

Wallingford School Newsletter

Winter Edition - December 2025



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Headteacher's Message



German Exchange, December 2025

In the last couple of weeks of a very long and busy term I have sat back and reflected on how lucky I am to have the job that I do.

We are fortunate at Wallingford School that we have great staff both inside and outside of the classroom who are totally committed to our young people making great progress and also having the very best experiences and enrichment that they possibly can have. They are the practitioners and innovators, the coaches and mentors, the supporters and advocates who drive high standards and expectations in everything that we do as a school.

We are equally fortunate to have such a wonderful student population who work hard and are committed, who are so positive and well-mannered and whose enthusiasm and zest bring something brilliant to our school. It's not always easy being a teenager – and teenagers don't always get the best press – but there is not a day when I stand on the gate and would wish to be somewhere else as they roll in with smiles and “good mornings”, ready for the day ahead. They are a joy and a pleasure to be around.

It's been a typically hectic end of term with a flurry of concerts and House matches, Christmas jumpers and trips, decorated doors and a quest for ducks. It's time for a break, to enjoy Christmas and come back refreshed at the start of 2026; there's always the odd thing we would tweak but in the bigger picture we have a school of which we are very proud and to which we give our all.

Have a great Christmas Wallingford School and see you in 2026!

- Mr Marston, Headteacher



Livery Academy Awards

At the beginning of the school year, around 14 Year 12 students attended a workshop with the Speakers Trust to improve teamwork, public speaking, and creativity. After a Dragons' Den-style activity, 6 of us were picked to represent the school in the real competition. The day after, our team had a virtual meeting with our mentors, whom we told our initial idea: wanting to make an app to help school leavers into employment, and gathered feedback on how to develop it for the competition. Our team met up 3 times a week, once afterschool with our mentors and twice in school without. In these meetings we not only developed our ideas but got to know each other, giving supportive feedback on how to improve our presentation slides and our speeches. As the day of the competition came closer, our meetings became more frequent, even meeting outside of school. On the final school day before the competition, we had another workshop with the Speakers Trust, where we refined our speeches and improved our delivery, ensuring they were ready for the day of the competition.





Finally came the day of the competition, where we travelled to the Merchant Taylors' Hall in London. We felt so honoured to even be in such a beautiful building, let alone get the chance to speak to three highly esteemed judges who we presented our idea to, as well as conferring with other competing schools. The atmosphere was full of excitement and nerves from the minibus, to the train, to Pret where we had lunch! We spent the day rehearsing, enjoying the provided snacks, and getting to know our way around the building. The day was extremely productive, but we still had our fair share of laughs. Even though we didn't win, the experience and skills gained will stick with us for the rest of our lives. We are so grateful to have been a part of the Livery Academy Awards and if given the chance would definitely do it again.

- Lydia & Ruby, Year 12



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Once in a Lifetime Experience!



How many of us can say that they've met a man who has designed a STAR WARS spaceship? A whole scene on Tatooine? A lightsabre? AN ACTUAL LIGHTSABRE USED IN STAR WARS FILMS!?!?!?

That's exactly what happened - to about a lucky hundred of us - when the Art Department was visited by Star Wars Concept artist extraordinaire, Vincent Jenkins!

Mr Jenkins was kind enough to give his awe-struck audience a glimpse into the career and world of a man who has been instrumental in designing the

iconic worlds, people, spaceships and objects of our beloved STAR WARS universe. He spoke with passion about his amazing work, some of which you can see here: <https://www.artstation.com/vincentjenkins>

It might have been a tight squeeze, but the hundred or so pupils crammed into the Art room will never forget this experience. Just in the same way that Vincent will never forget being an actual Stormtrooper in 'Rogue One'! We cannot thank you enough, Mr Jenkins!

Mayoral Christmas Card

Christmas Card Winners Extraordinaire!

When the Mayor of Wallingford, Ros Lester, contacted us to ask whether our students would be interested in designing the Mayoral Christmas Card this year, we were naturally thrilled.

We ran a competition and had the Mayor in to help us do the impossible - pick an actual winner. It did turn out to be impossible. I think it took us an hour to whittle down all of the wonderful entries to the final few. Then we found we couldn't pick between the last two - so both were sent off to be professionally printed!

Here are the proud, talented winners with their beautiful Christmassy designs. Well done to Iniya, Year 7 and Emily, Year 9!

- Mr Bowen, Head of Art





Enriching Experiences in English

It's been a busy term in English! We've had trips to Stratford, Aylesbury and a Debate competition! The students have written about their experiences:

Year 12 and 13 visit to see 'Measure for Measure' at the RSC Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon:

Our excitement was unmeasurable! We were on the minibus singing, playing games, chatting about how thrilled we were that we had this amazing opportunity. Even Alexis was excited (although she thought we were going to Stratford, London, not Stratford-upon-Avon). When we arrived, we were tasked with buying food, in which we scavenged M&S and McDonald's as a class. It was extremely yummy and we left a good review due to the lovely hospitality of Stratford citizens. We enjoyed each other's company, with a scenic view of the river while making vivid memories. Now for the good part... the show was in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, and we must say it was a brilliant venue. It was an absolute marvel from the staff to the seats; everything was top tier. We had a great view of the stage to allow us to be fully encapsulated into the show. The acting was phenomenal and we felt immersed in the experience, and although it's not one of the texts we study, it was interesting to see another Shakespeare production and feel richly bonded with each other. Big thanks to Mrs Harding for driving and Mr Cross for being there to take the photo of us at the end, it was amazing and we would highly recommend it. Overall a brilliant, well organised experience and we had so much fun as a class, it allowed us to connect deeply and have fun in our natural habitat – literature! Looking forward to the Lake District trip in July ...

- Florence Oldfield and Will Venn, Year 12



Year 8 visit to see 'The BFG' at the RSC Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon:

The BFG trip was amazing. The performance was so good to watch, it was so detailed, even down to the puppets. The actors and puppets were really enjoyable to watch. It was in Stratford-upon-Avon in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre which was really nicely designed. Overall the trip was incredible, and I enjoyed going with my classmates and peers.

- Imogen, Madeleine and Erin, Year 8

Year 7 visit to see 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' at the Waterside Theatre, Aylesbury:

As soon as I and my classmates walked in it was amazing. The stage was full of light and there was a man in the middle playing the piano making beautiful tunes. Then it started. Many people ran onto the stage singing the most beautiful song about people who had to move to the countryside during the war time.

