



RECEPTION'S SCIENCE WEEK ANIMAL ADAPTATIONS

FROM THE HEAD

The Head, Craig, reflects on a rather busy term at Abingdon Prep.

It has been another wonderful term with so many different activities taking place.

I am writing this after listening to a wonderful Senior Section end of term concert with soloists, ensembles and choirs performing superbly and showcasing their immense musical talents. The week before saw our Middle Section perform just as well in their concert.

On stage, Years 3 and 4 performed 'Peter Pan' to a packed house just before half term. It was a brilliant production with all the children throwing themselves into their roles and entertaining the audience throughout.

Our talented artists exhibited their work on the theme of 'change' at Abingdon School's new pavilion earlier in the term. It was great to see so many pieces of impressive art on display.

In the sporting arena, our cross country teams performed admirably all season but special mention must be given to our U13 team who came a fantastic 2nd in the Prep Schools National Finals, after finishing 14th in the English Schools National

Finals the day before. Our football teams have produced their now customary strong set of results, with our U12A team going unbeaten across the season. The childrens' hockey skills have also developed enormously and it has been hugely rewarding to see so many children loving taking up another sport.

Trips have continued to prove incredibly valuable to support and extend the childrens' learning, whilst being incredibly enjoyable too for all of our year groups.

This term alone has seen: a history trip to Ufton Court for Year 4, a maps and trails day to support Year 6 geography, a forensic science experience during Science Week for Years 7 and 8, Year 5 combined science and history at the Oxford museums, Reception had an environmental day at Sutton Courtenay, Year 1 enjoyed storytelling at the Oxford story museum, and Middle Section had road safety workshops, to name but a few.

Best wishes

Craig



The Great RSPB Birdwatch



Inter House Cross Country



Griffin win the termly House Merit Cup



Arts Award Skill Share

Farewell to Elizabeth Slater



This term we said farewell to Elizabeth who leaves us after just over twelve years, in which she has proved to be the most adaptable of teachers taking on many different roles in the school.

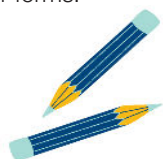
She began as a Year 3 form teacher. After returning from maternity leave, she taught French to Pre-Prep and Drama to our Junior Section, later becoming Head of Drama. She also extended Forest School to include Years 3 plus, and recently combined the two into 'Drama in the Woods'.

Working closely with Emma, our Director of Music, Elizabeth's drama productions have been colourful and engaging, drawing out some splendid performances from the pupils from main parts to ensemble ones across the School in the Year 3-4 plays, Year 5-6 pantos and last year's Year 7-8 'Play in a Week'.

We send our very best wishes to Elizabeth as she plans her next career move.

School Council

The School Council met three times this term. Topics for discussion included looking at whether we have the right balance of activities, so that everyone can be involved and has the opportunity to do what they want during our breaktimes and lunchtimes, and also ideas for Other Half clubs. The Pre-Prep reps had some excellent suggestions. All these ideas, and propositions for improving other aspects of school life, were presented to Craig at the end of term after the reps had discussed them with their forms.



February Class Pairings - Cards and Games

Congratulations to all who took part in the prestigious SATIPS Challenge, an annual general knowledge competition for prep schools. This was our first time entering, with nearly 40 pupils from Years 5 to 8 taking part. Special mentions go to three pupils who placed in the top 50 in their respective divisions. In the Juniors, Arran placed 28th whilst in the Seniors Alex came 23rd whilst Kit finished an incredible fifteenth in the country. They received special certificates in our end of term assembly and Amazon vouchers from the organisers!



QUIZ MASTERS



YEAR 6 GROW COPPER SULFATE CRYSTALS



CHINESE NEW YEAR

ART CLUB DRAGON



LENT TRADITIONS - PANCAKE FLIPPING



MANDARIN CLUB

Eco Talk from BBOWT

A large group of pupils crowded into the library for our Eco Talk this term by Lisa Lane from Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). Lisa explained all about the work BBOWT has been doing at Chimney Meadows reserve, including rewilding the arable land into a wetland meadow, and initiatives to enhance accessibility for fish at Duxford and Shifford weir. Lisa's talk included so many fascinating pictures of the progress they are making and highlighted the numerous features that are considered when planning such a project. Phoenix House has chosen BBOWT as their House Charity this year and it was a super opportunity for them to see how their fundraising was used to support our local area.



Sustainable Housing Talk

James Pritchett from Greencore Homes gave a talk to the Senior Section on sustainable housing, detailing how they build their homes to ensure that they have minimal energy loss and can therefore have a low impact on the environment. Pupils from 8R then took part in a workshop where they designed their own homes to be 'eco friendly' taking ideas from the presentation and adding many of their own, including wind turbines and bee hives. James was as equally impressed with their ideas as they had been by his presentation. A super way to compliment Year 8's topic on energy.



