

Wallingford School Newsletter

Spring Edition - March 2026



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Headteacher's Message



French Exchange, February 2026

The spring terms bring lighter days, buds and flowers and a sense of potential. I gave assemblies this term beginning on the subject of daffodils and the optimism that they bring and this positivity permeates our school.

It's been a busy term with fixtures and rehearsals, trips and visits, competitions and challenges and a whole lot more. We have been to France and Morocco and Belgium, to Silverstone and the Victoria and Albert Museum and Westminster Abbey; we have won, lost and drawn against many other schools and revelled in the end of term House matches.

And the centerpiece of all this extra-curricular and enrichment was our whole school production of *Legally Blonde* which was simply wonderful.

It's been equally busy in the classroom with Years 11 and 13 in particular working incredibly hard in preparation for their public examinations. Year 11 are focused and determined and impressing everyone while Year 13 are working towards university offers or other aims as the majority spend this week revising in the Lake District on the banks of Lake Windermere. They are all doing well and are well-supported and this bodes well for the summer.

A busy school is a happy school and that is Wallingford School as we start the Easter break and celebrate the vibrant life of our school in this newsletter.



- Mr Marston, Headteacher

In Conversation with Alex Yee



Wallingford School was delighted to welcome Olympic gold-medal-winning triathlete Alex Yee for a day of engaging talks and discussions with students in Years 11 and 13, as well as many of the school's most committed young athletes. The visit - made possible through the support of the Merchant Taylors' Company - proved to be a memorable and inspiring event for the whole community.

The morning session, aimed at Year 11 and 13 students, focused on the "life lessons" Alex has gained through his career as a high-performance athlete. He spoke about navigating challenges, managing pressure, and developing resilience - messages that resonated strongly with students approaching the final stages of their GCSE and A Level journeys.

Reflecting on this session, Year 13 students Wilfrid and Ronan said,

"Yesterday we had the privilege of being joined by Alex Yee, a Great British triathlon athlete and marathon runner... Alex spoke openly and generously about his experiences as an elite athlete and life beyond sport. He was an absolute inspiration, and I think we all took something valuable away from his visit."

Later in the day, Alex led a sports-science-focused discussion attended by around 100 of the school's top sports performers. This session explored the physiological, psychological, and technical demands of elite competition. Students were able to connect their academic studies with Alex's real-world experiences, gaining insight into how theory translates into practice.





Year 13 student Alexa reflected on the impact of both sessions:

“We welcomed Alex Yee, Olympic triathlete, for two insightful talks into the life of an elite athlete. In his talk, he shared about overcoming struggles like injury, dealing with motivation and finding a work-life balance... In the afternoon, A Level and BTEC Sport students were able to listen to a discussion between Alex and Mr Dodson, which looked at the sports science aspect of Alex’s life, which provided us with understanding in how learning points in our course can be applied to an athlete’s life.”

Throughout both sessions, Alex was friendly, open, and humorous. He fielded a wide range of questions - from the final metres of the Paris 2024 Olympic triathlon to his diet, training routines, recovery practices, and even lighter topics such as gaming (he enjoys Fortnite), avoiding energy drinks, and supporting Crystal Palace. His engaging and personable style made the experience enjoyable as well as informative.

Staff highlighted how much students benefited from the day, with many commenting on Alex’s humility, authenticity, and ability to speak meaningfully about both sport and life beyond it. The podcast-style format, led by Mr Lamb and Mr Dodson, helped to create a relaxed but thoughtful atmosphere that encouraged excellent conversation.

The school extends its sincere thanks to Alex Yee, his team, and the Merchant Taylors’ Company for making the event possible. Alex’s visit left a lasting positive impact on students and staff alike, offering inspiration not just for sporting success but for personal growth, determination, and balance in all aspects of life.



I LY MUN 2026



Wednesday 11th March 2026, 3.45am: ten students from Year 12 and one from Year 13 meet in the cover of darkness, waiting for the transfer to Lyon to begin. Nerves were rife with the anticipation of meeting host families and debating in new committees.

Once again, sunny Lyon delivered. After a delightful tour of downtown Lyon and unveiling the mysteries of the French Resistance, the party entered the magnificent buildings of the Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes where the student lead conference commenced. Surrounded by the awe-inspiring architecture, the team joined their fellow delegates from 30 schools across France, Germany and Denmark, and separated into their committees to debate world problems old and new on the theme “Justice in Motion: Building Trust, Protecting Rights”.

As always, the topics were perfectly current, with each committee having a crisis delivered to them by guest speakers – employees from INTERPOL, UN Women and political journalists. With the students tackling problems such as: How the current ceasefire in Yemen can be strengthened. What can be done to safeguard the rights of minorities, such as the Khoisan tribe who hold the secrets to cultivating Rooibos tea in South Africa? How can the UN Women ensure bodily autonomy and integrity for all? What can be done to ensure the sharing of global resources? How can INTERPOL act to stop transnational organised crime?

Additionally, this year we had 3 judges in the International Criminal Court who were presiding over the trial of Omar Al-Bashir – former President of the Republic of Sudan – who was charged with Crimes against humanity, War crimes and Genocide.



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Courageous speeches were made by all – trying to convince their fellow delegates to follow the ways of their country; even if that was Myanmar and the rights of women! Confidence was gained and friendships cemented. The exhausted delegates left having forged lasting memories.

- Mrs Jones

The students said:

“Before going to ILYMUN the only expectation was to improve my academics, however what I did not understand was that it would be the opportunity to meet amazing people from across Europe and what an incredible amount of confidence it takes to debate in front of such a large crowd of people. I have enjoyed my time at the Model UN and have made incredible friendships along the way too.” – **Cassia**

“Before I went to ILYMUN, I wasn’t sure what to expect, but from only 3 days in France I have learnt so much. In Lyon I made new friends, acquired new skills, explored the beautiful city (only getting lost a few times!), and had the best night at the party. Throughout the experience, I was surrounded by hundreds of people whose passion and confidence was inspiring. I would 100% recommend ILYMUN.” – **Rubymae**





Fundraising Recognition

I was recently invited to attend a Rotary Club meeting in Abingdon, where I gave a short speech about the fundraising challenges I completed in support of Cancer Research UK. I spoke about my 2,500 push-up marathon and 1,000 pull-up marathon, and together raised just under £1,500 for the charity.

It was a great opportunity to share the experience with members of the Rotary Club, who were extremely welcoming and supportive. I was presented with a certificate and medal in recognition of the fundraising.

The evening also highlighted the work of several other students who had carried out impressive charitable activities, from supporting their peers to raising money by donating their hair.

I'm very grateful to the school for selecting me to attend such a positive and inspiring event

- Ronan Cronk, Year 13

Magistrates' Mock Trial

On Saturday 14th March, thirteen of our Year 8 and 9 students had an early start as they gathered outside Oxford Crown Court before 9am for the annual Magistrates' Mock Trial competition.

The team, who have been preparing since the Autumn term, had to take on the roles of lawyers, magistrates, witnesses, legal advisor, and even the defendant, in a case involving a mobile phone snatched at speed by someone riding a rental bike. As ever, our students acquitted themselves impressively, with staff from opposing schools as well as competition judges commenting on how well they performed. Particular mention must go to Phoebe Armitage, who won the award for Best Defence Lawyer. Her award was presented by John Berry, the defence solicitor we had seen in action when we visited the magistrates' court to observe a trial in December.