After these few main bits some of my favourite parts were when the Queen came onto stage and she had this most beautiful robe on and ice all around her. I also enjoyed when the four siblings met the beavers. Lastly, these people walked on with heads that looked like monsters. It was a little bit scary but very cool. Overall I thought the play had amazing lighting in many parts and the story was just emotional and wonderful.

- Maddie, Year 7



Student Leadership In Full Swing...

Since September, the student leadership team has been in full swing with our responsibilities and the improvements we're working to bring to the school. We've been hosting daily form representative meetings, which have seen a fantastic turnout from engaged and enthusiastic students. It's been inspiring to hear so many thoughtful ideas about how we can make our school even better. If you'd like to share your ideas or learn more about what goes on behind the scenes, please speak to your form tutor about joining our form representative team.

Recently, we had the opportunity to represent the school at a heritage crime conference in Wallingford Town Hall, hosted by the council. It was a valuable experience to contribute our perspectives as young people on issues affecting the town and the surrounding areas. Following the event, the council reached out to collaborate with a group of history students to help make Wallingford's history more accessible and widely understood, and to explore how we could do so. The council would also like us to advertise their wonderful Youth Council opportunity. See further details on how to apply.


We hosted a vibrant and hugely successful Culture Day, where many students showcased their heritage through traditional dress, baking, and delicious foods for everyone to enjoy. We hope you

WALLINGFORD TOWN
COUNCIL

YOUTH COUNCIL

AGED 15-18?
HAVE YOUR SAY
IN 2025/2026

PLAN PROJECTS
LEARN SKILLS
HAVE FUN!



FEEL LIKE JOINING?
VISIT
WWW.WALLINGFORDTOWNCOUNCIL.GOV.UK/YOUR-COUNCIL/WALLINGFORD-YOUTH-COUNCIL/

CLOSING DATE:
31ST OCTOBER
2025



loved it as much as we did, and we would love to see this become an annual tradition.

We also organised a very successful donation drive for the Wallingford Emergency Food Bank, collecting festive-themed items. By the time you're reading this, we will have done our second collection of regular food parcels, which we're hoping will be as successful as the first! We're grateful to everyone who has contributed - your support truly makes a difference, and the food bank sends its thanks!

Waste management has been another key focus for us. To help improve recycling habits across the school, we've designed informative posters that will soon be displayed in classrooms to remind everyone what can and cannot be recycled. Accurate waste disposal is essential, and we appreciate everyone's effort in helping us keep the school clean and environmentally responsible.

In the Sixth Form, we've created a new resource centre filled with past students' work and revision materials for all students to use.

If you have any questions, please email us at studentleaders@wallingfordschool.com



- Student Leadership Group

Wallingford Christmas



What's more festive than eating a mince pie, listening to 'Last Christmas' and fretting about running out of wrapping paper? The Wallingford Christmas Tree, that's what!

This tree is the proud emblem of Christmas standing right in the centre of our wonderful town. When the Mayor asked the Art Department to supply paintings to surround the tree this year, we jumped at the chance!

Mr Hinchliffe's drawing expertise, Mrs Williams' organisational skills and the painting talent of Year 12 A Level artists made the vision come alive. We are proud of the results. Why not pop into town and have a look? It will make you feel more festive than a turkey wearing a Christmas Wham! jumper. And that's festive.

- Mr Bowen, Head of Art



as Tree





A Musical Ensemble...

We have had a very busy time in Music!

In November, 57 GCSE Music students visited the Royal Festival Hall for an interactive concert with the world-famous London Philharmonic Orchestra. They guided us through detailed musical analysis with quizzes, and students sharpened their listening skills. The programme included the third movement of J.S. Bach Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, where students watched a harpsichord being played, the beautiful first movement of Bartók's Hungarian Pictures, and students could perform with the orchestra in the minimalist music by Steve Reich.

We also heard music by Tchaikovsky, Coleridge-Taylor, taking us from the Romantic period to the 20th century, covering themes and terminology relevant to the exam board. There was some film music by the most iconic film composers of all time, and a multitude of timbre techniques played and explained in Saariaho's Forty Heartbeats (1998).

Tilda, Year 10, said, *"It was a fantastic experience to witness a live orchestra!"*

Alicia, Year 10, said, *"My favourite piece was the Hungarian Dance by Bartók, especially the clarinet solo."*

Harry, Alex and Edward, Year 11, said, *"It was highly enjoyable and a great educational experience that will definitely help us in our exam."*





A few weeks ago, our Year 7s were treated to a concert by the Huw Wiggins Saxophone Quartet! At the end, students took part in a Q&A, where they answered musical questions relating to what they have learnt about orchestral instruments in term 1 and their knowledge of musical elements in term 2.

A big thank you to Huw Wiggins Saxophone Quartet, and to the Wallingford Chamber Music who funded the experience as part of their 40th anniversary celebration.



All our ensemble groups are in full rehearsal mode at the moment, from Clarinet Group, String Ensemble, Brass Ensemble, KS3 Choir and our amazing new Percussion Ensemble, who performed for the first time at our Christmas Concert. We had a wonderful range of performances, including KS3 students playing Christmas music on the piano, Year 10s duetting on vocals, the KS3 Choir debuting their new uniform and singing energetically, and all our fantastic ensembles! At the end of the concert all musicians performed with the audience singing "We Wish you a Merry Christmas!"

The Christmas Concert was a huge success raising £500, which will go towards a xylophone for our new Percussion Ensemble! Thank you for your kind donations!



The KS3 Choir performed four times in the weeks leading to Christmas Holidays: at Sotwell Hill House; the Town Centre with Cholsey Silver Band; alongside the Mayor hosting the Wallingford Christmas Lights; and for Style Acre at St Mary's Church, where they used Makaton sign language.

Members of the Chamber Choir performed with Benson Choral Society at Dorchester Abbey. And what better way to start the Christmas season than with Benson Choral Society's amazing performance of J S Bach's Christmas Oratorio! Bach made this compilation from the series of 6 cantatas written in Leipzig for the Christmas feast-days in 1734/5. It's a powerful account of the Christmas Story. The choir was accompanied by Baroque instruments of the renowned period orchestra 'Instruments of Time and Truth', and a quartet of sparkling soloists.

The final performance will be at the





Christmas end-of-term whole school assembly. The KS3 choir and Bigg Band will be performing 'All I want for Christmas' with Iris Anderson singing the solo part.

Wow what a busy term, and we are now planning next term with the KS3 Live Lounge kicking off proceedings on the 12th January.

- Ms Hammond, Head of Music





UKMT Challenges

UKMT challenges have already started this year for Sixth Form students and there have been some exciting additions to the calendar.

