



Newsletter

Dame Alice Owen's School

December 2025



Letter from the Head **Hannah Nemko**



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What a remarkable term it has been. As I write this introduction, I am still beaming at the further recognition the school has received for what it achieves, celebrating the extraordinary achievement of being awarded two prestigious Sunday Times accolades at once: Comprehensive School of the Year for Academic Excellence (a national title) and the Comprehensive School of the Year in the Southeast, both bestowed on us on top of our previous award of Sixth Form of the Year as awarded by The Telegraph earlier this year, I hope you agree that this is a school with which we should all be very proud to be associated.

We have had a fabulous term of celebration, even before these awards, as we celebrate our 50th anniversary in Potters Bar. The highlight for a number of parents and alumni was certainly attending the Beer Quiz, held at Brewers' Hall – a sumptuous event, full of very important learning (about beer) followed by a tasting and a quiz about beers of all kinds to show us all what we still had to learn. This was all beautifully put together by Sambrooks and we remain very grateful to them for the time they gave the school.

Our students have demonstrated stunning entrepreneurial spirit in the Starter for Ten Challenge. Students have shown remarkable


THE SUNDAY TIMES

**SCHOOLS GUIDE
2026**

**COMPREHENSIVE
SCHOOL OF THE YEAR
SOUTH EAST**


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**SCHOOLS GUIDE
2026**

**COMPREHENSIVE
SCHOOL OF THE YEAR
FOR ACADEMIC
EXCELLENCE**

creativity and entrepreneurship with some taking their initial £10 investment to set up and run a stall at our Christmas Market. Between them and our big Christmas Quiz, they raised over £700 for the school. It's not too late to get involved! If your child has not already signed up please follow this [link](#) if you would like to register them for the challenge to grow £10 into as large a sum as they can to support the school.

As our 50th Anniversary year moves towards the end of its first term, we are already looking ahead to the New Year and our spectacular performance at the Royal Festival Hall. Tickets for this once in a lifetime event are already on sale so please do not forget to secure your seats for what will undoubtedly be an event to go down in Owen's history, rivalling the famous Royal Albert Hall concert back in 2013. You can buy your tickets by clicking this [link](#).

In the meantime, you can ensure your family's lasting connection and support for the school is remembered for posterity by purchasing a brick to be included in the entrance to the new sports hall by clicking [here](#).

Within the pages that follow, you will find many more highlights, successes, and reflections on the diverse opportunities our young people have enjoyed this term.

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support.

We wish you and your families a wonderful, restful Christmas break.

Hannah Nemko.

Hannah Nemko

**Celebrate
with us...
Golden
Anniversary
Concert**



the latest from the **Owen's School Association**



Warmth in the Winter: Staying Connected Through Collaboration

As the days grow colder, this season reminds us of the importance of connection, collaboration and shared purpose. Whilst the weather encourages us to wrap up and stay warm, it also offers a timely opportunity to strengthen the sense of community within DAOS.

Parents, teachers and students, working in partnership together, whether through sharing resources on parent groups or supporting the school by donating, attending and/or helping at an event, bring a different kind of warmth: one that supports growth, strengthens relationships for parents and young people, and inspires collective progress.

Our January committee meeting will be held online on Thursday 12th Jan at 7.30pm. We are a friendly, inclusive group of parents from all backgrounds and cultures. You can get involved a little or a lot, it's really up to you. We would love to welcome any new volunteers, explore new development opportunities for the OSA, and reflect on the benefits of growing and learning together.

Why not start by having a look at [the OSA website](#)?

We look forward to hearing from you.

Belinda Quinian, OSA

Quiz Night

The hugely popular OSA Quiz was the hottest ticket in Potters Bar again and despite the cold outside, the heat was on for the DAOS staff to beat the parents and sixth formers! The teachers made a valiant effort only to be beaten at the last hurdle by a parent/OSA team called 'Been there, won that'. Congratulations to them. The evening was a triumph all round, with lots of great comments about how good the food was, the DAO theme, and the fabulous raffle and spot prizes. It was an entertaining night, and we raised essential funds to contribute to activities for our young people.

If you have ideas about this or other events you would like to see the OSA run next year do get in touch or visit [the OSA website](#) for comments, suggestions and offers of help.

OSA Committee Meetings

Come and join in – everyone is welcome! We usually meet on the first Monday of the month (except December and January) in term-time, at 7:30pm, in the Old Library, above Reception in school. We alternate between face-to-face and online meetings so the next one on January 12th will be online. Please come along and meet other parents aiming to support our young people and the school community. Visit [the OSA website](#) for suggestions and offers of help.

OSA Easy Fundraising

Have a quick look at this please – it is the easiest way for us, friends and extended family to raise money for DAOS daily. It involves doing nothing more than we're already doing, when shopping online and with over 8,000 retailers. Please follow this [link](#) to sign up.

OSA Nearly New Uniform

Please remember to recycle and donate school uniform items (and support the school's environmental sustainability efforts at the same time). Containers labelled 'OSA Nearly New Uniform' are located through the main Reception doors, on the right-hand side walkway. Recycling of clothing helps families save costs, gives the school additional source of funding and demonstrates environmental conscientiousness. We will publish dates for the next uniform sale on our Instagram and through WhatsApp groups, however we really need some help with organising this. If you could offer to help, please email **Sheena** at uniform@theosa.org.uk

OSA Refreshments

Have you been to school events such as the Music Events, Senior Concert, Chamber Concert, Winter Concert, Musical or our Nine Lessons and Carols? If you have enjoyed refreshments in the intervals and wondered who provided them, Tony tirelessly co-ordinates a small but great team of OSA occasional volunteers. We really need more volunteers to support Tony and the team; it's a great way to get to know other parents in the school. Any contribution of time you can make would benefit the efforts of the pupils and the school. Please email **Tony** at refreshments@theosa.org.uk if you could spare a couple of hours.

OSA's '200 Club'

The OSA operates a Lottery Style 200 Club with a £50 and a £25 prize draw every month and an extra draw in December. A one-off annual membership fee of £24 per number and nothing more to do other than wait to hear if your number is drawn. For further details, please contact OSA volunteer **Alan** at 200club@theOSA.org.uk.

OSA Match Funding

Many companies across the UK run match funding schemes, where they will match the money raised by employees for their chosen charity, often doubling the impact of your support at no extra cost to you. It can make a significant difference to the OSA's annual fundraising for the school. Please contact OSA volunteer **Nadine** at matchfunding@theosa.org.uk. Further information can be accessed through the QR codes.



Match funding email to employer:



Match funding FAQ:



Opportunity for all to contribute and enjoy ...

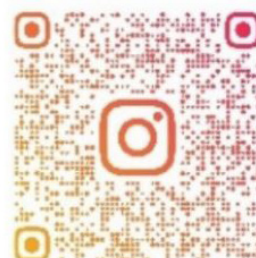
Volunteer Vacancy

We are seeking someone to manage the content of the OSA's Instagram account including promoting all things OSA and forthcoming events.

Total of 3-4 hours per month required. Skillset requires basic website backend experience for making updates along with good knowledge of Instagram with some creative skills to design posters although not essential. If you think you can help out, we would love to hear from you at the [OSA Website](#).