Well done to all of the students who participated: Phoebe Armitage, Anna Bevington, Michael Bradford, Devon Hansen, Imogen Hoborough, Poppy Hope-Smith, Beth Newbold, Patrick Pitchers, Martha Redhead, Lizzie Sandland, Eloise Wager, Hannah Wilcox and Henry Young, as well as our dedicated reserves, especially Patrick Keane, Emilia Hague and Ava Hill.

- Ms Haworth-Walsh



Legally Blonde!



Wallingford School's production of Legally Blonde was such an amazing experience, and I'm so glad I got to be a part of it! It's always such an exciting opportunity to meet new people from other year groups, learn new skills, make new connections, and ultimately put on a show that everyone can be really proud of.

The cast, crew and staff involved with Legally Blonde worked tirelessly in and out of the spotlight: rehearsing, painting, building, sewing, rigging and much more for months - and I think it's fair to say that the hard work paid off! I loved being a part of the musical this year (and all the years before that!) because I always feel like there's a place for everyone and that I'll always be welcome in the Drama department and I'm really looking forward to whatever next year's show brings.



- Tilda Santer, Year 10



A Decade of Determination: The 10th Annual Ninja Warrior House Competition



This year marked a major milestone for our school as we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Ninja Warrior House Competition - and what a year it was! The event has grown tremendously since its early days, and this year's edition proved to be the biggest, boldest, and most demanding challenge yet.

A Gruelling Final Like No Other

The grand final featured 13 outstanding competitors, each earning their place after an intense qualifying round. To honour the 10-year celebration, the PE team unveiled what many are calling "the hardest course ever built" in the event's history. And the results speak for themselves:

Only 5 of the 13 finalists managed to complete the course and record an official time, highlighting just how tough the challenge was. Every competitor showed remarkable grit and resilience, battling through upper-body burners, balance tests, and time crunch pressure in front of a buzzing audience.

A Qualifying Round Full of Energy

Before the spotlight of the final, the qualifying round saw an incredible 60 students step forward to attempt the course. The energy was electric as students from all four houses pushed themselves in the hope of claiming one of the coveted finalist spots. The atmosphere captured exactly what the Ninja Warrior competition is all about: courage, determination, and House pride.



Raising Funds and Raising Spirits

One of the most inspiring aspects of the event was the community spirit displayed by both participants and spectators. Together, they helped raise money for our school's chosen charity, turning physical challenge into meaningful impact. Once again, Ninja Warrior demonstrated that our school community is strongest when we come together - whether that's to cheer each other on or to support causes bigger than ourselves.

Honouring Our Champions

This year also marked the introduction of the newly created Ninja Warrior Roll of Honour, a lasting tribute to individual excellence and exceptional achievement. The overall winner earned not only the individual title but also the prestige of having their name etched onto this permanent record - a legacy that will be celebrated for years to come.

2025: Seb B	2020: Connie E
2024: Peter FN	2019: Matt W
2023: Henry W	2018: Nat G
2022: Amelie B	2017: Albert H
2021: Albert H	2016: ??

Unfortunately, we don't have a record of the original winner in 2016! If anyone knows, please contact us!

A Celebration of House Spirit

While only one student can claim the individual prize, Ninja Warrior continues to be a true celebration of house unity and friendly rivalry. Throughout the competition, the four houses demonstrated tremendous sportsmanship, teamwork, and mutual encouragement - qualities that define the best of our school community.

- Mr Lyons, Head of House System





ART BYTES!

ART BYTES is a National Art Competition run ONLY for Year 9 students.

Our extra-talented Year 9 artists submitted some very inspirational work.

Every entrant gets their art exhibited in a display in a Virtual Gallery, professional artists pick winners from each school and then there are regional live events in the summer term.

The school with the most community engagement also gets a prize. That sounds like something Wallingford School could win, doesn't it? I think we are that sort of community, don't you?

From Fri 20th March – Sun 19th April 2026 you will be able to VOTE for your favourite artwork, and it is the public vote which determines each school's winner.

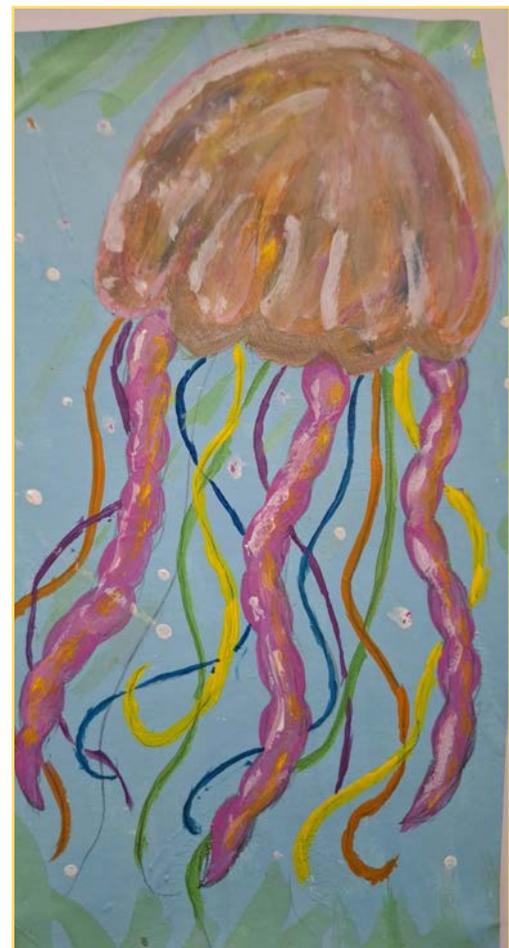
[Follow this link to vote for your favourites!](#)