The Mathematical Olympiad for Girls was accompanied by the Mathematical Competition for Girls this year. The aim of these challenges is to close the gender gap in students choosing to study maths at a higher level. The introduction of the Mathematical Competition for Girls allows even more girls to take part. Three students took part in the Olympiad, a challenging 2.5 hour question paper designed to challenge the highest ability students. All 3 students received a certificate of merit. Well done to Orla McNulty, Grace Smyth and Jessie Clayton. 12 students took part in the 90-minute competition. Georgia Masters received a certificate of distinction which is an amazing achievement. Melissa Loyd, Elodie Hall-Palmer, Emily Byron, Yisha Jacobson, Madeleine Cornut and Lucy McCalla all received a certificate of merit. A huge well done to all those who took part.

October saw the Senior maths challenge for sixth form students. 63 students took part, with 28 bronze, 18 silver and 8 gold certificates gained. 8 students qualified for the next round with Douglas Blake, Joshua Skeels, Celyn Marriot, Rohan Clark, Nazar Mykhailenko, Samuel Harpham and Ben Godfrey qualifying for the senior Kangaroo gaining 3 bronze and 2 silver certificates. Charles Mortimer qualified for the British Olympiad – a massive achievement! We still await his results as marking of this tricky challenge takes UKMT's volunteers a long time.

This year also saw the return of the senior team maths challenge for the first time since



Covid. A team of two Year 12 and two Year 13 students travelled to Matthew Arnold School to compete against other schools from around Oxfordshire. They had a great day surrounding themselves with like minded students and teachers from other schools. Well done Charles Mortimer, Matthew Hindle, Jessie Clayton and Harvey Brewer.

Well done to all of the sixth formers who have taken part. The next challenge is intermediate for Years 9, 10 and 11 in January.

- Miss Pratt, Teacher of Maths



Wellbeing in Nature



Art in the Park Exhibition

Rosie is a WINNER!

If you were ever lucky enough to meet Rosie, you'd know she was a winner straight away. However, she's proved it again by winning in Howbery Park's prestigious Art in the Park competition!

Responding to the theme, 'Wellbeing in Nature', Rosie created a postcard sized bumblebee, doing what it does best, to win the 12-18 category. Very well-deserved and such charming work!

Rosie won a generous prize and so did this very Art Department. Thank you Howbery Park for your generosity! We're going to buy some special printmaking materials! We've no idea what Rosie is going to spend her money on. Blending sticks?!? Probably. She's obsessed with the things.

Animal Exhibition at the Oxfordshire Museum

Isla (Year 13), Daisy (Year 10) AND Ruby (Year 7) are exhibiting some of their fine, fine paintings in an 'Animal' themed exhibition at the Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock.

Isla has opted for a beautiful, large, colourful painting of an Owl, which was springing from her brother's hand at an experience at Millets Farm. Look how she's brought new, expressive colours to the fore! The sheer energy! I wouldn't have used blue. She used blue. Isla was RIGHT!

Ruby drew this INCREDIBLE drawing of her cat, Dodger. Ruby said, 'It's my adorable cat Dodger who is my favourite animal. I have loved producing this artwork and hope you all enjoy it as I do.'

I agree with every word. It's also true that all the best cats in Wallingford are called Dodger. Controversial but true.

Daisy has chosen to make a highly detailed painting of a Thames duck with her chicks. This is a masterclass in control and detail! Wow. Every centimetre of this surface is accounted for and cared for. Imagine even thinking of doing this painting!

And congratulate these amazing talents if you see them. They deserve it!

- Mr Bowen, Head of Art





Debate Success

Year 11 Debate Team through to the next round of the English Speaking Union's Debate Competition:

KS4 Debate Club Success or A Soup-er Debate Success

In November, the KS4 Debate team (Joseph, Jasmine, Thomas, Edward and Daisy) took part in the English Speaking Union's MACE competition, the oldest and largest debating competition for schools in England and Wales. We were chosen as the opposition for the topic "This house would ban dating and relationship-based reality TV". This meant we had the tricky task of coming up with reasons why dating shows should not be banned. Together, we spent a few weeks beforehand researching and developing ideas and evidence for our case, eventually coming up with three main points for the argument.

The competition was held at Bradfield College, who were very hospitable hosts, providing us with a range of excellent food, particularly the soup (was three bowls too much?). We were paired against Langtree School, who presented some excellent arguments on the effects of reality shows on contestants' mental wellbeing, and fought against Wallingford with a well-thought-through case. Thank you to them for such brilliant competition.

At the end of the night, the all-important scores came in from the judges, and although there was some confusion over a misspelling of the school, Wallingford was announced as going through to the next round.

Thank you to Mrs Harding for her excellent mentoring so far. The team feels we have learnt a lot from this experience and we're excited to take this new knowledge into the next section of the competition.

- Edward Wilcox, Year 11

My Neighbour Totoro

On Thursday the 13th of November, Year 11 Drama students went on an unforgettable school trip to see the play 'My Neighbour Totoro' at Drury Lane, in central London.

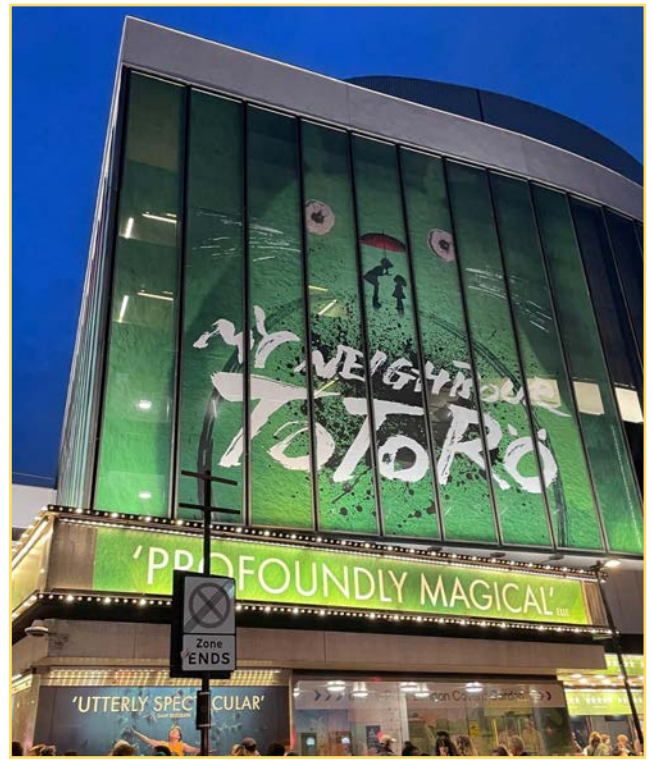
Leaving school during period 2, we arrived in London in time for the 2:00 start, with the play running for two and a half hours (including the interval) meaning that we arrived back at school very late: around 7pm!