OSA's Instagram

To keep up to date with all OSA events and fundraising schemes, please follow the OSA's Instagram Account. There you will find links to ticketed events, the Online Nearly New Uniform Shop etc.





Window to the world beyond the classroom ...

"I thought the life drawing class was a wonderful experience that I found really enjoyable. Calvin was an excellent teacher who thoroughly talked us through the process of replicating the model on our paper and he helped me improve my skills with helpful constructive criticism. It was my first time in a professional art studio using a standing easel which was different and fun. I think this was perfect for my course work because it taught me how to accurately draw the human figure."

Sofia B, Year 12

"I genuinely enjoyed the life drawing class. Calvin was a great teacher who made the session approachable, encouraging, and enjoyable."

Oscar S, Year 12

Life Drawing at Candid Arts, Islington

I felt so proud to celebrate the work of our wonderful Year 12 and Year 13 A Level artists [alongside two Old Owenians who joined us, both of whom are continuing their creative practice; one studying Architecture at Cambridge, and the other working towards becoming a Concept Artist]. The workshop was led by the wonderful Calvin Richard, who put us through our paces, demonstrating his extraordinary skills in capturing proportion, form and movement and thoroughly inspiring the students. Despite it being only their first or second time drawing the figure from life, they all produced exceptional work, which will support their A Level portfolios, and their forthcoming exhibitions. I do hope it will be the start of a relationship that they will continue to enjoy for years to come.

Mrs L Grigson



The Great Owen's Keg Roll 2025

Earlier in the term saw the return of the Keg Roll. The enthusiasm was ripe around the school, as demonstrated by the fantastic turn out from all year groups. The Senior Team introduced the event with commentary and live drumming, whilst teams from each house were led out by their House Captains, each dressed as fruit in their house colours.

The event is essentially a relay race with the teams made up of Year 12 and Year 7 students. The passing of the keg to some of our newest students is a nice picture of our history with the Worshipful Company of Brewers.



Four of the House Captains dressed up to get into the spirit of the game



The victorious Clerkenwell team

It was a close run thing, with Hermitage making a flying start only to be controversially pulled back by race marshalls for not completing a full length. Isledon looked likely to retain their crown as they led for much of it. But while all of the houses fought well there could only be one winner. Following a late push, setting up a dramatic end to the proceedings it was Clerkenwell who recorded their first ever Keg Roll victory. After their victory, Clerkenwell faced off against a team made up of other House Captains and teachers. It was a close-run thing, and came down to a grandstand finale, but the teachers displayed some impressive keg-rolling technique, and won by a miniscule margin, avenging their defeat to Isledon last year. After this fantastic display, we concluded another very successful day, and we look forward to next year's event.

Success on Stage

Earlier this term, we had the amazing opportunity to perform in the English National Opera's production of Dead Man Walking, in the children's chorus. It ran for 6 nights at the Coliseum in the West End and we got to sing alongside some internationally renowned opera singers. We found it fascinating to see behind the scenes of a professional production and the level of detail that goes into the set, costumes and music. The opera received five star reviews across the board and we were really proud to be a part of it!

Charlotte T, Year 9 & Emilia M, Year 8



House Harvest Collection

As last year we partnered with Herts Young Homeless who do such a brilliant job supporting many of the hidden homeless teenagers in our county. Students were tasked with bringing in items including shampoo and conditioner, baking trays and warm hats and gloves with a house point awarded per item donated. A considerable number of items were donated and gratefully received with Clerkenwell house donating the most items.



Diwali Celebrations

On Monday 20th October, we celebrated and educated about the festival of Diwali by hosting a Diwali Fair. This was a fun and vibrant celebration that brought everyone together to enjoy the spirit of Diwali. There were loads of activities, including games, mehendi, and detailed henna tattoos, and the food was definitely a highlight – with delicious samosas and refreshing mango lassi. The whole atmosphere was warm, colourful, and lively, making it such a great way to celebrate Diwali and appreciate the richness of Indian culture with friends and classmates at school.

Guess Who?! Live on stage

The Old Owen's Sports Ground was filled with music on Thursday 23rd October as student band Guess Who?! played a lively set which got everyone up and dancing! There was even a nod to a past musical success here at Owen's as Eden, Hannah, Hassan, Louis, Matthew, Philip, Seth and Tom played a rousing cover of Spandau Ballet's *Gold* to an enthusiastic audience. Will Guess Who?! be the next Owen's band to hit the big time? Watch this space...

Well done!

Congratulations to **Tanishka** in Year 10 who swims at Potters Bar Swimming Club and recently achieved gold in these 6 races at her club championships competition:

- 200m individual medley
- 100m butterfly
- 50m breaststroke
- 100m backstroke
- 100m breaststroke
- 100m freestyle



Geography trip to Iceland

Where to begin? Iceland was a magical trip packed with endless enjoyment. From visiting museums to tectonic plate boundaries, it really was the whole package. The great planning and organisation allowed us to enjoy true wonders, including waterfalls and glaciers, which are truly unique and breath-taking. The trip certainly wouldn't have been possible without the resilience and determination of all the amazing teachers. Despite this, Mr Macdonald still decided to throw himself off a glacier during one of our many adventures.

The constant travelling around to different parts of the country and staying in different hotels allowed us to get a wide range of experiences. The food provision was great in some places but mediocre at best in others (always room for improvement!).

The Blue Lagoon was a truly remarkable experience as it allowed us to enjoy the naturally-heated waters of Iceland, along with the sight of Mr Macdonald enhancing his youthful looks with the face masks. The Lagoon was certainly one of the highlights of the trip. The plethora of activities throughout the trip included a lava museum, erupting geysers and more waterfalls than we can count.

A dramatic snowstorm on the last day nearly made us miss our flight but ended up being a blessing in disguise as it allowed us to go on a beautiful walk in hip-deep snow and we also managed to see the Northern Lights on the last night!

We hope that all the teachers on the trip enjoyed their time, despite probably not getting much rest. A special shoutout to Mr Thompson, Mrs Papalouca, Mrs Goldwater, Mr Jayapal and Mrs Aionoa. Overall, Iceland gave us unforgettable memories and unbreakable bonds, as well as a deeper understanding of the natural world.

Monica, Izzy and Aurelia



A Level Maths in Action Lecture

For our first talk of the day, we had the chance to hear from Dr Katherine Holmes, who shared with us her 'Decision Tea Trees'. Using various types of flow diagrams, she demonstrated how we could find the perfect tea from her selection of 100 teas, and how this could be done in just seven questions.

Secondly, we had the exciting opportunity to learn about fractals from Dr Jamie Frost. After explaining the concept of a fractal in detail and displaying a number of examples, he led us to explore some of the fractals we see in real life, such as in the film *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol.2*, and even in broccoli.

With Alison Kiddle, we were able to delve into the maths behind knitting a circle. They showed us the process of using different algorithms to map out a pixelated circle, which could then be interpreted as a knitting pattern. They explained the factors needed to be taken into account in order to produce a perfect knitted circle, such as using rectangular pixels rather than square pixels to replicate the shape of each stitch.

Nicole Cozens explained her top 5 success list to help us succeed in A level maths. We learnt

about the importance of drawing diagrams to represent our mathematical ideas; showing all of our working out so that we can be credited for our method; and reading all questions thoroughly to ensure we are answering them correctly.