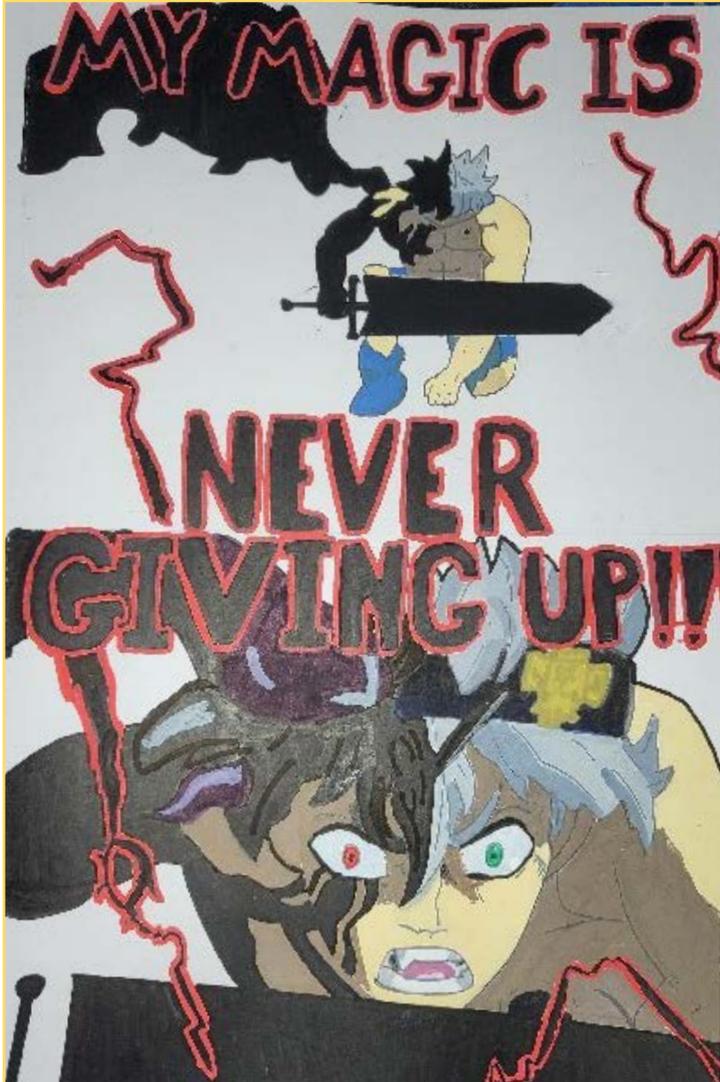
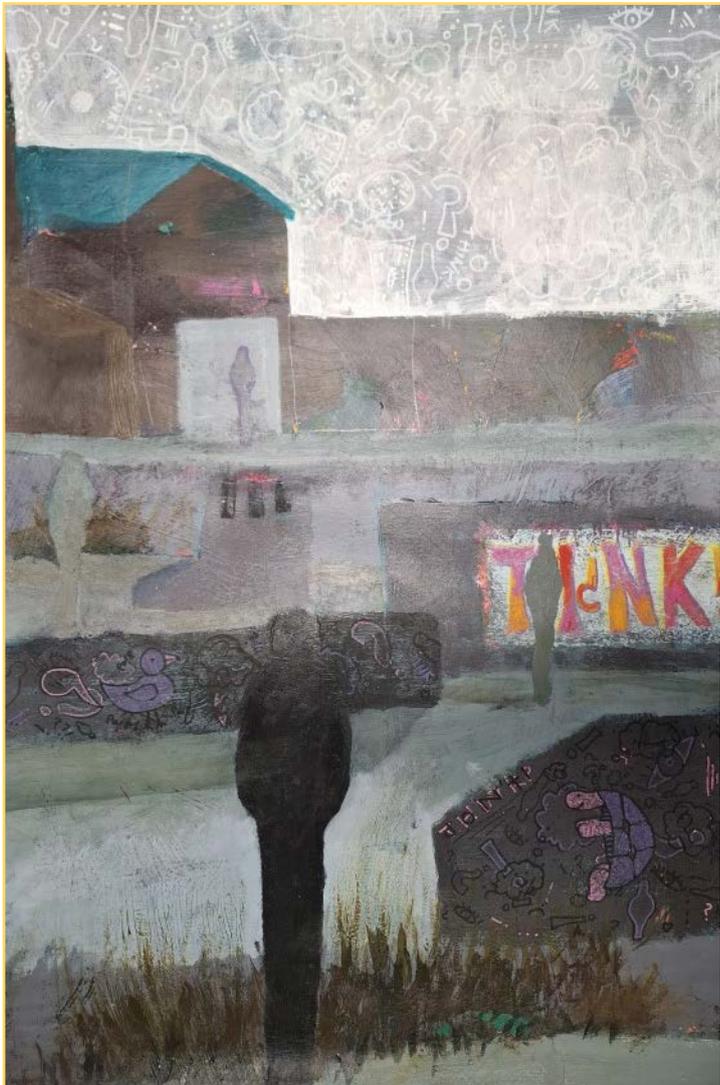
Winners then go forward into the next round of judging to be in with a chance of becoming a regional - or even national - winner!

Everyone can vote - students, teachers and parents/family members can all get involved.

A huge thank you to the wonderful Goring Arts Society who funded our entry into this national competition!

- Mr Bowen, Head of Art





Commonwealth Day

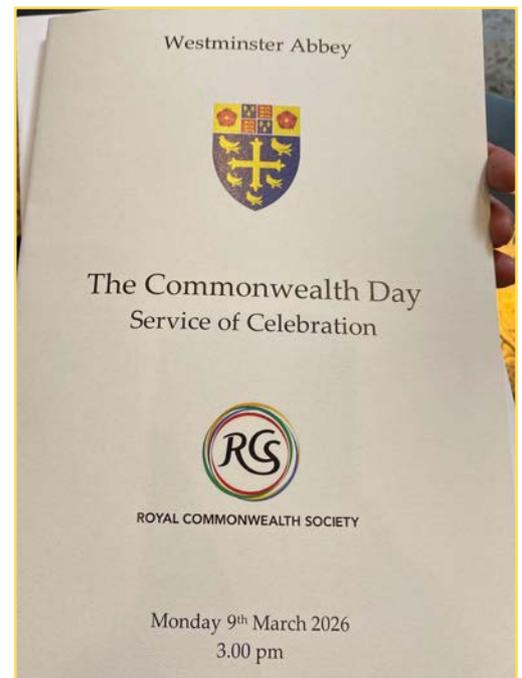


Our trip to London was an excellent experience! Stepping through the doors of the Merchant Taylors' Hall into its opulent foyer, I felt like royalty!

Upon arrival, we were treated to refreshments then given a tour, followed by a fun activity where we made our own wax seals and learnt the deliciously gory backstory behind some guild artifacts! After this, it was on to an even more delicious luncheon and some readings of the winning essays.

Full of exquisite treats, we then departed to Westminster Abbey. Before we knew it, the imposing building was towering splendidly above us, decked with the bright flags of the Commonwealth! Once inside, the ceremony commenced! It entailed organ music, speeches, amazing performances by dancers and singers, but best of all, the ACTUAL KING OF ENGLAND was just a few feet away from us! What an honour!

I would highly recommend entering the Commonwealth Essay Competition as then you too would be invited to partake in a day as wonderful as this!



- Martha Redhead, Year 8

Poetry by Heart

All KS3 have taken part in the annual Poetry by Heart competition, where each student had to learn a poem off by heart over the Christmas break, then perform it in front of their class.

Some students were chosen to go through to the Year Group final, and then a lucky few to the KS final. We have selected our very worthy winners, Blessing and Henry (both in Year 7), to submit to the next round of the national competition – watch this space!

- Mrs Harding, Teacher of English

Here are some students' views on the competition:

Poetry by Heart by Blessing Paratema, Year 7

I did the Poetry by Heart competition at Wallingford School. At first it was kind of overwhelming and intimidating but, I fought through my fears and went on to win again and again.

It was scary being in a crowd filled with people who might judge you for your work. However, the greatest thing you can do is adapt to the crowd, have fun and experiment with your poem. That's what I did and each time it worked perfectly, or not so perfectly, but it still wowed the crowd.

But it's not the crowd that matters. When you're out there, there are two things that exist on the stage – you and your poem.

Poetry by Heart by Ryan Marshall, Year 7

Poetry by Heart was amazing. It's a great opportunity to learn poetry that we wouldn't otherwise learn. It was really good to see everyone perform a poem and listen to everyone else. Can't wait for next year!

My (2nd!) Poetry by Heart experience by Jacob Reynolds, Year 8

One year ago, I stood in front of my class, unknowingly about to start something that would keep me occupied every Christmas! In January, it was Poetry by Heart season again and what a season it was, with very stiff competition and a group of teenagers united in their love of poetry! An amazing experience all round to be standing there reciting something you've worked so hard on to people you've worked so hard with. For me, it's the highlight of the school calendar no matter which place you come because there's always next year. To those who haven't yet tried: aim high! Surprising yourself isn't impossible, especially in such a changeable contest so always give your all. To the winners of this year's competition, congratulations! And to those who are ready for next year, never doubt yourself!

House Hyrox: A Triumphant First KS3 Competition



With over 50 enthusiastic participants, the first ever KS3 House Hyrox Competition proved to be an extraordinary success, showcasing the energy, determination, and unshakeable resilience of our students. From the opening whistle to the final sprint, students from all houses demonstrated outstanding teamwork and spirit.

The Hyrox challenge, known for its demanding blend of functional fitness and endurance, pushed competitors to dig deep, persevere, and support one another through every station.