The play, based off the Studio Ghibli animated movie of the same name, focuses on two sisters, Mei and Satsuki, who have moved from Tokyo to the Japanese countryside and learn to embrace the supernatural spirits that live in the countryside with them. The spirits involved some outstanding puppetry, with an ensemble of puppeteers moving covertly around the stage and blending in with the background while controlling their characters. Perhaps 14 months (so far) of learning terminology of stage directions, acting techniques and costume design (to mention just a few of the topics in GCSE Drama) allowed me to see the play through a whole different lens of well-thought-out design and planning. In particular, the immersive set with gnarled trees and treehouses around the edges gave the illusion of being in the forest- and the trees even moved further into the stage when the characters were exploring beyond the village, deeper into the forest.

All of the class thoroughly enjoyed the trip. Eliza said: "I thought the puppets and set were really creative. The ensemble work and the band were so good too!" Jasmine thought that "it was a very magical production that brought the characters to life incredibly well". Even Jacob, who admitted that he wouldn't want to see the play again, said: "The puppetry was spectacular and I enjoyed the movement of the set on its turntable."

However, the trip served a greater purpose than simply sitting back and enjoying the show. In the final exam, 25% of the exam consists of questions about the show you watch, so the excursion was, in fact, a crucial part of our GCSEs. Despite this, the trip has definitely been one of my favourite school trips so far, and, given the chance, I would definitely watch the play again and bask in the ingenuity and suspense of the production.

- **Callum Reynolds, Year 11**



This Is What You Get



Radiohead Exhibition

Year 12 and Year 13 artists and photographers visited the RADIOHEAD exhibition at the Ashmolean in September. Oh, my goodness. It doesn't matter whether you're a Radiohead ULTRA or have only maybe, possibly heard of them, maybe, dunno... this exhibition is GOOOOOOD!

Our talented photographers and artists went there to steal ideas. And they did. And we love them for it.

So ALL HAIL THE THIEF!

And our amazing 6th Form artists.





Marvelling at Modern Art

Year 10 & 12 Artists Visit Tate Modern

CRIKEY, WE'RE LUCKY! We can just get on a coach on a Monday morning and end up spending the day at TATE MODERN! And that's just what nearly 150 Year 10 and Year 12 artists and photographers did this week.

We came to marvel, to enjoy, to taste, to explore, to shop, to look, to sip, to see and, above all, steal some fine, fine ideas from some of the greatest artists that ever lived.

Everyone enjoyed themselves. Everyone came back a better person. And that includes the teachers.

We LOVE the TATE.



German Exchange

Ezra McHugh & Will Venn, Year 12

Englisch

We got to school at 5am, and got on the bus. We were all tired, but excited for the exchange! We swiftly passed through security, with no problems. This left us time to buy food, and look around the shops. When we arrived in Bad Wurzach, we had a tour of the town. It was really interesting to see the historic side of the town. We learnt about the history of the castle in Bad Wurzach, and the connections it had with World War 2. We also learnt about the benefits of a marsh in Bad Wurzach - recreation, health and beauty. We walked through the park and saw beautiful landscapes. We then met our exchange partners, back at the school. They were all super friendly, and super welcoming. We all went home, played games and got to know our partners.

The next day, we all woke up early and made our way to school for a morning of lessons with our partners. The lessons were very different. They used Ipads for writing, and mostly stayed in the same classroom. It was very interesting to see these differences. Then we had free time in Bad Wurzach - we explored the shops and supermarkets. One thing that was really interesting to us was the Pfandsystem. You put your empty bottles in, and it gives you a deposit back - a great environmental initiative! That afternoon we spent more time getting to know our partners.

We are writing this on Wednesday, and are very much looking forward to the rest of the week! We are going to visit Christmas markets in Munich and Lindau. We are also excited to ride to Pfänderbahn. On Saturday, we will have a free day with our families, before returning to England on Sunday.

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A big thank you to all of our outstanding teachers, and of course Frau König, for organising this exchange. Without them, this would not be able to happen.



Deutsch

Wir sind um 5:00 Uhr in der Schule angekommen, und wir gingen im Bus. Wir waren alle super müde, aber auch aufgeregt für den Austausch. Wir gingen schnell durch die Flughafensicherheit, mit keinen Problemen. Wir hatten Zeit, um Essen zu kaufen und um die Geschäfte zu sehen. Als wir in Bad Wurzach angekommen sind, hatten wir eine Tour der Stadt. Es war hochinteressant, die historischen Aspekt der Stadt zu sehen. Wir haben über die Geschichte der Schloss in Bad Wurzach gelernt, und auch wir haben über die Verbindungen dieses Schloss mit die zweite Welt Krieg gelernt. Bad Wurzach ist eine Kurstadt, und wir haben über die Vorteile der Zumpf in der Stadt gelernt -Erholung, Gesundheit und Schönheit. Wir sind durch den Park gewandert, um atemberaubende Landschaften zu sehen. Zurück in der Schule, haben wir unsere Austauschpartner/Austauschpartnerin getroffen. Sie war super freundlich. Wir sind zu ihren Häuser gegangen, um sie besser kennenzulernen.



Im nächstem Tag, haben wir uns früh aufgewacht und gingen in die Schule für Morgen Unterrichten mit unseren Partner. Der Unterricht war super anders als England. Sie nutzte iPads für Schreibung und blieb im gleichen Klassenzimmer. Es war sehr interessant, diesem Unterschiede zu sehen. Nachdem wir Freizeit in Bad Wurzach hatten. Wir erforscht die Geschäfte und Supermärkte. Ein Sache, die hochinteressant war, war das Pfandsystem. Sie stellen alte Flaschen in die Maschine, und sie bekommen ein Pfand - eine tolle Umwelt-Initiative! Im Nachmittag, wir haben mehr Zeit mit unseren Partner verbringen.

Wir schreiben diesen Artikel am Mittwoch, und freuen uns für die übrige Woche! Wir werden den Weihnachtsmarkt in München und Lindau besuchen. Wir freuen uns auch die Pfänderbahn zu rodeln. Am Samstag werden wir Freizeit mit unseren Austauschfamilie haben. Am Sonntag werden wir zurück nach England fahren.

Dankeschön zu unserem unglaubliche Lehrerin und natürlich Frau König, die diesen Austausch organisiert hat. Ohne sie könnten wir diesen Austausch nicht machen.