We had the thrilling opportunity to hear from Professor Nira Chamberlain OBE, as he taught us about the application of maths in the real world, and how he used it to propose the design for the HMS Queen Elizabeth. He showed us the great heights that maths can take us to, and how "Maths is indisputably the greatest subject in the world!"

Finally, with Dr Tom Crawford we explored the world of Pokémon. Looking at this world through a mathematical lens led to a series of interesting calculations that gave us some very funny facts about Pokémon characters. For example, we calculated that Wailord (a Pokémon character who is essentially a giant whale) is actually less dense than air, which would mean that it can't live underwater, because it would just fly away!

**Vanshika T
& Ruofu L,
Year 12**



Senior Maths Challenge

In October a record number of sixth form students took part in the Senior Maths Challenge. 63 students were awarded bronze certificates and 53 students were awarded silver certificates. The 40 students who were awarded gold certificates then took part in one of the follow on rounds – the Senior Kangaroo or the British Maths Olympiad in November.

We are delighted to report that 11 students were awarded bronze Kangaroo certificates and 9 students were awarded silver Kangaroo certificates. Congratulations to Andrew F and Adam Q in Year 12 and Zackaryaa I in Year 13 who all scored 70 points and were awarded gold Kangaroo certificates. Also with gold Kangaroo certificates with 75 points are Sunny Y in Year 13, Vishnu P and Akshay M joint best in Year 12 and special congratulations to Jonah R in Year 13 with 80 points, the best score in school.

We eagerly anticipate the results of the BMO round 1 and congratulations to all on their achievements.





Excellence in everything from our departments ...

Drama Department

This half term has been unbelievably busy with Exams, a trip to the theatre and the Winter Musical. In November we had three evenings of Devised Examinations, beginning with Year 13 who performed a play based on their springboard text 'Hangmen' by Martin McDonagh. This led them to create their piece 'Revenge is Sweet' set in the world of reality TV where one of the contestants sought revenge on the others who had killed her parents in a car crash. The piece was also influenced by the style of Revenge Tragedy, so the contestants, all very unlikeable characters, fought amongst themselves 'Traitors' style to win the 'inheritance' money offered by their mysterious and invisible host. Well done to Theo, Luca, Lloyd, Uma and Emily who created and performed this very innovative piece.

As a department we are a victim of our own success as due to the introduction of Drama in Year 9 three years ago, we have almost 40 students taking the subject in Year 11. This meant two evenings of exams over two weeks to ensure that all our students had the preparation they needed in Technical and Dress Rehearsals. With two classes it was decided that we would arrange for performances to take place on two different

evenings to ensure that parents and friends could see the culmination of weeks of improvising, scripting and rehearsing. Both classes had the same stimulus 'Hidden Histories' and my students came up with some very interesting and creative pieces that explored the hidden history of medicine ('Inhospitable'), lesser known female criminals and the justice system ('Behind the Bars') and the incredible life story of one of our student's grandparents ('Unbound').

The week after this was Miss Khan's class, exploring inspiring female leaders and role models ('Her Echo'), the exploration of corrupt political systems and the betrayal of their people ('Disciplined to Death') and finally the way in which a family responds to grief when a loved one is murdered in ('Victims of the Andes').

Well done to all our GCSE & A Level performers and designers who worked really hard to ensure that they gave their best to performances and thank you to our audiences, including my Year 10 students, parents and friends who were very effusive and impressed by what they saw.

Theatre Visit

After the exams, on a Friday evening we took our Year 12 and 13 students to see 'Punch' at the Apollo theatre. I was thinking afterwards how relevant this was to young people and how it should really be accessible to a wider audience outside of London who would really benefit from its



incredibly powerful messages about "gang culture, restorative justice and masculinity in crisis." In a recent article in The Guardian, Nadia Khomami states that the playwright, James Graham, was encouraged by the huge number of schools attending the production: "They were the most remarkable atmospheres we've ever experienced,"

Graham said. "Julie [Hesmondhalgh, one of the actors] said it was one of the highlights of her performing career. You always hear that theatre doesn't fit the TikTok generation, but we could tell these young people were completely connected to the themes of what it's like to grow up as a teenager, to struggle, survive and evolve."

My thoughts about the production touring have clearly been shared by the playwright, the actors and the real people on whom the production was based as the playwright "is working on an adaptation of the play for younger audiences, which will be taken into schools around the UK." He went on to state, "We want to tell the story directly in the young people's own environments. It's about making the play more compact for a younger generation who will be seeing this between classes."

For my perspective, I'm glad we saw the original production as I know our students were on the edge of their seats and came out of the theatre emotionally charged and eager to discuss the themes and messages of the play in class.

Winter Musical

Our final production of the year was **Annie**, the eponymous lead played by the incredibly expressive and energetic Hannah, supported by her fellow orphans Alex, Anasuya, Jasmine, Jiselle and Meredith. Oliver Warbucks and Grace Farrell were played by Theo and Imogen, who brilliantly conveyed their roles as lonely souls who finally realised that they needed each other and Annie to be truly happy. Miss Hannigan, Rooster and Lily were an astonishing combination, the three of them dominating the stage due to their relentless energy and cleverly choreographed dance sequences; well done to Bella, Lilia and Lottie who were perfectly cast in these roles. President Roosevelt was played by Aron who led the presidential cabinet with a strong sense of gravitas and led me to believe that I'd like him to run for the next UK elections! Finally, and by no means least, were Bert Healey and the incredible Boylan sisters played by George, Sethuni, Arya and Andriana whose harmony was astonishing.



Congratulations to our fabulous ensemble cast in Years 8-13 and we even had a Year 7 in the show as we recruited Noah to play Sandy the dog, as suggested by several members of the cast. I wasn't sure how much time a Year 7 would want to spend inside a dog costume, but luckily he said yes and the cast even took to offering him treats! Rehearsals were entertaining and educational. I now know how to pronounce Roosevelt, understand that Hannah has nightmares about red wigs and that Ms Makepeace-Lott and I enjoy a Nairn's oatcake as well as endless packets of blueberries. Most of all though, I know that the cast like to spend hours in the Drama Studio because of the company spirit alongside the cosy underfloor heating.

A huge thank you to Gabriella, Katherine, Alexandra, Gracie, Eva, Anya, Jiselle, Sophia & Meredith; our fabulous choreographers. Since I started teaching Drama, both in this school and in others, I've encouraged our students to lead on the choreography as they are more than capable of creating innovative dances and between them they bring together a range of styles and abilities that everyone can learn from.

Of course a massive well done to our Band, led by Mrs Brady which is full of incredibly talented musicians; there are not many schools out there that have live music to accompany their productions to such a professional standard or students, who demonstrate real initiative in rehearsals and performances. We should give a special mention to Laura, Freddie and Stephanie for turning their hands to instruments they had never played before, namely tuba, tenor saxophone/bass clarinet and piccolo, and to George for learning new guitar notation, all in order to fulfil the requirements of their respective band parts. They are definitely the embodiment of the Owen's Way.

Thanks too to Mr Kelly, Mr Crossley and Mr De Souza for helping them in these endeavours. We really appreciate the effort that these students have taken, especially as we particularly need more Brass players in school if we are to continue to create the kind of sound that is needed in future musicals and indeed in our bands at Owen's.