What stood out most was not just the athleticism on display, but the vigour, sportsmanship, and sheer grit shown by every participant. Whether powering through lunges, racing on the rower, or tackling the bear crawls with determination, KS3 students embodied the values that make our school community so special.

Our staff were equally impressed by the encouragement and camaraderie circulating throughout the hall, with students cheering on teammates and support in running the event from the year 10s. The atmosphere was electric, and the pride in each House was unmistakable.





A huge well done to all students who took part in this event. You have set a strong foundation for the future of House Hyrox, and we cannot wait to see how this new tradition grows.

Place / House	Athlete Girls	Time
1 - Christie	Erin R/Madeleine	29:04:00
2 - Bigg	Isobel Y/ Lana B	30:20:00
3 - Blackstone	Autumn J/Poppy C	30:37:00



Place / House	Athlete Boys	Time
1 - Bigg	Fin L/Roman	22:12:00
2 - Christie	Harry/ Angus	22:45:00
3 - Christie	Harry E/James SH	23:43:00





KS5 & Staff Showdown

The excitement didn't stop with KS3. Our KS5 students and staff competitors brought just as much intensity to the House Hyrox event. For many returning athletes, the familiar burn of the Hyrox stations came with a realisation that perhaps a little more fitness over the Christmas break wouldn't have gone amiss.

Our new Year 10 competitors stepped up boldly, showcasing impressive stamina and confidence in their first high level Hyrox challenge. Meanwhile, sibling rivalry reached peak levels, adding an extra spark to the atmosphere as sisters battled for bragging rights in a truly competitive spirit.

The teachers delivered their own entertainment. Mr Lamb and Mr Holton burst out of the gates with an undeniably strong start, but despite their early momentum, they didn't quite finish where they had hoped.

Among the standout performances, Tom and Stan stunned the crowd by setting a new course record, demonstrating exceptional grit and teamwork. Not to be outdone, Year 11's Jasmin and Lily dominated the girls' category, finishing first with remarkable strength, consistency, and composure.

Once again, House Hyrox proved to be far more than a competition; it was a celebration of resilience, community spirit, and healthy rivalry across year groups and staff. A brilliant event all round, and one that continues to grow stronger each year.

This year, Christie House truly dominated, claiming victory with power, consistency, and standout performances across all categories. Their triumph sets out a high bar for future competitions, and they've already made it clear they'll be fighting hard next year to defend their title. With such passion across all houses, the battle for the Hyrox crown is only just beginning.



Place / House	Athlete Girls	Time
1 - Matilda	Jasmine/Lily	29:37:00
2 - Blackstone	Olivia/Olivia	32:59:00
3 - Bigg	Phoebe/Charlotte	34:44:00

Place / House	Athlete Boys	Time
1 - Christie	Tom/Stan	21:26:00
2 - Matilda	Finley/Daniel	23:10:00
3 - Christie	Elliot/Tom D	27:30:00

Place / House	Athlete Mixed	Time
1 - Christie	Vlada/Sam	29:30:00
2 - Christie	Lily/Ollie	30:21:00
3 - Blackstone	Jessie C/Mr Wootton	32:00:00



- Ms Chamberlain, Christie House Leader



Livery Entrepreneurs Challenge



We were invited to the annual Livery Entrepreneurs Challenge, where we were split into pairs and then partnered up with another pair attending from the Merchant Taylors' group of schools.

In our groups of 4 we had to complete a retail business simulation on a mobile phone business under competitive conditions and against strict time limits. In this time we had to negotiate finance, marketing, research, team management and communication in order to succeed within the simulation. After every quarter (40 minutes) in the simulation our progress within

the market would get compared to the other 13 teams, which gave us an opportunity to see what changes we had to make to our business strategy or what we did well to carry it over into the next quarters. At the end of the simulation the results were evaluated and each team was ranked. Unfortunately we didn't win but our team A came a credible 4th while team B came 8th. We really enjoyed listening to the guest speakers and getting to understand all the factors that go into a successful business.

- Alice Venner, Year 12

My Cheerleading Experience



This was so much fun! Holly, an ex-Miami Dolphin cheerleader came to one of my PE lessons. First, she taught us how to walk onto 'the pitch' the cheerleader way. After this we learnt a sixteen-count routine filled with pom-poms (the real ones!), the walk, new techniques, and a classic hair flip! As someone with ballet experience, this was a wonderful genre of dance to express myself in and I thoroughly enjoyed learning the new techniques. Overall, I had an amazing time filled with laughs, pom-pom noises, perfected routines and a lot of fun! Thank you, Holly, for this exciting experience and Miss Clarke for organising and assisting it.

- Emily Pool, Year 9



Touring Morocco!



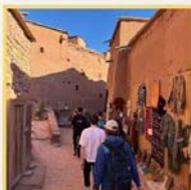
MOROCCO - DAY ONE
MONDAY 16TH FEB

We've had a great first day in Marrakesh!
We went on a walking tour of the souks,
visited Koutoubia Mosque and an
apothecary.



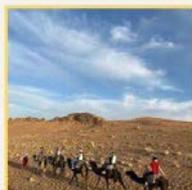
MOROCCO - DAY TWO
TUESDAY 17TH FEB

On our second day, we took a drive over The Atlas Mountains including a stop to see water management, lunch near the Tizi-n-Tichka pass - with lots of great views - a visit to an Argan Oil Cooperative and finally Ait Benhaddou Kasbah. A super day and super weather. The students have been fantastic! They've learnt lots about general water issues, tectonic activity, and the growth and decline of desert settlements.



MOROCCO - DAY THREE
WEDNESDAY 18TH FEB

An incredible third day. A visit to the Atlas Film studio (amazing!) and another mountain pass. A stop at a date palmery to listen to local farming methods and also taste broad beans. We ended up near Zagora to ride the camels into the desert to camp for the night.



MOROCCO - DAY FOUR
THURSDAY 19TH FEB

A cold night in the desert waking up to blue skies. Rode camels back to near Zagora and then visited the Tinfou Sand Dunes on the way to Tamegroute to see the subterranean village and learn about local pottery making. Then a long drive back to Marrakesh over the Atlas Mountains.



Please visit our web news story here:

[Sun, Sand and Souks - A Visit to Morocco](#)

By Ben Heriot, Maddie Cornut,
Ferne Organ & Stanley Vowles.

MOROCCO - DAY FIVE
FRIDAY 20TH FEB

A morning visit to the Majorelle Gardens and then a walk to Djema el-Fna for a final walk around the Souks and a roof top restaurant to round off the trip.







Music Performance Exam

This term the Year 13 Musicians performed in their A level performance recital, worth 35% of their overall grade. The examiner commented on the range of instruments he heard and the programmes offered. Celyn played Grade 8 Rock School pieces on electric guitar, Karishma played Grade 7 recorder pieces, Matthew played bassoon Grade 7 pieces, Tee sang Grade 7 pieces, Alfie and Daniel performed Grade 6/7 pieces on the piano.

For all of them this is the culmination of practising and mastering their instrument over many years. Matthew has been playing bassoon for 10 years and Celyn playing guitar for 12 years! I wonder if 7-year-old Matthew ever thought he'd be playing Grade 7 pieces for an A level Music exam?!

Playing an instrument to Grade 7 requires dedicated daily practice, mastery of complex technical skills (scales, arpeggios), advanced repertoire, and strong musical interpretation. It is well known that employers and universities value musicians because playing an instrument demonstrates exceptional discipline, long-term commitment, and intellectual creativity, signalling a well-rounded applicant. It suggests superior time management and cognitive abilities (like memory and multitasking). These are all skills Year 13 musicians have displayed and all whilst they are studying for their other 6th Form courses.