German Exchange in Pictures...

We had a fantastic week on the German Exchange and there were many tears when we said goodbye to the German partners on Sunday! We look forward to their return visit to us in Wallingford in July.

- Mrs McGarrick, Head of MFL





6F Social Committee Round-up



A jam-packed way to start the year, Social Committee have really embraced Sixth Form's community spirit, kickstarting the year with bake sales: raising a whopping £189 for Macmillan, and £100 for World Mental Health day supporting Mind Oxfordshire. We hosted our Autumn bake-off, which saw some brilliant entries from our Year 12 and 13s.

Sixth Form have shown their support throughout the last two terms, watching and taking part in the first XV rugby, first XI girls football and mixed hockey. This included wins across all 3 sports – congratulations to all that took part! There has also been an excellent participation in the 6-side football – congrats to Call'em County on being the overall winners! In term 2, we celebrated cultures on the whole school culture day, we learnt much more about countries such as Fiji, China and the Philippines; thank you to those who took part.



We saw our term 1 with a trip to Thorpe Park for Fright Night, students say "it was a great trip, a real way to end term 1." We took a trip to watch Mamma Mia theatre show in November. Throughout the last few weeks, we have also been selling hot chocolates at Friday break time, which has been popular with many students – especially during the colder days. Coming up at the end of term 2, we are hosting Christmas Bingo, Christmas Raffle with prizes from our local businesses and our annual Winter Ball.

Looking ahead to next term, social committee are currently planning pyjamarama day for Children with Cancer UK and other exciting events.

Merry Christmas from the Sixth Form Social Committee!



Highlight Of My Year!

My voyage on board TS Royalist from the 15th to the 21st of November has proven to be the highlight of my year! From sailing skilfully across the English Channel, gaining my Offshore Hand Two qualification, and forming family-like bonds with the 22 other cadets on-board, the cold that was constantly nipping at my fingers and the constant rocking of the boat paled in comparison.

Throughout my journey from Gosport to Cowes, docking in Poole Harbour, traversing back to Cowes — a journey prolonged a day due to stormy weather — then helming TS Royalist back into Gosport, was an interesting and worthwhile venture to say the least. “Bracing stations!” is often screamed when sailing TS Royalist, requiring all cadets to abandon their tasks and muster at their assigned stations on the foredeck to help control the sails (t’gallant, topsail, and the course) perched upon twin masts, and to heave the various handling lines like the clewline, buntlines, and leechlines, all equipped with different functions.

Overall, this trip has reignited my passion to join the Navy as a Hydrographer, as the community, teamwork, and knowledge gained have forever altered my life.



- Corrie Gordon, Year 13



2026: The National Year Off to a Flying Start!

It's been an action-packed first term in the library, and what a great start to the National Year of Reading! Borrowing has soared, with term one loans more than **four times higher** than the same period last year. A big part of this success? Our refreshed **graphic novel and manga section**, which has been a runaway hit. Books are flying off the shelves faster than ever.

Summer Reading Challenge Winners

We kicked off the year by celebrating our Summer Reading Challenge winners. Congratulations to Martha in Year 8, who scooped a £10 book token, and well done to all our runners-up who received prizes for their fantastic efforts.

Graphic Novels and Manga: A Game-Changer

We have a great selection of graphic novels and manga in the library, which have been riotously popular with our students. This is the first time we've seen students run to the library at lunchtime so they can grab the next volume before their friends! Graphic novels aren't just fun; they boost reading confidence, support visual learners and give a sense of achievement to those who find text-only books daunting. But they're not only for reluctant readers; they offer huge benefits for all.

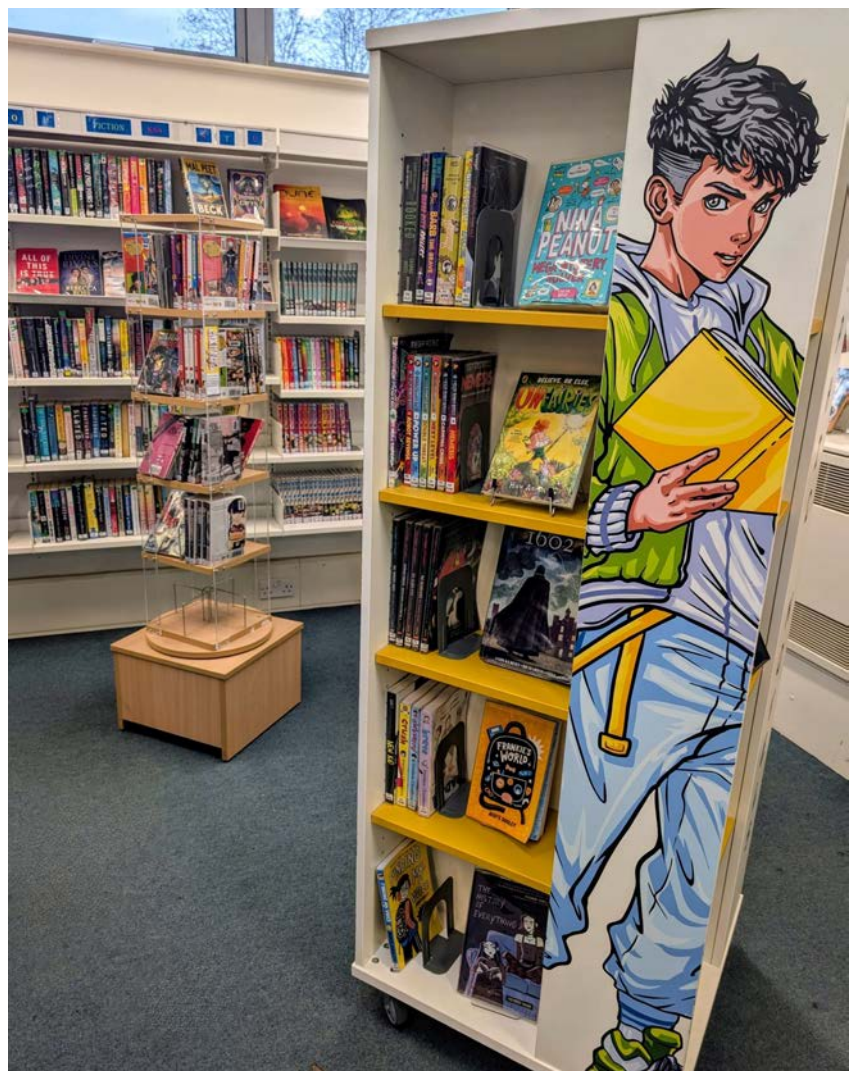
Read more: <https://readingagency.org.uk/reading-crisis-well-not-among-comic-readers/>