We continue to have alumni come back in order to help us create our professional polish from the incredible Levy brothers who enable the mammoth task of rigging all the light, sound and special effects. Our 6th form student leads this year are Archie and Finlay on Lighting and Sound and Niamh on Stage Management. All three are old hands at shows and manage to keep a calm head at all times, which a director is more than grateful for.



Farewell to Theo, Bella, Aron, Imogen and many members of the band; we will be very sorry to see them leave the Owen's theatrical stage. They are all going on to great things and I hope they all continue to be involved in treading the boards or playing in the pit at university or wherever their destiny takes them. After a particularly manic lunch time dance rehearsal, I surveyed the feathers all over the floor and thought 'Dear Lord... will this all come together?!' Imogen, a beacon of emotional intelligence, looked at my face and said, 'It will be alright Miss, it always comes together in the end!'



Thank you to Mr Anastasi who took all the fabulous photos in the programme and to Ms Starck our scenic designer without whom the incredible set would not have been possible. Inspired by a recent visit to New York, she meticulously planned the panorama that the audience experienced and if you looked closely you realised that the five flats explored all four seasons and also played a familiar tune from the show!



Backstage, thank you to Mrs Nicolaides and Mrs Bamber who ensured the safety, application of multiple plasters and safety pins that ensured our performers went onstage on time and in the right costumes. On Front of House, thank you to Miss Chan who has also been instrumental in helping out with some last minute props and ensuring that the audience made it to their seats in time for the show.

Miss Khan, Mrs Brady, Ms Makepeace-Lott and I have really enjoyed putting the Winter musical together over the last 10 weeks including our two Sundays, Technical & Dress Rehearsals. Despite the long hours and the zillion questions about costumes, props, set, shoes and wigs... when it does all come together it really is magic. And when it's over... we're already plotting the next one because what is life like without live theatre?



Biology Department

Year 13 Students Explore Molecular Biology at Oxford

Our Year 13 biology students recently had the incredible opportunity to attend the “A Question of Taste” Molecular Biology Workshop at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. This hands-on workshop allowed students to experience cutting-edge molecular biology techniques and connect classroom learning with real scientific investigation. Workshop highlights included:

Taste Testing Students began by carrying out a taste test to determine their own taste phenotype, discovering how genetics can influence everyday experiences.

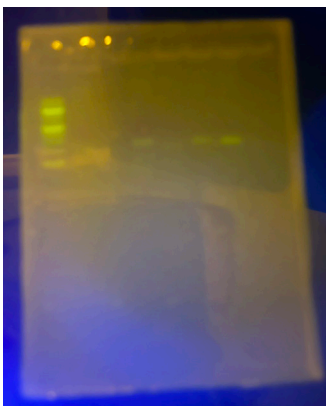
DNA Extraction & PCR They isolated DNA from their own cheek cells and used the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) to amplify a key fragment of a taste receptor gene.

Restriction Enzyme Digest Students used a restriction enzyme digest on their PCR product to differentiate between ‘taster’ and ‘non-taster’ alleles.

Gel Electrophoresis By visualising their digested DNA on a gel, students discovered their genotype and compared it to their taste phenotype.

Finally, the results were discussed in the context of human evolution, giving students insight into how genetic variation has shaped populations over time.

This workshop offered students a unique taste of university level biology, combining practical lab skills, critical thinking, and discussion of real-world biological questions. It was an excellent opportunity to deepen understanding of genetics, molecular biology, and the links between genotype and phenotype – all crucial for their A-Level studies. We are grateful to the Oxford University Museum of Natural History for hosting us and inspiring our students to explore the frontiers of biology. It was a day full of discovery, curiosity, and hands-on science – a perfect experience for our Year 13 biologists!



Agarose gels showing bands of DNA of different sizes

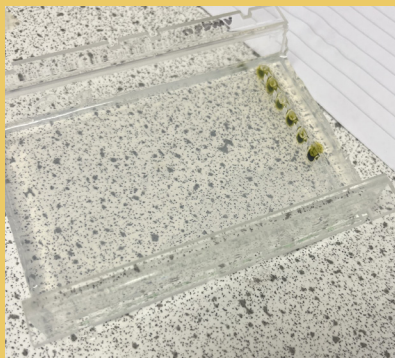
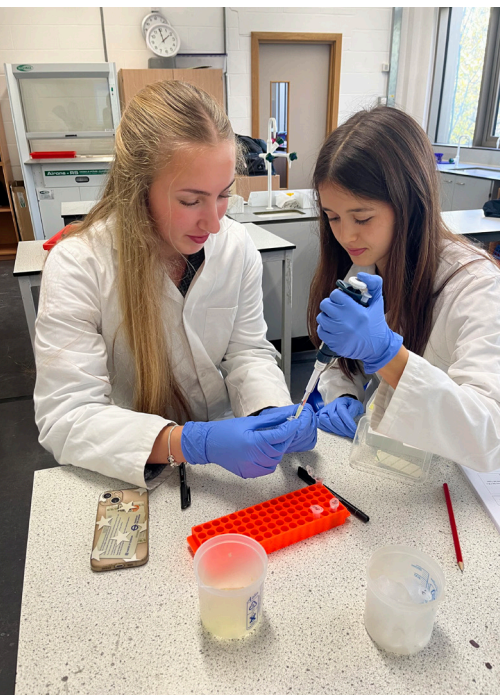


Amgen Biotech Experience

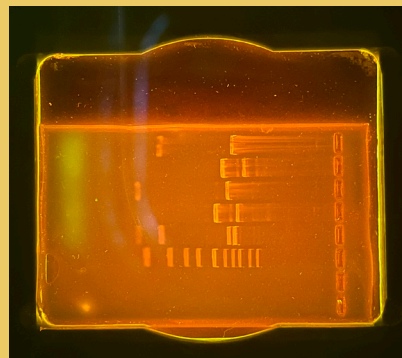
Year 13 students recently took part in two hands-on afternoons of biotechnology through the Amgen Biotech Experience (ABE) programme. Biotechnology provides many of the essential tools and techniques used in modern pharmaceutical research and drug development, and this workshop gave students the chance to explore these methods first hand.

During the sessions, students carried out DNA manipulation on two bacterial plasmids, using restriction endonucleases to cut the DNA and ligase enzymes to join fragments together. They also prepared their own gels for gel electrophoresis, a technique that separates DNA fragments by size, enabling them to analyse the results of their experiments.

The ABE programme aims to inspire young people to pursue further study and careers in biotechnology while helping them develop valuable laboratory skills. Our Year 13 students showed great enthusiasm and precision throughout, demonstrating practical skills worthy of undergraduate scientists!



Gels before the experiment...



...and after.

English Department

Year 13 trip to Stratford-upon-Avon

On Friday 19th September, Mr Maxwell arranged a wonderful trip to Stratford-upon-Avon for Year 13. Mr Simpson kindly drove us up in the minibus, and we stayed in a charmingly quaint B&B named The Quilts and Croissants, run by a lovely couple called Richard and Sue.

Over the weekend, students had the opportunity to visit Shakespeare's birthplace, the home of his wife, Anne Hathaway, and Shakespeare's family home. It was a fantastic chance to learn more about Shakespeare's life and legacy. We also enjoyed wandering around the small town and sampling treats from the market.