Students will find out their mark as part of their A level result in August, but I think they totally smashed it and I'm very proud of them.

- Ms Hammond, Head of Music

Young Carers

We now have 110 students who have been identified as young carers, meaning that they help take on a caring role at home for someone they live with. This varies hugely from person to person, but we think they are AMAZING! As a school we are committed to understanding the needs of our young carers and supporting them as much as we can.

All students have recently taken part in a PSHE lesson around what it is like to be a young carer, and Wednesday 11th March was Young Carers Action Day. On Friday 13th March we held a cake sale to raise funds for the young carers trips – this raised a fantastic £48.50 which will go towards helping our students enjoy fun activities throughout the year. Mr Dodson and Mr Lyons have also donated £129.45 which was raised from the Ninja Warrior competition earlier this term. Thank you very much!

- Mrs Emmerson, Young Carers Lead



A Photographic Snapshot...



They say, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” so we’re going to show, not tell, all the amazing things that have been happening in Photography over in D-Block!

To start things off Year 10 have been developing skills in a range of photographic workshops including Light Painting, Cyanotypes & Joiner photography in their Mock Exams, they have really thrown themselves in to this part of their coursework. Our Year 11 photographers are continuing to explore ideas for their final projects. They LOVE a full contact sheet especially as the exam is just around the corner!

To top it off our first batch of Year 12 photographers have been diving headfirst into their personal investigations! With themes encompassing Natural Forms, Identity, Abstraction, Memory & Constructed Environments, here are just a few snapshots of what has been going on!

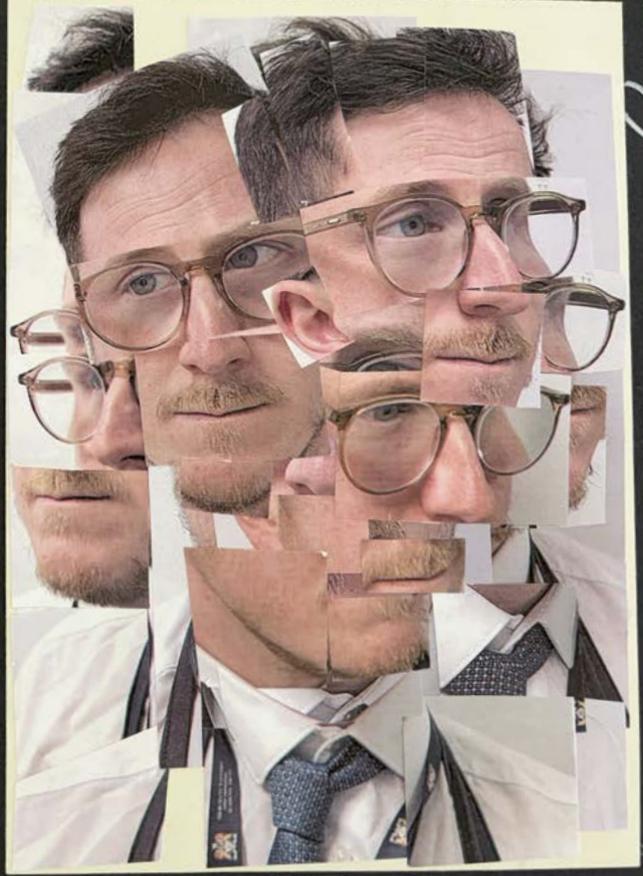
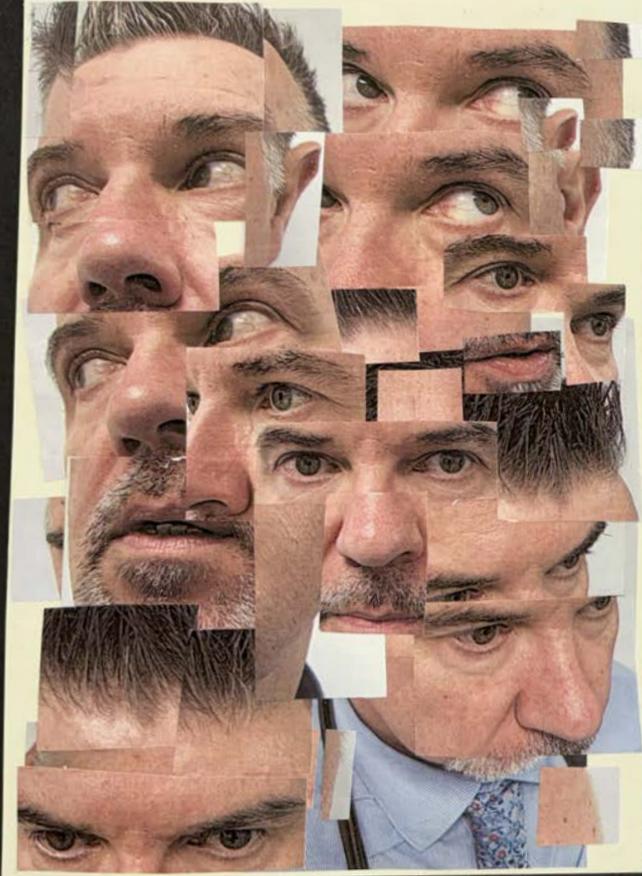
- Mr Hinchliffe, Teacher of Photography



We shared news about the Merchant Taylors' Company Photography Competition 2025 last term. [Please visit the full article here!](#)

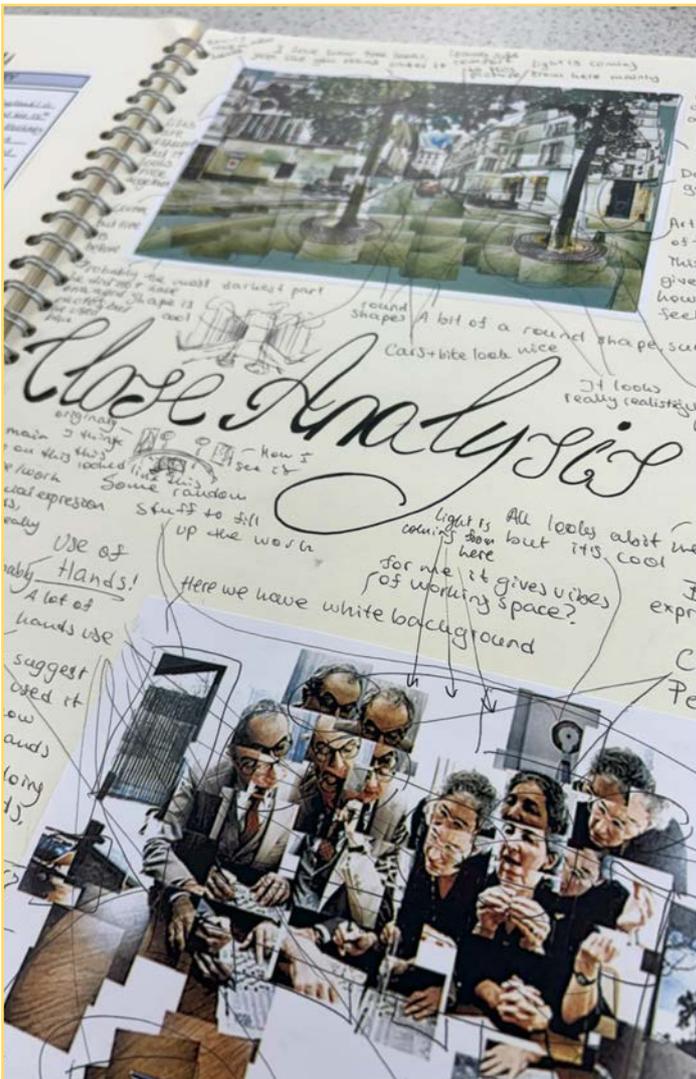
1. My first try - love it! really proud of this work

2. My second try - love it, looks nice together



Handwritten text on the right side of the collage, partially visible.

me I will use a bit less space. Just to have a bit more background. I used a lot



French Exchange

The French exchange was an amazing experience to be a part of, and it improved my language skill significantly.