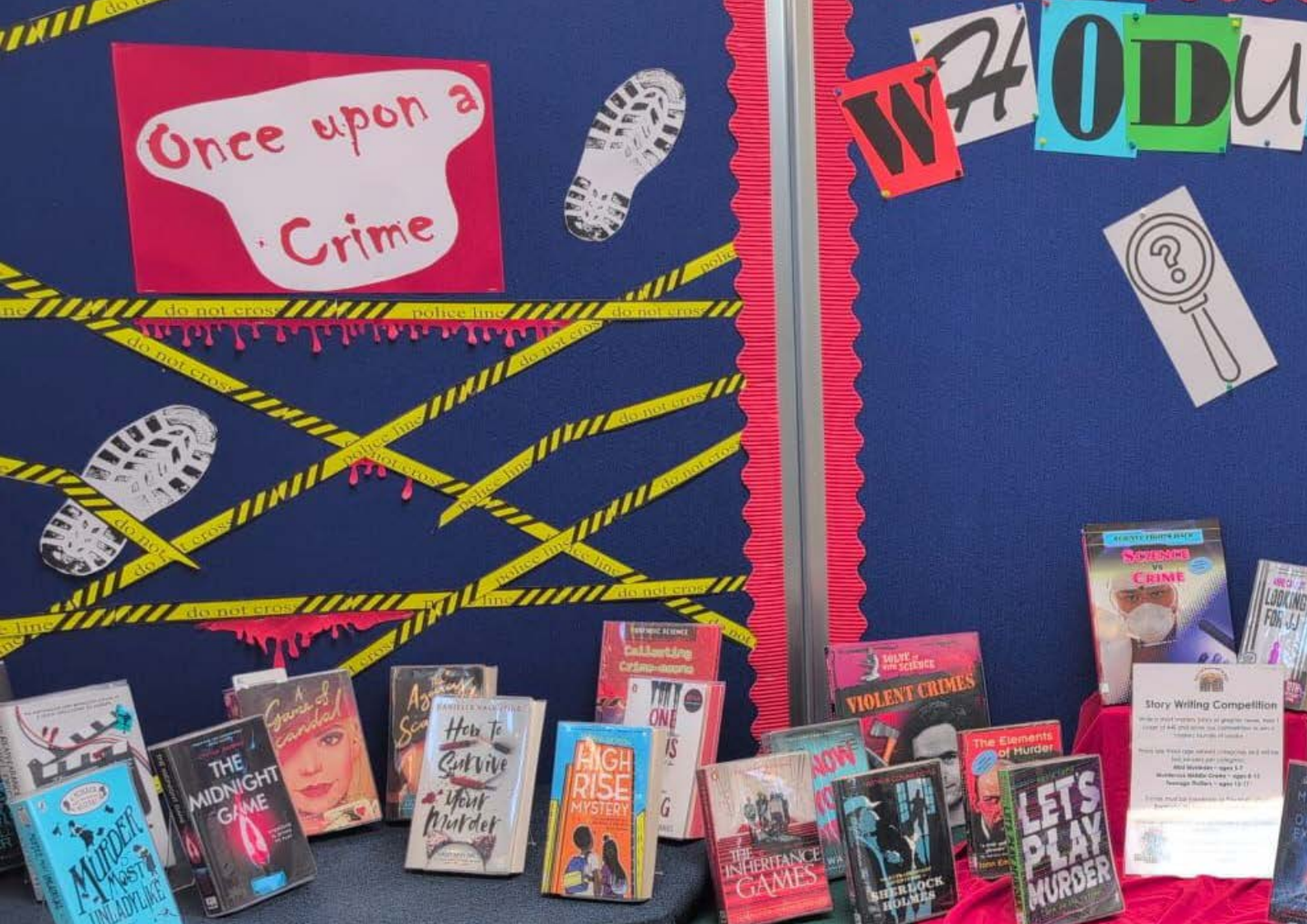


Tip for Parents: Graphic novels can be pricey, especially when your child devours them quickly! We're constantly updating our shelves, but for holidays, try Oxfordshire Library's Libby app. With a library card, you can access thousands of titles, including popular graphic novels like:

- Wings of Fire
- Avatar: The Last Airbender
- Emmie and Friends
- Amulet
- Babysitters' Club
- ...and more!

Take a look at our new graphic novel and Manga shelving!



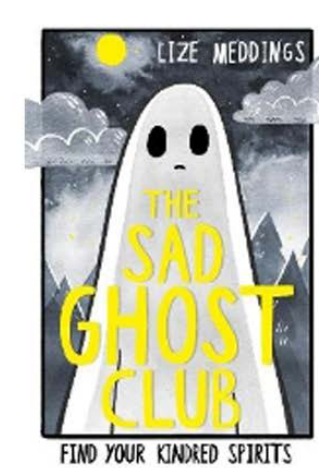
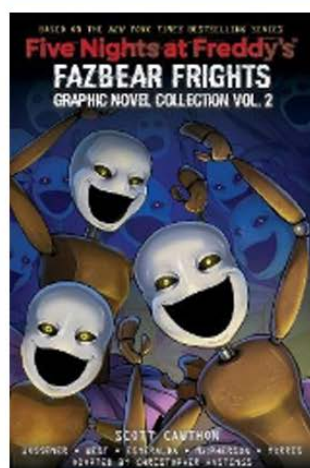
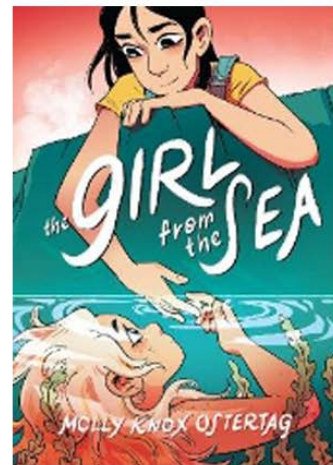
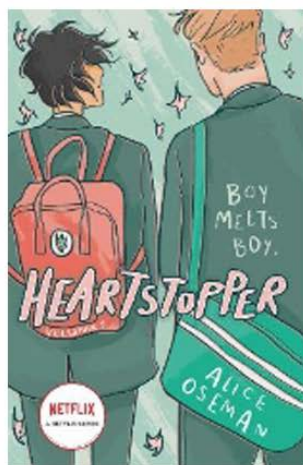