On Friday evening, we were lucky enough to see a performance of Measure for Measure at the Stratford theatre; in this play, when her brother falls foul of the state's rigid morality laws, Isabella is sent to plead for his life in Shakespeare's razor-sharp thriller of hypocrisy and corruption. This production was truly thought-provoking and cleverly modernised the play. It opened with a montage of politicians and public figures accused of corruption or mistreatment of women, immediately establishing the play's themes as strikingly relevant today. The stage was set up like a clinical office, complete with a glass cell that descended to entrap Claudio, and large screens forming the backdrop. During the climactic scene, these screens projected live video footage of the characters as though filmed for a news broadcast.

The show was so riveting that students were up late debating the morality of the different characters representing men in power. We even had a lively discussion about whether the Duke is, in fact, the true villain of the play.

All in all, it was an excellent and enriching trip! Mr Simpson was so inspired he wrote this wonderful sonnet:

INTERVAL

*Two ageing lovebirds sit for a while
Taking a break from a story retold.
Unwrapping clingfilm they turn and smile
To eat rolls that are much better than gold.
Ham with lettuce and a packet of crisps
Consumed quietly with a fizzy drink.
This pair that walk on replaceable hips
Are equal or so you would like to think.
But behind closed doors who has the power?
Who made the tasty cobs they ate tonight?*



The Globe Players

On Thursday 13th November, Year 7 students enjoyed a performance of 'What You Will' delivered by The Globe Players, a superbly entertaining theatre company.

'What You Will' proved to be a lively, engaging introduction to Shakespeare, offering Year 7 students a genuinely immersive experience of Shakespearean theatre. The performance blended humour, energy, and clarity, making Shakespeare's language feel fresh and accessible even to those encountering it for the first time.

The cast moved seamlessly between scenes from a range of Shakespeare's plays, using minimal props and impressive physicality to bring each moment to life. Their ability to shift tone – from the mischief of A Midsummer Night's Dream to the tension of Macbeth – kept students captivated throughout. The fast pace and interactive elements helped maintain excitement without ever losing the richness of Shakespeare's language. We even saw a brilliant cameo performance from Mr Henshaw, who convincingly took up the role of Duke Orsino in Twelfth Night, and young Temi was pulled up on stage to play the changeling boy that Titania and Oberon fight over in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'!

The experience not only entertained but also deepened students' understanding of one of the most significant writers in literary history. Students left with a greater understanding of the time period, Shakespeare's life and his plays.

The Globe Players are well known for making Shakespeare accessible to younger audiences, and 'What You Will' demonstrated exactly why. The production was both educational and thoroughly enjoyable, leaving many students inspired and eager to explore Shakespeare further.

A memorable and exciting introduction to the world of Shakespearean theatre.

"The production was full of perfect comedic timing, great acting and stage props that brought the play to life. The Tempest was included along with the malicious witches from Macbeth. In between the humour and the actors breaking the fourth wall, we received context about the plays. It was honestly entertaining!" **Myra**

"Hilarious comedic timing, and really entertaining. I was completely engaged the entire time." **Thea**

"Overall, this was an enticing performance which was very entertaining and amusing, and it had so many qualities I couldn't fit them here, but I give it four and a half stars, as well as a hearty recommendation!" **Aryush**

"It was a very exhilarating experience." **Rishi**

"Great fun, interesting facts, skilled actors and wonderful execution. Everything you need for an amazing performance packed into one brilliant play. Five stars from me!" **Diego**





Author visit with Matt Dickinson

Friday 28th November was an exciting day for Year 8, as we were lucky enough to welcome author and filmmaker Matt Dickinson to speak to our students.

Matt's talk perfectly complemented our English unit on heroes. He shared fascinating stories from his time in the jungle with Bear Grylls and, most impressively, from his climb up Mount Everest. Students gained real insight into the grit, resilience and determination required to take on such extreme challenges. The session was highly interactive, with Matt regularly inviting students to consider their own attitudes towards goal-setting, teamwork, and overcoming obstacles.

The students were captivated by the video clips of his Everest expedition and were enthralled by the realities and dangers of such a journey. Matt also offered his own perspective on heroism, introducing us to figures such as Poorna Malavath, the 13-year-old Indian girl who reached the summit of Everest in 2014; Ernest Shackleton, the Antarctic explorer who successfully brought all his men home; and the Nepalese porters who carry heavy loads up the mountain for little pay, yet play an essential role in every climber's success.

After the talk, there was a real buzz of excitement. Many students were eager to buy Matt's books, have them signed, and even take photos with him. Matt himself commented on how impressed he was by the enthusiasm and curiosity of our young readers.

An inspiring and memorable visit that left our Year 8 students motivated, thoughtful, and eager to read Matt's fiction inspired by his real-life experiences.

"Inspirational and an incredible author, it was a really big opportunity to meet with him."

Robyn



Music Department

'Danse Macabre' Assembly

8.45am on Tuesday 4th November and "Zig-a-zig-a-zig!", the twelve chimes of midnight, played by Megan in Year 10 on the harp, ushered in the DAOS Symphony Orchestra's annual 'Danse Macabre' performance assembly to the whole of Year 7. With the principal character (Death) represented by Year 13 orchestra leader Catherine's colourful violin solo, the orchestra (some running in from various transport complications) gave a thrillingly atmospheric and exciting performance of Saint-Saens' tone poem. Year 7, having explored this piece in curriculum Music lessons, were a responsive and informed audience as sections of the orchestra presented the different elements of the story before commencing the full performance. Congratulations to all the wonderful performers for such engaging performing (even first thing in the morning!)



Senior Concert

Later that week, on Thursday 6th November, the DAOS Concert Band gave a glittering performance to open the Senior Concert. Their programme mixed concert band original 'Festivo' by Edward Gregson with arrangements of popular favourites such as Toto's 'Africa' and Queen's 'Don't Stop Me Now', displaying the brilliance of this ensemble. The choral section of the concert demonstrated the range of our senior singers, opening with the Senior Chamber Choir's lovely rendition of the Irish folk song 'Danny Boy', to the Close Harmony Group's bossa nova 'Girl from Ipanema' and the Senior Choir, flooding the stage with over 100 singers to close the first half of the concert with their programme including a powerful rendition of 'Sail on Boys' from Operation Mincemeat, and closing with John Rutter's uplifting 'For the Beauty of the Earth'.

The second half of the concert was orchestral, opening with Senior Strings' exhilarating performance of the rhythmically exciting Concerto for String Orchestra by Grażyna Bacewicz. The Symphony Orchestra followed this with two large scale romantic pieces, Berlioz's colourful, descriptive concert overture 'Roman Carnival', followed by the sweeping melodies of Dvorak's Symphony no. 8, bringing the first large ensembles concert of the term to a thrilling close. Our thanks to the musician teacher ensemble directors and support: Mr Kelly, Ms McChrystal, Ms Makepeace-Lott, Mr Page, Mr Southorn, Mr Widden and Ms Bamber, also to professional accompanist, Ms Brooks, as well as Mr Muir in rehearsal. Thank you to everyone who helped backstage and in the preparation of the concert: Ms Sutherland, Miss Jones, Tech Crew and the OSA for refreshments. Thank you to all of our wonderful musicians for all of their hard work and inspiration and congratulations on their brilliant performances!



