involved. The library has become a popular space during break and lunchtime, with students actively engaging in homework and reading.

This year, our library display is inspired by the magical world of Narnia (above).



We ran our **Christmas Wheel of Fortune** for the second year, with 50 lucky students across KS3 winning a book. If you were one of the lucky students and haven't yet collected your prize, pop to the library as soon as possible, before we run out of Christmas magic.



ing First Term

Here is a round-up of the other exciting events happening this festive season in the library:


Reading Bingo – Grab a bingo grid from the library, complete reading challenges, and earn house points! Cards to be returned by the 10th January.

VLE activities:

Log on to our VLE system and under Blackstone Library you will find a number of exciting activities to challenge you this festive season, including our **Book advent calendar**, the **Gonk that Stole Christmas** and **Book Trust’s Quizmas**.

Happy Reading to you all!

- Ms Hanley & Mrs Saunders, School Librarians

Christmas Reading Bingo 

Read about the history of Christmas	Read a book recommended by a friend	Read a short Christmas stories
Read a book that became a movie	Have a go at our Christmas Quiz on the VLE—how many points did you get?	Read a book with animal characters
Write a review about your favourite book	Take a selfie of you reading a Christmas book	Read a Christmas poem

Name: _____

Tutor Group: _____

House Events



We have had some changes to the House Leaders this year, and that always sparks a new rivalry. Mr. Bowen (new Head of Bigg) and Mr. Hinchliffe (Head of Matilda) have put their Art friendship aside and gone toe-to-toe in what can only be described as “fighting talk” assemblies!

It has been really nice to see the students get on board with the “rivalry” and try to work out ways to ensure their house comes out on top.

In Christie, Ms. Chamberlain has taken up the mantle from the departed Miss Persse and continued the hard work and enthusiasm. She must be credited for sending the school Quackers! (More on that below.)



A final thank you to Miss Sutton who has led Blackstone for a number of years, and is stepping down temporarily to take up a post within Science. She will be a hard act to follow.

Yet again we had a number of well-attended House events this term. Language Leaders kicked us off, with over 50 students teaching and learning new languages. This is always inspiring to watch, especially those who have learned the language on their own.



We entered and won a number of awards in the Merchant Taylors' Photo competition. Mr. Bowen will be quick to tell you all the awards we've won over the years (see his report earlier in this newsletter), but we have some serious talent behind the lens!

Mastermind was another success, and it is always amazing to see how much knowledge someone can have in one subject. I am yet to jump into the hot seat and answer questions on Everton between 1984 and 1990 (when we were actually good).

This term, we have seen the houses come together to create incredible House Poppy displays for Remembrance Day. They always look amazing, and the students appreciate the fact that we mark that day so well.

House matches have concluded the term with a few results still to come in, but the determination and desire to win on the sports field is something we all love to see in the house system. Please do look on the [@walli.pe](https://www.instagram.com/walli.pe) Instagram account for details of the winners and action shots!

Our attention then turned to Christmas. We have some great trees and, no doubt by Friday, the annual Door Decoration competition will reach a frenzy! It is always hotly contested.

Finally, it would be wrong of me not to mention the school going "quackers" over some tiny ducks with Christmas hats on. Six hundred were sent out into the wild to be found. For that week, I have never been asked about ducks so much! Even the staff were getting into the spirit, both with the hiding and finding of ducks! All results will be revealed at the final assembly.

Have a great Christmas everyone.

- Mr Lyons and The House Team



House Matches in Pictures...







It has been an incredible two terms for Bigg House.

First of all, can I say what an honour it has been to lead the best house.

True, I had been

in another house (shhhh) for a few years previously, but coming over to the one true, TRUE, proud, BIG, GROWN-UP, blue BIGG house has been the stuff of dreams. Being in another house had been a massive mistake, but I had recognised it is a problem and did something about it. And that's what Christmas is all about isn't it?

We kicked off our beautiful Bigg Campaign with the World Languages Day event where many Bigg linguists used vocabulary from around the world to dizzying effect. Da iawn. Subaruashi. Ayis Amma. This was hotly followed by the House Mascot competition where our true blue cadets designed an incredible range of mascots for Bigg House. Designs arrived in pencil, coloured pencil, paint and even 3D animation. Impressive doesn't cover it!

The House Mastermind contest was also a rare treat. In the first general knowledge round we discovered that our clever pupils know a lot about Astronomy, the Olympics, Toy Story sequels and the contents of a cheeky tub of Celebrations. But maybe not quite so hot on the name of our current Prime Minister. The second, specialist, round was equally eye-opening and pupils from all of the houses answered questions on subjects as varied as Greek gods, TV programme Brooklyn 99, famous footballers, Tim Burton films and Taylor Swift. Did you know that Tay Tay was a Sagittarius? That her brother is called Austin? That her favourite number is 13? Me neither.