Library Highlights

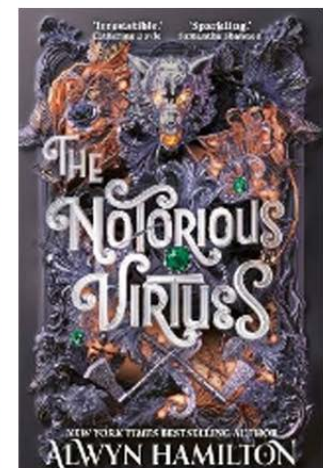
- Library Lessons: Years 7 and 8 have been discovering new reads and building a love of reading.
- Displays: Murder Mystery, Bookflix, Black History Month, Halloween, Remembrance and of course our Christmas display complete with our resident gonk!
- Competitions: The Murder Mystery Creative Writing Contest, in partnership with Wallingford Bookshop and the local community.
- Author Visit: October brought a special treat – Brían Dungan inspired Year 7 with his stories. Huge thanks to Wallingford Bookshop for making this possible free of charge.
- Reading Buddies: We're proud to support SEN with their Year 7 and Year 12 reading buddy scheme, and love seeing reluctant readers get stuck into a good book.



Most Popular Books in Our Library



New to Our Shelves



Get Involved: Book Reviews

Speaking of which, over Christmas, we're introducing rewards for reviews posted on our Reading Cloud library system. Share your thoughts for house points and a chance to win bookish prizes!

Log in here: <https://u010607.microlibrarian.net/>

Username: school email (xxxx@wallingfordschool.com)

Password: date of birth (DDMMYYYY)

If you have problems logging on, just jot your review down on paper and drop it into the library after the holidays.

- Ms Hanley & Mrs Saunders, School Librarians

Young Carers

On Thursday 4th December, 55 young carers from Wallingford School, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Primary, Crowmarsh Primary, St John's Primary and Aylesbury UTC visited The Corn Exchange in Wallingford for the annual young carers Christmas film. Everyone enjoyed eating snacks, wearing Christmas jumpers and watch the animated version of The Grinch. Staff across the schools said, "Students were thrilled to have an opportunity to have a special experience just for them!"



We enjoy celebrating how wonderful our young carers are, and how much they do for others.

If you think your child may be a young carer, please email emmersonr@wallingfordschool.com for more information on how we can support within school.



On 15 November a group of 14 students from Year 10 to Year 13 arrived bright and early outside a drizzly Oxford Crown Court to participate in the Young Citizens' Bar Mock Trial competition. Although we enter a team of Year 8 and 9 students in the Magistrates' Mock Trial every year, this was a new venture and a chance for some of those who had experienced mock trials lower down the school to hone their skills further on more serious cases. The team had had less than two months to prepare the prosecution and defence sides for two different cases, one involving someone accused of dealing drugs, and another with the defendant accused of threatening a noisy neighbour with a gun. Our students took on the roles of lawyers, witnesses, defendant, jury, and court staff, competing against teams from across the south east of England. Although we didn't walk away as regional winners, the team did themselves proud, and we received positive comments about how well-prepared and professional they were, as well as a bright future predicted for the acting careers of some of our witnesses! The day ended with a fascinating Q&A session with two practising barristers, who shared tips on getting into the profession and stories of memorable moments from their careers.

Here are some of the students' thoughts on their experience:

Being able to take part in the Bar Mock Trials was an incredibly fun and rewarding experience. Although law isn't particularly one of my interests, taking part in mock trials has been a highlight of my year every time I've done it. I have always loved drama and through playing the roles of lawyer and witness over the years, I've been blessed with the opportunity to enrich my skills in teamwork, persuasive writing, improvisation and public speaking. In



this particular competition I played a defence witness, a part more on the drama side, which as a drama student I found incredibly enjoyable.

The day itself ran smoothly for the most part and was first and foremost a pleasure. The other schools competing were friendly and everyone exhibited great sportsmanship. Although we didn't end up winning, each member of the team worked hard, did excellently and was proud to represent their school. I truly felt I got a lot out of this experience and I'm glad I was able to tackle my anxiety and have an amazing day out with my friends. I look forward to (hopefully) doing it again next year!

- Eliza Lombos, Year 11

For me, Mock Trials was a great experience which I am looking forward to doing again. This was the second time I have done it yet I was still looking forward to the event for weeks before it was happening and was just really excited for the whole thing. When I arrived, the atmosphere of the court and everybody dressed up in suits and ties wowed me, as it has done before, and the professionalism was evident in the room. The young citizens leaders ran the event smoothly and we all had a great time in the courtrooms and also talking to other schools. I think it's an amazing opportunity to have at Wallingford school (or any school for that matter) and I highly recommend it to people looking at law-based jobs or anyone else.

- Thomas Pool, Year 11



House Events

Terms 1 and 2 have once again demonstrated the strength, creativity and competitive spirit of our House system, with students across all year groups engaging enthusiastically in a wide range of academic, creative and sporting activities.

We began the year by promoting leadership and academic excellence through a number of key initiatives. Our Language Leaders played an important role in supporting learning and encouraging participation within their houses, while the ever-popular Mastermind Quiz Show provided students with the opportunity to showcase their knowledge, teamwork and quick thinking. Our Year 7 Tutor Board Displays were a particular highlight, with impressive creativity and effort shown by our newest students, helping them to quickly feel part of the wider House community.

One of the most significant and meaningful moments of the year was the creation of our Annual Poppy Mural. As always, this was approached with the correct tone, respect and commitment, resulting in a powerful and memorable tribute that reflected both creativity and understanding. This was complemented by our Poppy sales, which raised over £100 for the Royal British Legion, supporting an important national cause.

Creativity continued to flourish through competitions and enrichment opportunities. The Merchant Taylors' Photo Competition once again saw both students and staff achieve podium placements—an outstanding accomplishment that highlights the exceptional talent within our school. The Christmas Card Design Competition also produced a wealth of imaginative and high-quality entries.

As we moved closer to Christmas, the House system truly came alive with a range of much-loved traditions. House Christmas Tree Decorations, Tutor Room Door Designs, and the now-famous Christmas Duck Search brought fun, collaboration and friendly rivalry, helping to strengthen relationships and end the term on a high.



Alongside these events, students consistently contributed to their houses through our staple competitions and rewards. Attendance points, weekly form quizzes, and house sporting fixtures ensured sustained engagement throughout the terms. House matches in Rugby for the boys and Hockey and Netball for the girls were played with enthusiasm, teamwork and excellent sportsmanship.