We were able to see historical monuments such as La Bastille and La mémorial de la résistance, incredible views and snow, which was very exciting! We had the opportunity to experience French culture directly from our host families and exchange partners. Everyone was really kind and welcoming and I can't wait for the exchange partners to come to England in June!

- *Charlotte Hebbes, Year 12*





University Challenge!



Most people look forward to lunchtime. A chance to eat healthily. Or not. A chance to meet up with friends. Or not. Oh, and the Crisps. The Crisps!

Some of our amazing students, however, forego the opportunity to catch up with friends and discuss the merits of Transform-a-snacks vs Hummus. For they hunger for something else.

A battle of WITS! And the opportunity to smash BRIGHTLY-COLOURED BUZZERS into desks. It is, after all, UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE SEASON!

It works like this: All interested students (regardless of years and houses) are invited to D1 one lunchtime. Once there, they have 10 minutes to complete the elimination round. There are 20 questions.

Here's a selection:

Name three Welsh cities.

'You're not you when you're hungry' - which chocolate?

Who released the album 'Disintegration' in 1989?

What is the hardest natural substance on Earth?

What organisation has a light blue flag with a world map surrounded by olive branches?

Who wrote 'The Old Man and the Sea'?





After we've discovered that a surprising number of students have a secure and confident knowledge of international organisational flags yet are unsure of Swansea's existence, the top scorers in each house form the House teams. They go away for a week to swot up on anything and everything.

The finals, a week later, are an exciting opportunity to get the buzzers out. They are round, brightly coloured, make different noises and – possibly, most importantly - they are robust and can stand up to a lot of hammering.

Starters for 10. Bonus questions for 5. No conferring on starters; conferring allowed on bonuses. The questions ebb and flow and it is often quite difficult to work out who exactly got in first with the correct buzz. Many, many questions on music, maths, literature, rivers, Star Wars and the Avengers later, and we have a winning team.

But all of the teams and competitors won here.

- Mr Bowen, Big House Leader



World Book Day Story & Graphic Story Competition: Winners Announced!

To celebrate World Book Day, our library invited students to take part in a special Story and Graphic Story Writing Competition, and the response was truly incredible. We received a record number of imaginative, thoughtful and wonderfully creative entries. A huge thank you to every student who took part; your enthusiasm made judging both joyful and extremely challenging!

After much deliberation, we are thrilled to announce the winners in each category.

Short Story Category Winner

Winner: Emelia Timms, Year 8

Judges' Comments: This story captivated the panel with its strong narrative voice, striking imagery and wellcrafted structure. The writer demonstrated real creativity and control, making this entry a standout.

Winning Entry: The Ice Beneath My Feet by Emelia Timms

Thirteen-year-old Maisie pressed her palm against the rink glass, breath fogging the cold surface. Through the blur, she watched girls her age twist through the air like spinning compasses, their skates carving clean lines in the ice. A dull throb pulsed in her leg – CMRO had been part of her life since she was nine, turning simple steps into battles she fought every single day.

Her parents had tucked her skates away in the attic months ago, after the doctor's warning about stress fractures and long-term damage. They'd bought her watercolours instead, said art was "safer for someone like her". But Maisie's hands shook too much to hold a brush steady. On ice, somehow she found her balance.

Every dawn, while the house slept, she crept out in her sister's worn practice clothes, lacing up skates too big. The community rink opened early for maintenance, and the caretaker, an old man named Dave who'd once coached Olympic hopefuls, never asked questions. He just turned up the music and left her to it.

She couldn't jump like the others. Even a single axel sent shooting pain up her thigh, so she learned to move differently. She studied ice dance videos, teaching herself to glide with her weight shifted just so, using her arms to carry momentum instead of her legs. Her spirals stretched longer than anyone's at the local club – she'd hold them until her hip burned, focusing on the way light caught the ice like scattered diamonds.

I've spent half my life being told what to do with my body. Doctors draw diagrams of weak spots, parents speak in whispers about "protecting" me and other kids ask why I walk with a slight limp when the weather turns cold.

But on the ice, I don't limp. I flow.

When I skate, the pain doesn't go away. But it changes shape. It becomes part of the music, part of the flow. The ice holds me up, and for those minutes I'm exactly where I'm meant to be.

One morning, Maisie snuck to the rink, but little did she know someone other than David was there.

“It’s beautiful,” said her dad.

Maisie smiled, feeling the familiar throb in her leg, but now it felt like part of who she was, not something holding her back. As she glided off the ice, she knew she didn’t need competitions anymore.

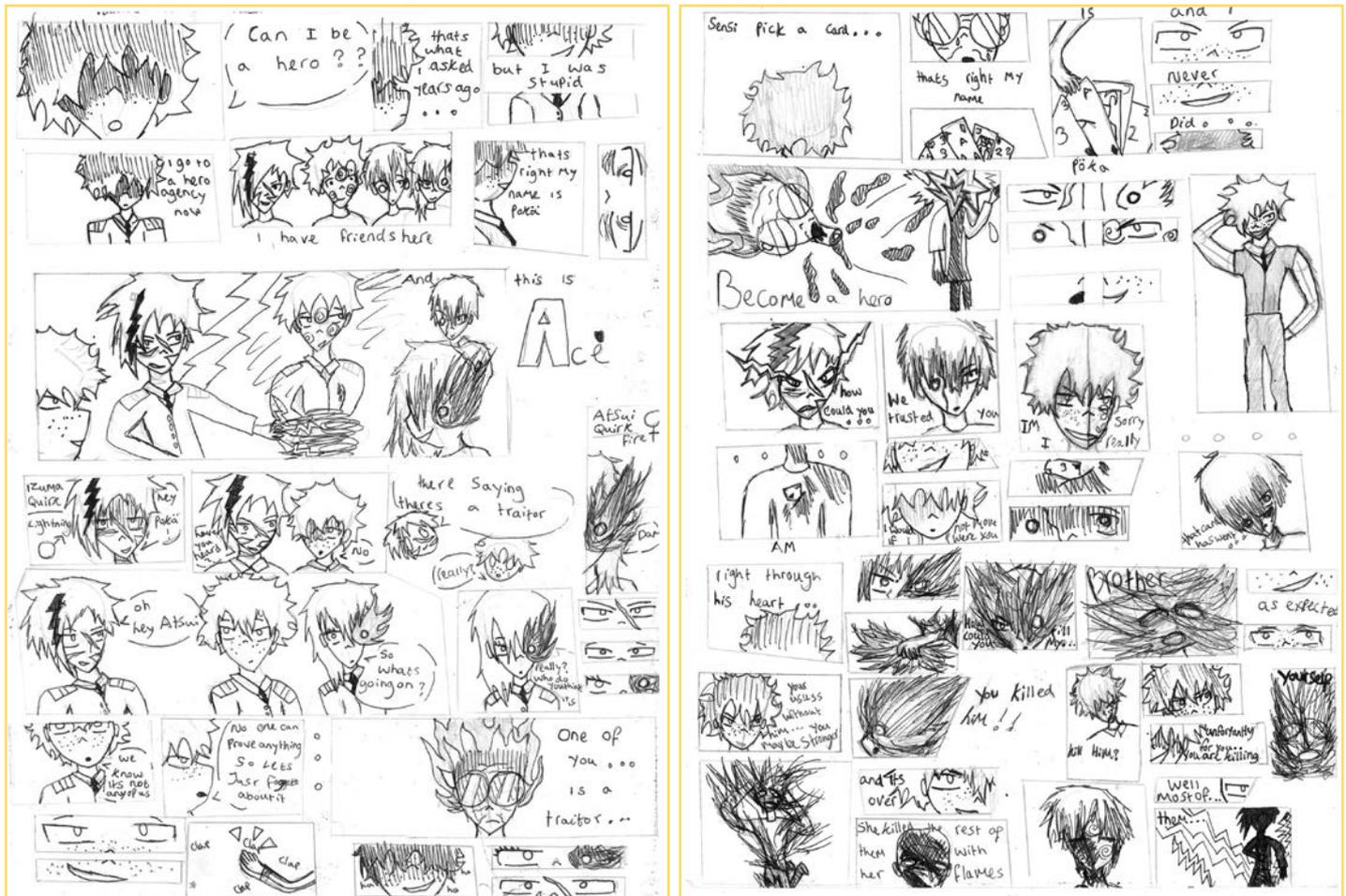
The ice knew where she belonged.