Chamber Concert

The Chamber Concert on Monday 10th November was a veritable feast of music that left audience, staff and performers alike delighted and in wonder at the range and quality of the music-making. Featuring 15 different ensembles, including percussion groups, various brass groups, wind chamber groups, string chamber groups, guitar ensemble and the senior jazz combo, the repertoire spanned over 300 years and even included a world premiere of a horn quartet by Year 11 student, Rafi. Some of our musicians were taking to a Dame Alice Owen's stage for the first time as the performers ranged from Year 7 to Year 13. An enormous thank you to the musician teacher directors involved in preparing our musicians for these performances, to Ms McChrystal, Ms Wild, Mr Widden, Mr Crossley, Mr Moutoussis, Mr Niesyto, Mr Kelly, Ms Smith, Mr Page and Mr Hunt, and a massive congratulations to all of the performers for a simply outstanding evening of performing!



Singing Success

Owen's Senior Chamber Choir had a fantastic day out in Southend on Thursday 27th November, where we took part in a regional choir competition and came home winners of our category! After our morning coach ride there, the choir delivered two contrasting performances: a beautiful rendition of 'O Danny Boy', followed by a spirited and entertaining version of 'Sit Down, You're Rockin' the Boat'. Both pieces were met with warm applause, and the judges praised our blend, musicality, and general performance at a high level. Spirits were high as we celebrated our success on the coach ride home, a brilliant day for the choir and a proud moment for the whole school.

Imogen G



Winter Concert

It actually snowed on the day of the Winter Concert on Thursday 19th November as a further eight DAOS large ensembles took to the stage. One of the most unique of these, working totally without sheet music, playing together by ear and incorporating improvisation to their carefully planned performances, is the 32-performers of the Jazz Collective who opened the concert. They were followed by the Junior Ensemble, who also had the audience singing along to the spiritual 'Deep Down in My Soul', and the Second Band, whose performance included a rousing performance of 'YMCA'. After that, the stage was cleared and Junior Choir sang beautifully to treat us to a set that included the songs 'Harvest Moon' and also 'Speechless' from Aladdin. The Junior Chamber Choir finished off the first half of the Winter Concert fittingly with a beautiful performance of 'Into the Unknown' from Frozen.

The second half opened with a characterful call to attention from the Brass Band's performance of a Baroque Rigaudon by Andre Campra. Following them, the Junior Chamber Strings gave accomplished and assured performances that included Karl Jenkins' 'Palladio'. The Second Orchestra flooded the stage with over 70 performers for a thrilling and rousing end to the concert with 'Slavonic Dance' by Dvorak and music from Pirates of the Caribbean. Featuring 170 performers, many of them in multiple ensembles, this was a concert where many of the performers were taking to an Owen's stage for the first time, and the results were thrilling! We would like to thank all of the musician teacher directors and support who worked with our musicians in putting together this fantastic concert: Mr Crossley, Ms Bamber, Ms Sutherland, Mr Southorn, Mr Kelly, Mrs Brady, Ms McChrystal and professional accompanist, Ms Brooks, as well as rehearsal accompanist, Mr Thompson. Most of all, we would like to thank our musicians for all their hard work and inspiration and congratulate them on their outstanding performances!

PE Department



Basketball

Boys Year 9

The boys have played one game so far this half term with a convincing victory over Chancellors. The boys have more games coming up over the end of this half term and after Christmas.

Girls Under 13

The girls have started their season off with a game vs Beaumont which unfortunately they lost. It is clear to see that they have been working hard in training and hope to put this into future matches.

Boys Year 10

The boys have started the season off well both in the district and county league. So far they have beaten Hertswood, Chancellors and Onslow in the district, and Sandringham and St Edmunds College in the county league. The boys have more games after Christmas.



Badminton



The under 14 Girls and under 16 Girls and Boys performed extremely well against some tough opposition in the Schools' Badminton Competition. All teams finished their respective tournaments in third place.

Football

Year 7 Boys

Both the Year 7 teams have successfully made it to the next rounds of all of their cup competitions. The B team have made it to the next round of the county cup after a strong competitive 3-2 win against Onslow, facing Aldenham in the coming weeks. The A team are currently in round 4 of the National Cup after a win over St Edmunds, and have also progressed to the next stage of the county plate, soon to play Goffs Churchgate. Very proud of the hard work from both teams!

Year 8 Boys

It's been a very positive time of the year for the Year 8 Boys footballers, who have beaten Yavneh College 6-0, Chancellor's 5-4 (having been 3-0 down at half-time), and Stanborough 8-1, all in the District Cup. In addition, the team beat Sir John Lawes in the first round of the County Plate Competition 2-1. The whole squad is playing some really good football at the moment, and is working hard to make sure that this continues throughout the season.

Year 11 Boys

The boys played against Future Academies Watford in the county plate and after a very tight game which finished 3-3 in normal time, they went on to win 3-1 on penalties.

Senior Boys

The boys have had a mixed bag of results this half term with two wins and two losses. They narrowly lost to Bishop Stortford in the national cup and St Edmunds in the county league. They have beaten Ridgeway in the district cup and Townsend in the County Plate. The boys will continue with more games after Christmas.

U12 Girls

The under 12 football squad faced a very strong Presdales School in the second round of the County Cup. Despite going behind to 3 first half goals they fought back to 3-2 and showed real resilience and determination despite losing 5-2. The goals were scored by Isha and Etti with Sofia selected as player of the game.

U13 Girls

In the English Schools' National Cup competition the under 13 squad faced Monk's Walk School in round 2. After trailing twice, the girls fought extremely hard to finish normal time at 3-3 thanks to two goals from Isha and one from Zara. Extra time still could not separate the teams and the tie went to penalties where the girls held their nerve well to win 4-2 and progress to the next round. Isha was voted as player of the match.

The girls then faced Henlow Church of England Academy in round 3 and put in a dominant display to win 5-1 with all five goals coming from player of the match Arya. They now face Sandringham School in round 4. In the County Cup the under 13s faced last year's finalists, St Albans Girls' School. It was a very even game which the girls were unfortunate to lose 2-0, with the second goal coming late on as they pushed forward looking for an equaliser. Nicole was voted as player of the match.

U14 Girls

The under 14s faced Marlborough Science Academy in round 2 of the County Cup. In a dominant display the girls ran out 4-1 winners thanks to goals from Emily, Amy, Arya and Zara. Nicole was picked as player of the match. They now face Knights Templar School in round 3.

In their first District League game the under 14s defeated Chancellor's School 3-0 courtesy of three first half goals from Amy, Emily and Anashe. Betsy was voted as player of the match. In the County Cup, the team battled hard against Katherine Warrington but were ultimately defeated 7-3 in a high-scoring game. In the National Cup, they faced Berkhamsted and, despite a spirited effort, fell to a 5-1 loss.

With valuable lessons learned from these cup matches, the focus now turns to the District League, where the girls still have plenty to play for. Upcoming fixtures against Broxbourne, Beaumont, and Haileybury will offer further opportunities for the team to showcase their development, teamwork, and competitive spirit as they look to finish the season on a high.

Hockey

U13 Girls

In an extremely tough county tournament the under 13 hockey squad performed superbly and certainly held their own against opposition that were all private schools. Maya and Autumn were selected as players of the day.