A further proud and defining feature of our school culture is the outstanding commitment to charitable work, both locally and further afield. This term, we were delighted to present a cheque for over £20,000 to Helen & Douglas House, raised through our summer sponsored walk—an incredible achievement that reflects the generosity and determination of our students, families and staff. In addition, students raised over £100 for the Royal British Legion through Poppy sales. More recently, the school community has shown remarkable kindness through a substantial collection for Sleigh 2 Give and our local food banks, ensuring vital support reaches those most in need.

I have loved seeing the huge amount of Satchel house points that have been collected and look forward to handing the house tie over to the new top scorer for Term 2 in the final assembly.

Overall, Terms 1 and 2 have been a tremendous success for the House system. The commitment, creativity and compassion shown by students and staff continue to strengthen our House community, and we are immensely proud of the positive impact our school has both within and beyond its walls.

- Mr Lyons, Head of House System



Warm feelings. They're all around us at this festive time of year, aren't they? You can get them from sipping hot chocolate, watching people opening presents that you've thoughtfully chosen, or just pretending you're out when you hear carol singers outside the door.

I personally get my warm feelings from thinking of all of the BIGG teamwork I've seen in action this year. From House Mastermind to World Languages day, from designing Christmas Cards for the Mayor of Wallingford to the Merchant Taylors' Photography Competition and from House Matches to the welcome return of those ducks, this has been a very successful term for BIGG.

As a team, we have welcomed our exciting new Year 12 House Ministers, Aimee, Nell, Nat and Ciaran. They all have specialities and talents that they bring to the BIGG table. The future looks very bright and the future looks very BLUE with them on our side. We have also seen a lot of new talent in the team as everyone in BIGG strives to do their bit for the House. All of the Christmas Card designs, wonderful photographs for the competition and brave entrants in the House Mastermind competition attest to this.

We all have a part to play and I really look forward to seeing more and more new faces take part in the many House events planned for 2026.

#BIGGISBEAUTIFUL #BIGGISBETTER #THISISABIGGYEAR

- Mr Bowen, Bigg House Leader



What a fantastic year it has been so far! Although I've been part of the Blackstone family for a while now, this has been my first full year as House Leader, and what a privilege it has been. Seeing the pride, determination and positivity you bring to every competition, charity event and challenge has reminded me daily why Blackstone is such an incredible house to lead.

Our brilliant Year 12 House Captains Jessie, Skye, Andrew, Lydia and Alice deserve huge recognition for all their enthusiasm and leadership this year. Whether they've been rallying forms, helping organise House teams, or adding a sprinkle of Blackstone flair to our events, they've been absolutely outstanding. Thank you all for your hard work and spirit! It was particularly impressive seeing the incredible Remembrance Day board- a fantastic group effort.

Your generosity for Sleigh2Give has once again been inspiring. The number of donations coming in from Blackstone forms has shown just how thoughtful and community-minded you are. It's one of the things that makes this house truly special. Across the school, I've loved seeing so many of you get involved and give things a go.

As the Christmas season arrives, no doubt I'll be blown away by the creativity around the school, from decorated doors to festive form activities. I cannot wait to see you shine in the final events of the year. Let's carry that momentum forward and finish the term in true Blackstone style. We look forward to our final assembly on the last Friday of term.

Thank you for making my first full year as House Leader such a rewarding one. I'm so proud of everything you've achieved, and I'm incredibly excited for 2026.

- Miss Robinson, Blackstone House Leader

Christie has been buzzing with energy this term! First up, a huge shout-out to our brand-new House Captains: Libby, Tom, Zac, and Tom who are ready to lead us to even greater heights.

We've packed in so much fun and achievement, from smashing it in Master Mind (big cheers for Patrick in Year 8 and Thomas in Year 10 for taking the crown!) to creating our beautiful Poppy Mural, a true work of art that made us proud.

Christmas spirit has been everywhere, our stunning tree and those creative Christmas doors have brought festive vibes to the whole school. And yes, we've gone quackers for our Little Ducks in Santa hats (because who doesn't love a duck?), all while gearing up for the thrill of House Matches in the last week of term.

Christie, you've shown creativity, teamwork, and unstoppable energy. Let's keep that momentum going, let's aim higher, cheer louder, and make it our best yet!

- Ms Chamberlain, Christie House Leader



As 2025 comes to an end we can reflect on all the wonderful things we have achieved as a House this year! July saw us win the House Trophy for the THIRD year in a row, officially making it a Matilda HAT TRICK! That was down to you all putting in maximum effort inside and outside of lessons, taking part in competitions and generally being the best! While the overall scores were close in the end, we maintained a great level of engagement and success in a wide range of competitions and opportunities! Sports day was ours too, winning for the second year in a row with our ability to take part & filling places in races gaining us the advantage!!!

As we approach the Christmas break, we can hold our heads high for all the hard work you have been doing in lessons so far, especially for Year 11s having completed their Mock Exams in such a mature and productive way, and all the donations that have gone to the Sleigh2Give campaign and Wallingford Food Bank over the last few weeks really making a difference in the local community!

But Matilda! If we want to continue our successes, we need to make our New Year's Resolution to take part in as many competitions, collect as many House points as possible and make the most of ALL the opportunities offered to you! There are some great competitions coming in 2026 that are ours to WIN!!

While most people associate the colours GREEN or RED as Christmas colours, you continue to make Christmas YELLOW... In a big way!!! (not a Bigg way)
To everyone in Matilda I wish you a well-deserved break and let's get 2026 off to as impressive of a start as 2025!

- Mr Hinchliffe, Matilda House Leader



Satchel Point Totals

	Bigg	Blackstone	Christie	Matilda
Year 7	7135	3774	5023	5740
Year 8	5566	4270	5095	6311
Year 9	3935	3549	3072	3304
Year 10	2530	2488	2465	2490
Year 11	1800	1637	1427	1777
Sixth Form	651	710	686	620
Total	21617	16428	17768	20242

Top Point Scoring Students Term Two

Year 7	Minnie Deveson	120
Year 8	Amelie Gill	90
Year 9	Joe Fraser	71
Year 10	Alicia Gould	54
Year 11	Nathaniel Hopkins	37
Sixth Form	Nell Bowden	38

House Tie Holders - Top of House for Term Two

Bigg	Amelie Gill	90
Blackstone	Maddie Woolf	78
Christie	Minnie Deveson	120
Matilda	Ryan Marshall	119



Our Head Students, Orlagh and Wilfrid, at the annual Merchant Taylors' Doctors' Dinner at Merchant Taylors' Hall, London.

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year!



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Website: www.wallingfordschool.com | Social Media: @wallingford4140

Cover: Year 12 Politics Students Visit Westminster