Graphic Short Story Category Winner

Winner: Haidee Prime, Year 8

Judges’ Comments: The winning graphic story impressed with its expressive artwork, clear panels and engaging visual storytelling. The balance of illustration and narrative made it a compelling and highly polished piece.

Winning Entry:



We would like to congratulate every student who entered the competition. The standard was exceptionally high, and we were blown away by the creativity shown across all submissions. In recognition of their valiant efforts, all entrants will receive house points.

The winning entries are published here in the newsletter, and copies will also be displayed in the library for everyone to enjoy.

What's Next? Join Our Reading Resolutions Challenge

As part of our continued celebration of reading, we are excited to launch our next competition: **The Reading Resolutions Challenge**, running throughout this term and the next.

This challenge is open to all KS3 students and is available now on Satchel One. Students can set personal reading goals, explore new genres and track their progress for the chance to earn rewards.

We can't wait to see your reading journeys unfold!

- Ms Hanley, School Librarian

Human Library 2026



We are delighted to announce that our Human Library event returns in July as part of Year 12s Futures Week. In a nutshell, Year 12s get the opportunity to speak with people from a broad range of industries and sectors, with an incredible variety of career paths and experience. Students always highly value the personal nature of the experience and can find out information about prospective next steps that won't come up when trawling through the internet about careers. This invaluable experience relies on volunteers from our wonderful local community, so if you would like to participate this year, or would like more information, please contact holtonp@wallingfordschool.com.

- Mr Holton, Head of Year 12

Dorchester Abbey Art Exhibition

The Art Department was thrilled to be asked to take part in an exhibition in Dorchester Abbey as part of the Dorchester Festival.

The result will be a collaborative installation of small artworks created by a variety of groups within the local community. Designed and led and by Oxford-based artist Emma Coleman-Jones, individual responses to The Abbey, the village and the local landscape are displayed together in an innovative design inspired by the windows and arches within the Abbey itself.



We are receiving entries as I write this. The exhibition will run from 1st to 10th May at Dorchester Abbey.

- Mr Bowen, Head of Art

Hitting Targets & Building Confidence



The South Oxfordshire Schools Archery Competition, held at Wallingford School, was a fantastic example of what school sport can achieve beyond just scores and results. From the moment the event began, there was a clear sense of excitement and focus among the students, many of whom had trained hard in the lead-up and were eager to perform at their best.

With over 40 students taking part, participation levels were impressively high. The range of schools and competitors highlighted both the growing popularity of archery and its inclusive nature, where students of all abilities can get involved and feel part of something meaningful.

One of the most noticeable aspects of the competition was how it helped build confidence and self-esteem. Archery demands patience, concentration, and control, and it was inspiring to see students step up to the line, focus, and give their best effort. Each arrow released wasn't just about hitting the target - it was about personal growth and belief in their own ability.



The event also created a strong sense of friendship and community. Students supported not only their teammates but also competitors from other schools, celebrating successes and encouraging one another throughout the day. These shared moments helped build lasting friendships and showed that healthy competition can go hand in hand with respect and camaraderie.



There was also a clear desire among all participants to perform well. Students demonstrated determination and resilience, staying composed under pressure and learning from each shot. This positive attitude contributed to the overall spirit and success of the event.

Wallingford School enjoyed particular success on the day, achieving team Silver in the Recurve category and team Bronze in Barebow. In the individual events, their archers performed exceptionally well, bringing home 3 Gold medals and 2 Silvers - an impressive achievement that reflected both skill and dedication.

Overall, the South Oxfordshire Schools Archery Competition was not just about arrows and targets - it was about building confidence, forming friendships, and inspiring young people to strive for their best.

Our School Archery Club meets Wednesday's 3.05pm - 4.30pm.

Anyone interested, please speak to Mr Roberts in the PE department. All equipment is provided or individuals can use their own.



- Mr Roberts, PE Teacher & Archery Coach



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House Traitors



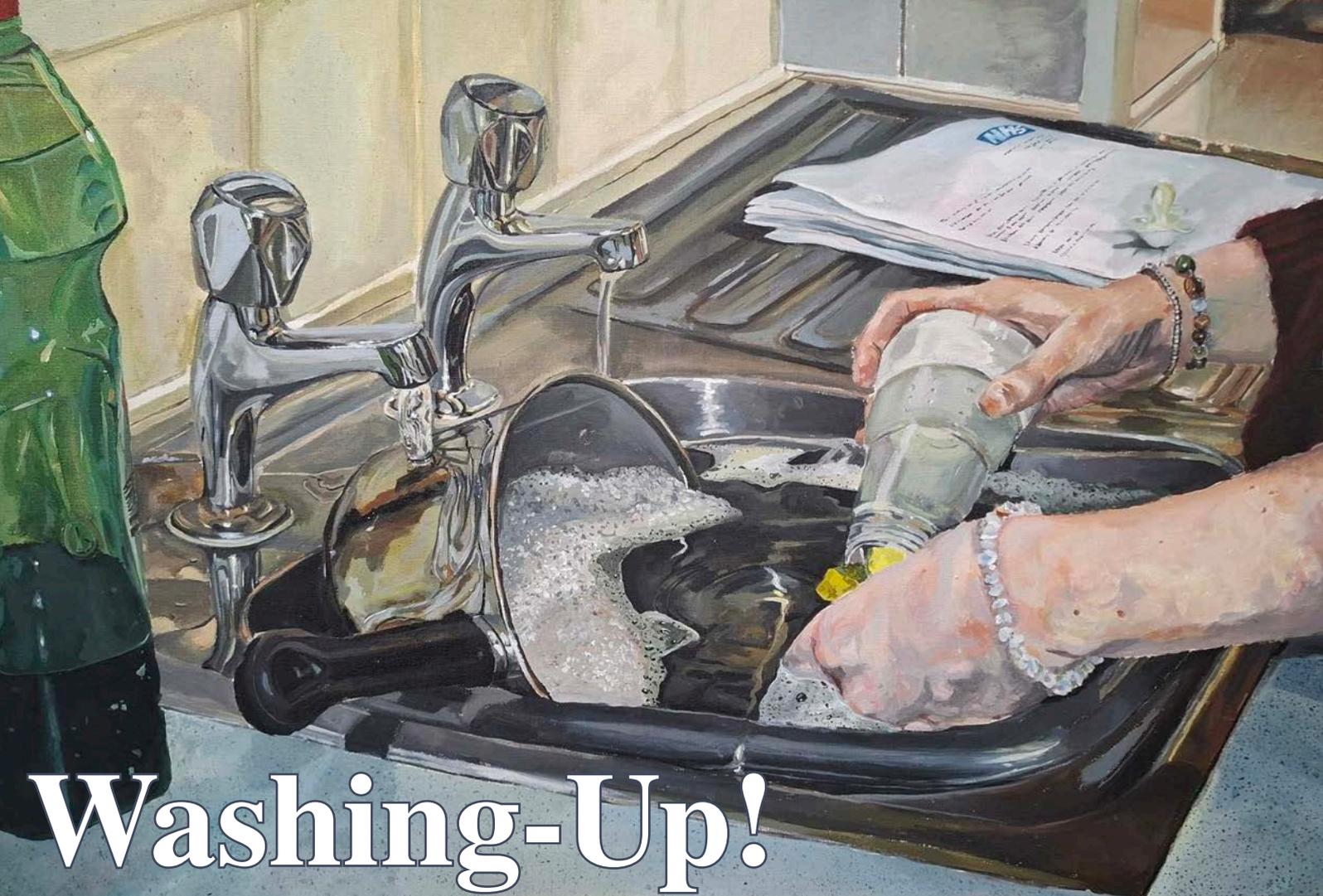
Term 3 saw D-Block stand in for a Scottish castle as twenty-two hopeful Sixth Formers took part in Wallingford School's very own Traitors! There were Missions, Banishments & Murders all the while students collected House points to be added to the House totals!