In a friendly match the under 13s faced a strong Royal Masonic School for Girls side. Zoe put the team 1-0 up but they were pegged back just before half time. The second half was very even but RMS scored a late goal to secure the victory. Isabella was selected as player of the game.

U14 Girls

With several players missing, the U14 hockey team travelled to face a tough Bancroft's School side. The girls conceded an early goal but showed great character fighting back to earn a 1-1 draw thanks to a goal from POM Izzy.



Cross Country



On November 11th the Mid Herts Cross Country Championships were held at Queenswood School. We had teams in both the girls and boys categories. In the girls events we achieved the following results: Year 7 came 2nd, year 8 came 1st, Year 9 came 3rd and Senior Girls came 2nd and the girls overall came 2nd.

In the boys events we achieved the following results: Year 7 boys came 1st, Year 8 came 2nd, Year 9 came 1st, Year 10 came 1st and Seniors came 1st with the boys teams coming 1st overall. This helped us regain the championship trophy and become champions again.

Well done!

Congratulations to **Annie** in Year 11 who competed in the London Regionals for Gymnastics and came away with a silver medal in double mini trampoline and a bronze medal in tumbling.

Netball



Year 7

vs Chauncy – Friendly Match

The U12s faced a very strong Chauncy side in what proved to be a highly competitive friendly match. Although the team came away with a loss, the game was full of positive moments and provided plenty to build on in training. Every player showed determination from start to finish, matching Chauncy's intensity and demonstrating excellent teamwork throughout. Congratulations to Izzy, who earned Player of the Match, and Scarlet, awarded Opponent's Player of the Match, both recognised for their fantastic defensive performances.

Year 7 vs Year 8 Friendly Match

In a fantastic display of school netball spirit, the U12A and U12B teams took on the U13A and U13B teams during training in a friendly Year 7 vs Year 8 fixture. For both B teams this was their first opportunity to play in a match environment and they rose to the challenge brilliantly. The Year 8 teams ultimately came out on top in both games, but the fixtures were highly competitive throughout, with plenty of impressive play from all sides. It was wonderful to see so many students not only participating but also supporting each other, an excellent afternoon of netball all round!

Year 8

On November 12th, the U13s played their first match of the season which gave them the chance to apply what they had been learning in training. It was a match for recognising the difference between training and competition which stood the students in good stead for upcoming matches. Unfortunately, BHGS had an extremely strong GA who we were unable to take out of the game resulting in a 9-15 loss.

POM Lydia.



In order to give the U13s some more match play experience, we arranged for them to play a friendly match against Habs U14C team. Knowing that they would be against opponents who were likely taller and stronger than them, they approached the game with determination and a will to build on the basics. Despite taking a loss, all enjoyed the match and lessons were learned about accuracy of passing. POM was Betsy and CPOM was Zara. Unfortunately, this was not enough to win and Berkhamsted won the County League Match 36-14. Opposition Player of the Match was Cara and Coach's Player of the Match was Ottie for her instant response to feedback.



Year 9

The U14 Netball team played Onslow St Audrey's School on October 15th and had the opportunity to apply what they had been working on in training in the game. With everyone working together and thinking about doing their own job well, the U14s took the win 21-2.

On an extremely cold November 20th, the U14s played Habs in the County League. Despite all efforts, they were unable to overcome the very strong opposition and lost 28-8, with CPOM Betsy.



Year 10

vs BHGS: 20-17 Win

The U15 team opened their season with an impressive 20-17 victory over BHGS. The girls set themselves the target of having a strong first quarter, and they did exactly that, coming out with energy, accuracy and control. Their early momentum proved crucial, allowing them to maintain the lead in a tightly contested match. This was a very promising first performance, showing great potential for the season ahead.



Year 10 District Tournament

The Year 10 girls braved a bitterly cold afternoon at the district tournament this November, with temperatures dropping to -1°C. Despite the icy conditions, spirits remained high and the energy across both the A and B teams was fantastic.

A Team Tournament The A team faced a tough and competitive pool, with every school bringing their best to the court. The girls rose to the challenge, showing excellent teamwork, determination, and some brilliant attacking play. After a series of hard-fought matches—several of which were decided by just a single point—the team secured a well-earned 4th place out of 7 overall. A great result in a very strong field!

B Team Tournament The B team's tournament followed a slightly different format, with longer match times that demanded real stamina and focus. The girls handled the pressure superbly, delivering consistent performances throughout the afternoon. A few of the games were incredibly close, keeping everyone on the edge of their seats, but the team held their nerve when it mattered most. Their determination paid off as they finished the tournament in first place, bringing home a fantastic victory.





Year 11

On the November 11th, the U16s took on Berkhamstead U16 B team and played with such determination. The movement on court and links across the positions were fluid. Our defence was dominant with many turnovers and the shooters were able to convert to goal after the centre court looked after the ball down the court.

The U16 team played against Chauncy in the County League and after a battle against a strong opposition, they came away with the win, 31-29. A closely contested match, the team found themselves having to pull together and try various changes in positions and strategies to take control of the game. POM was Freya and CPOM Annabelle.

On November 18th, the U16s took on Habs in their County League match and despite their hard work and whole court defense, they were unable to secure the win 13-17. The team is working very hard in training to iron out the techniques and strategies needed to dominate in a very competitive league. We look forward to seeing them continue to grow and reap the rewards they deserve! POM was Freya and CPOM Hannah.



Seniors

The Senior netball squad took on Saint John Henry Newman School in Stevenage in the County Plate Quarter Finals. It was a pleasure to be able to get all players on the court and they all played very well. POM was captain Evie and CPOM was Jenna. We now await to find out who our opponents will be in the semi-final.

On November 11th, the Seniors played against Habs in a County League match and after most of the game being goal for goal, they were just unable to hold on in the last quarter, losing 14-18. POM was Evie and CPOM Shenel.



Careers update

Year 13 Apprenticeship Evening

The 6th Form held an Apprenticeship Evening for Year 13 on Wednesday 17th September 2025. Parents and students learnt more about this alternative higher education pathway whereby qualifications and degrees are gained whilst undertaking a full-time role in a company. An alumnus who had chosen this route recounted their reasons for undertaking an apprenticeship, the application process and their experience as an apprentice. Year 13 students are kept up to date with apprenticeship opportunities that they may be keen to apply for. The Sixth Formers' Guide to Degree Apprenticeships provides interesting information on both the apprenticeship process and examples of the types of apprenticeships on offer in the UK economy can be found [here](#).

Year 13 University Applications

Those students for whom university is their preferred next steps have been choosing and applying for courses through UCAS. Each 6th form student has a personal tutor to support them through this process and 6th form and careers staff are always available for advice and help with choosing courses, the application process, writing personal statements and interviews where relevant.

Year 11 Career Interviews

All Year 11 students have met at least once with Ms Stein to discuss their options post-GCSE. These discussions cover A Levels at DAOS 6th Form, other 6th forms they may be interested in moving to, college courses and other vocational qualifications they may wish to pursue. Students have been provided with links and information relevant to the decisions and pathways they are considering. Year 11 also had a visit from Oaklands College where they learnt more about the post-GCSE options they offer.

External Careers Events

Our students have been involved in careers programmes run by outside organisations and attended several external careers events to help them consider future paths after DAOS.

TfL Work Experience Day

On October 8th, 24 Year 12 students journeyed to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park where they got a tour around the TfL offices, had a chance to network and meet with staff to learn more about their roles and careers in TfL and took part in a challenge regarding submitting a bid for an event.