The Merchant Taylors' Photography Competition - I have written about this in more detail elsewhere in the newsletter but suffice to say, we were all very, very happy with the outcome! Congratulations to everyone who entered the competition and BIGG congratulations to everyone who won with such style and panache.

The Science Advent Calendar competition (for Years 7 and 8) allowed some pupils to show off their remarkable scientific knowledge of Christmas dinners and Christmas trees, and later the forms got together to make a Poppy Mural for Remembrance Day.

Then: the school wide-search for birds. It's amazing how even tiny things can capture the hearts and minds of an entire community. The Duck competition was such an event. The entire school went crazy for finding these charming plastic waterfowl. Honestly CRAZY. It was quite, quite wonderful.

Events in the past week have included the return of the beloved Christmas Doors competition and one of the year's highlights – the 'Sleigh2Give' campaign where the whole school remembers those less fortunate at this festive time.

Next term 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. 2025 is our year and we know it.

Lastly I would like to wish everyone from each and every House a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Yes, every House. That's Bigg, Matilda (the enemy), Blackstone (are they still going? Need to check) and the Red house I can never remember the name of...Crispy?? Something like that. Merry Christmas to one and all.

- Mr Bowen, House Leader of Bigg



Hello Blackstone!

This marks my last newsletter and term as House Leader of Blackstone as I am stepping back to taken on some additional responsibilities within the science department. It has been a pleasure to lead such a fantastic house for the last 3.5 years and I will miss it! However, I will always be rooting for Blackstone (just don't tell my current form group who are Christie...!).

I am leaving you in the good hands of our new year 12 House Captains, Lizzie and Wilfrid, who have done sterling work so far this year, helping me to arrange all sorts, from the poppy mural to the house Christmas tree. I have been really impressed with all the donations they have been collecting from the Blackstone form groups for the Sleigh2Give Campaign – thank you for your generosity!

I look forward to the new year and seeing what the new House Leader of Blackstone will bring. Have a wonderful Christmas!

- Miss Sutton, House Leader of Blackstone



At the heart of Christie House stands its beloved mascot, the Christie Fox, whose playful spirit embodies the warmth and camaraderie of the house. This clever creature is a symbol of the house's resilience and unity, guiding everyone toward the true meaning of the season. Whether it's through the fun of House matches or the friendly competition in Mastermind, Christie House thrives on a sense of togetherness and holiday joy. Throughout it all, the Sleigh2Give rolls in bringing gifts and surprises, a reminder of the season's spirit of generosity. The tradition of

Christmas cheer runs deep, as each member of the house contributes to the festive atmosphere, ensuring that the spirit of giving and celebration is always alive and well.

- Mrs Chamberlain, House Leader of Christie





Hi Matilda House! What a term it has been. It seems like soooo long ago that we started this year but it has been packed with so many fantastic examples of the Matilda magic that makes us so great as a house. This little Christmas message is for everyone that has tried something new, learnt something new & just been a part of our fantastic school this year!

Every House point means something and you have continued to work so hard both in and out of the classroom to make them count! There have been heaps of competitions so far, from

World Languages day, House Mastermind, The Crazy Duck Hunt

(yellow, like the best house) and so much more. The proudest moment as a House though, and as a house system, has to be the beautiful poppy murals we made! Every year you astound me with your efforts and thoughtfulness that you pour into it, so a huge WELL DONE!

Now onto CHRISTMAS: The Tree, the Doors and, more importantly, the Christmas charity donations for Sleigh2Give - Christmas really is our Season, while others have a BLUE Christmas! It's our time to shine, some say RED & GREEN are Christmas colours, I say it's YELLOW!!!!

So all that's left for me to say is have a great and very well deserved break and see you in January!

I wish you a very Matilda Christmas and can't wait to see what we get up to in 2025!

And remember #BEMOREMATILDA

- Mr Hinchliffe, House Leader of Matilda

Top Point Scoring Students Term One

Year 7	Lana Ballard	Blackstone	112
Year 8	Oliver Stuart	Christie	96
Year 9	Rosie Newton	Bigg	95
Year 10	Joseph Rhodes	Matilda	97
Year 11	Charlotte Hebbes	Christie	64
Year 12/13	Scarlett David	Matilda	24

Top Point Scoring Students Term Two

Year 7	Emilia Hague	Matilda	98
Year 8	Abigail Jones Evans	Matilda	95
Year 9	Bailey-May Townsend	Bigg	87
Year 10	Maia Ballard	Christie	59
Year 11	Rosie Wilkes	Christie	42
Year 12/13	Wilfrid Venners	Blackstone	30

Satchel Point Totals

Bigg	21,359
Blackstone	20,501
Christie	18,155
Matilda	17,614

House Totals so far...

Bigg	3815
Blackstone	3755
Christie	3855
Matilda	4060



Merry Christmas!



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