The temptation to grow out a fringe was real as over six lunchtimes suspicions rose, alliances formed and numbers dwindled! To say it was tense at times would be an understatement, but all players threw themselves into the game and made it a very enjoyable House event that we will run again in the future!

As for the result, the Traitors started on the back foot, losing a Traitor in the very first banishment! The Faithful caught three more Traitors along the way and won the overall prize, with a joint win for BIGG & CHRISTIE!

- Mr Hinchliffe, Matilda House Leader





Washing-Up!

'I am an A Level Art student who has been exploring the theme of 'isolation' in my work. I have looked at the artists Giacometti and Munch, and I have been influenced by both the style and the storytelling aspect of their work. I have made two main final paintings.

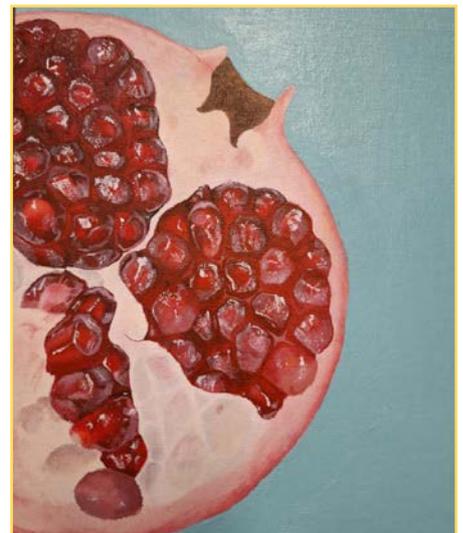
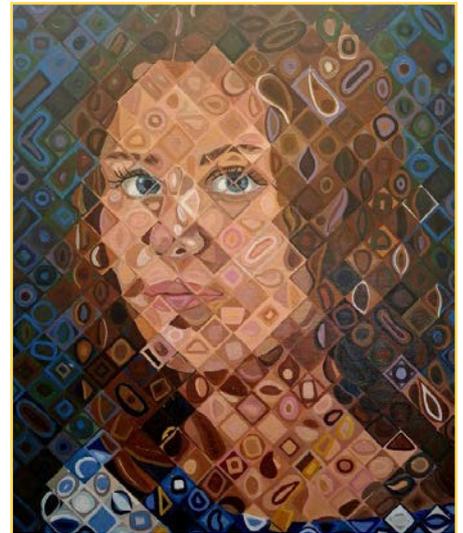
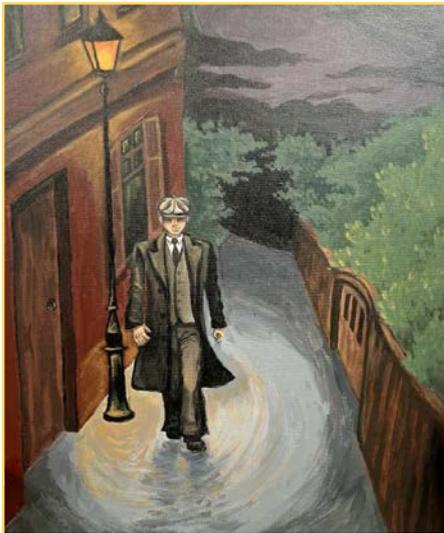
The first of the paintings introduces a story that unravels through close observation. This piece portrays isolation via the contrast between light and dark; highlighting despair within everyday still life.

The narrative continues a few months later, in the second painting, depicting the same woman washing baby bottles to emphasize her maternal responsibilities. The viewer's eye is then drawn to a nearby NHS document with a dummy resting on top, symbolising her commitment to prioritizing her child over her own medical needs. Both the illness and her motherly duties serve to highlight her profound isolation within this situation.'

- Oli Baskeyfield, Year 13



A Few Art Department Highlights...



"I liked the interactive museums because I was able to engage better with the information." - Isla D

Scholars in Belgium

Day 1: Up bright and early to catch the ferry from Dover to Calais! We stopped off on the way to Ypres at Vimy Ridge, a Canadian war memorial which has recreated trenches and a beautiful monument to commemorate those lost at the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Day 2: We started our day at Talbot House, a house set up for soldiers to relax on their rare days off, where everyone was considered equal regardless of rank or status. After some tea, we visited two cemeteries with stark contrast: Langemark, the German cemetery, was much more modest, with a harrowing mass grave in the centre, while Tyne Cot was much larger and featured bright white headstones and various memorial features commemorating the commonwealth soldiers who lost their lives in World War 1. We then headed back to Ypres to visit the In Flanders Fields Museum and learn about some individual experiences during the war. We finished our day watching the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate - a very poignant moment indeed.





Day 3: An earlier start today as we headed off to the Somme. We started our visit at Lochnagar crater, the largest crater produced by British mines placed under the German front line and triggered the Battle of the Somme. We then visited Thiepval memorial, which was quite extraordinary in size and listed the names of all soldiers whose whereabouts were unknown after the battle. We continued on to Newfoundland Park, another Canadian war memorial that showed just how close the front lines were in the Battle of the Somme. The landscape still shows the original trench lines so clearly.



Day 4: Our final day. After packing up our rooms, we headed back on the coach and over to Bruges. We started with a boat tour, learning about the history of the city. Then it was time to explore and grab some authentic Belgian waffles before starting our long journey home.

- Ms Norman, Scholars Coordinator

"We were surprised at how big the crater was - the diameter was further than the Olympic javelin record!" - Sam



Upcoming Events...

Spring

Concert

15th April

7pm

Adults: £4

Children: £2



SPOTLIGHT DANCE SHOW

16TH APRIL 2026

PERFORMANCE STARTS 7PM

TICKETS: £4





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

Cover: Geography visit Morocco, Feb 2026