Morgan Stanley Student Programme

On November 20th–21st, two Year 12 students joined 20 other students from London and Ireland for two days of team building, diversity, networking and generally getting a taste of various career options, potential mentors, and connections to broaden their network within financial services. One of the students commented: 'I found it very helpful as I could talk face to face with employees at Morgan Stanley. Getting an insight on their career paths and how they ended up where they did was inspirational and helps me when thinking about my future aspirations. Additionally, I thoroughly enjoyed seeing the Bloomberg office and this made me realise the wide range of opportunities out there.'

FT Student Advocate Programme

Two students are involved in a four-month virtual work experience programme promoting the value of the FT to their peers and sharing student perspectives with the company. As a Student Advocate, they will build real-world skills in communication, leadership and teamwork.

Careers in the Curriculum

Staff around the school have been focusing on careers linked to their specific subject. This is both through displays and posters around the school and references in lessons.

Abiola Bello,
Love in Winter Wonderland

Described as a 'screen-worthy holiday romance', this young adult novel set in a Black-owned bookshop tells the story of Trey and Ariel, thrown together by their holiday jobs and forced to overcome their instant dislike of each other in order to save the business. You can guess what happens next!

Jacob North,
Ice Apprentices

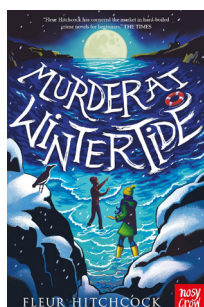
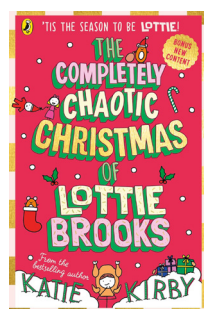
The first book in a brand-new series by an aptly-named new author, this is a fantasy adventure set in Tundra, the last settlement in a world of ice. It follows the story of Oswin Fields, an outsider new to a school for ice apprentices, who becomes caught up in a struggle with the monsters lurking within this enchanted world. We're looking forward to seeing how this series will progress.

Soyoung Park, *Snowglobe*

Our young adult readers love dystopias and East Asian settings, so what better than a winter-themed novel that combines the two? This Korean thriller tells the story of Chobahm, raised in a climate-raved, frozen world, who becomes caught up in the 24-hour reality TV shows streamed from Snowglobe, the climate-controlled domed city at the heart of her world and the only warm place left on the planet.

Katie Kirby,
The Completely Chaotic Christmas of Lottie Brooks

The Lottie Brooks series is hugely popular with our younger students, and Lottie's Christmas adventures promise more of Katie Kirby's best-selling blend of fun, friendship and family embarrassment!



Never stop learning news from the library ...

New winter reads in the library

December has arrived! We can't do anything about the weather outside, but we're working hard to make the Library into a cosy place to enjoy some relaxing winter reading. Our wonderful Student Librarians are decorating the Library for the festive season as I write, and over the next few weeks, Years 7-9 will be enjoying library lessons on the theme of Winter Reading and will be set a Winter Reading Challenge to encourage them to keep reading over the holidays. We even have our very own Elf on the Library Shelves! Most importantly however, we have lots of great books for everyone to borrow. Here are a few of the brilliant newer books on festive and wintry themes that we have available in the Library this year.

Fleur Hitchcock,
Murder at Wintertide

Part of a series of atmospheric murder mysteries for younger readers that also work as standalone reads, this novel transposes the traditional Christmas murder mystery to the seaside, with a body washing up on the beach and strange lights on clifftops...

Katharina Weiss-Tudor,
Mission: Arctic - A Scientific Adventure to a Changing North Pole

Shortlisted for the Royal Society Young People's Book Prize 2024, this attractively-illustrated non-fiction book tells the story of the 2019 voyage of the research icebreaker Polarstern, which was deliberately frozen into the sea ice and left to drift towards the North Pole. Over the next year, the researchers on board braved the ice, bears and storms in the largest scientific expedition to the Arctic ever undertaken. This book brings the expedition alive for young readers, and explains why the mission's findings matter to us all.

**Shared on behalf and in collaboration with
Hertfordshire Constabulary**

All schools in Hertfordshire have been asked to share the following message from Herts police requesting that those aged 11 and above complete a survey to help the police focus their efforts in the most important places – please see below:

Dear Parents, Guardians & Carers,

Your local Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) is currently seeking views from residents as they set their next round of local policing priorities. Officers are keen to hear from young people about the issues that matter most to them, to ensure they are capturing opinions across a wide age range – often lacking in feedback from our younger community.

We're asking parents and guardians to please encourage young people 11+ to take part in Hertfordshire Constabulary's Local Priority Survey to make their views heard. Whilst it is not mandatory to provide, by answering the "Age" question in the survey, this will really help us to narrow down feedback provided relative to the age of the individual answering.

What is a local policing priority?

NPTs work alongside partners to focus on solving long and short-term neighbourhood issues – with young persons in mind, particularly at this time of year, it's important to provide you and your child, more opportunities, to tell us where individuals may feel unsafe when walking home from school or friends but also any other local issues that may affect them. Local officers set local policing priorities every four months, to provide a specific focus on the issues which are currently causing the most concern to residents locally. The views and concerns of the

Supportive community have your say...

younger community are just as crucial, ensuring that everyone has a voice.

What can the public expect?

The responses you provide are reviewed by your local officers. Residents will see their dedicated team of PCs and PCSOs working alongside partners to address the agreed priorities, through an increased police presence, engagement events and targeted enforcement.

You can see what your community are saying in response to this survey by visiting the Local Area Pages and entering your postcode.

What about other crime and issues?

Every area of the county is covered by a NPT but is also policed by response officers who attend emergency calls, detectives who investigate crimes such as burglary, robbery and assault, and specialist countywide units. While there will be a focus on the local priorities, officers will continue to respond to daily business as usual, as well as force wide priorities.

We want to ensure that local policing resources are focusing on the issues that matter most, so we'd encourage everyone to share their views with us by completing the survey via this link:

[Hertfordshire Constabulary – Local Priority Survey](#)

dates for your diary

- Mon 5 Jan** Inset Day: no students to attend
- Tues 6 Jan** Spring Term starts for all students
A level and GCSE mock exams begin
- Mon 12 Jan** OSA Committee meeting
- Mon 19 Jan** Parent Workshop: Resilience
- Mon 26 Jan** Year 9 Immunisations
- Thu 29 Jan** Year 9 Parents' Evening
- Wed 4 Feb** Year 12 UCAS Information Evening
- Thu 5 Feb** Great Gig
- Fri 6 Feb** Year 9 GCSE options deadline
- Mon 16–Fri 20 Feb** Half term holiday
- Mon 23 Feb** Chamber Concert
- Tues 24 Feb** Years 7, 11 and 13 photographs
- Tues 3 Mar** Gala Concert, Royal Festival Hall
- Mon 9 Mar** Parent Workshop: Talking Teens
Year 13 Soloists Concert
- Thu 12 Mar** Year 8 Parents' Evening
- Thu 19 Mar** Senior Concert
- Tues 24–Thu 26 Mar** Spring play
- Fri 27 Mar** Last day of term



happy holidays!