SCIENCE WEEK

Each spring, schools all over the UK celebrate Science Week, an annual event of STEM activities promoted by the British Science Association (BSA). At Abingdon Prep all year groups took part in fun activities and workshops, and many made posters and models following this year's theme of 'change and adaptation'.



Year 8R and Pre-Prep teamed up to work together. Reception made box animals, adding features to match



different habitats. Year 2 investigated the disintegration properties of paper towels and toilet roll. Year 1 hunted for camouflaged caterpillars. 8R thoroughly enjoyed working with the younger children.



Charlotte from Oxford University's Earth Sciences Outreach Team gave Years 3 to 5 a workshop on volcanoes. The children identified different rocks, learned about volcano types with fun demonstrations, and tried to predict when the party popper volcano would blow.



Year 6 explored the properties of dry ice with Nitro-Jen from Bright Sparks.



Also we welcomed back John Bates, retired forensic scientist, to run his workshop for Years 7 and 8 in which they became CSIs and forensic scientists, solving a crime and taking it to trial.



World Book Day and Author Visits



Thursday 6 March marked World Book Day, an annual event dedicated to promoting and celebrating the love of reading. Abingdon Prep was filled with excitement as children arrived dressed in an incredible array of creative and colourful costumes, bringing their favourite book characters to life. It was a difficult job for our judges! Our winners were Hero (Reception) as a witch from Strega Nona, Tom (Year 4) as Gangsta Granny and Theo (Year 2) as Tin Tin. Well done to all for their wonderful costumes!



Following the celebrations at Abingdon Prep, pupils in Years 7 and 8 headed over to Abingdon School to meet Nathaneal Lessore—a young, up and coming author who writes from his own experience of growing up in South London. He entertained pupils with his personal stories as well as sharing some tips for inspiring them and helping them to write. Several left clutching signed copies of his books; many will have been inspired to try writing differently having heard and seen him speak.



Middle Section pupils all took part in a road safety workshop designed to improve their awareness of potential hazards and teach them essential safety skills. Children learned about finding safe places to cross, how to cross safely and to predict the dangers they may encounter. They also learned about car stopping distances, and planned to test their parents when they got home!



Why not take up Classics?

Our Year 8 pupils received a very informative presentation from Mr Price, Head of Classics at Abingdon School, to help them with their Year 9 options. Following discussions of the influence of the Ancient Greek language on modern English, with references to Greek gods and contemporary historical events, the pupils are well placed to consider whether they might continue studying Latin, or add Ancient Greek or Ancient History to their timetables next year.



The APS Go Club was visited by two robots last week. The club has been running all term, with most members being completely new to the game. This was the first time robots were involved and everyone enjoyed playing against them. It was fun, if slightly “spooky” to see them picking up the pieces, placing them on the board, and even complaining if the humans didn’t play by the rules! Thanks to Mr Qin for providing one of the robots.

TRIPS



YEAR 4 VISIT UFTON COURT

The Year 4 pupils enjoyed an exciting trip to Ufton Court, where they explored what everyday life was like during the Tudors. They learned about farming methods, Tudor crime and punishment, and made bow and arrows using natural materials. A great day out for all!

YEAR 6 MAPS AND TRAILS AT HILL END

Year 6 enjoyed a chilly trip to Hill End to practise their map skills from this term. After a few warm up games and team building activities, everyone raced off in pairs to complete the whole site orienteering course. It was a great day out and a good test of the pupils' map reading.



Worldwise Quiz

Three teams from Year 7 and 8 had a great night at the Geographical Association World Wise quiz held at MCS. Congratulations to Teddy, James and Carter as the winners of a creme egg for the best Mixed Bag round.



YEAR 5 AT THE PITT RIVERS & NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUMS

Year 5 spent a busy day at the Oxford museums, combining history and science. The morning's adaptation workshop included looking at a polar bear paw. After lunch in the Pitt Rivers, the Maya were the subject, which included handling authentic artifacts. Both workshops were followed by museum tours. The workshop facilitators were excellent, getting the children involved right from the start.



DT – ARTS AWARD SUCCESS

The DT arts award students have worked extremely hard in finishing their DT arts award. Students explored designers who inspire them, visited the design museum in London, shared skills with others and completed projects showcasing their ability and love for DT.

Projects included sweet dispensers, a replica cricket bat and stumps, table hockey, garden decorations, table football, home storage and a Harry Potter themed chess board. They should all be very proud of their achievements and I look forward to seeing them display their work with pride at our Art and Design Exhibition in May. Well done Ollie F, Daud, Leo, Alex S, Aubrey, Ben, Benji, Orlando and Yash!



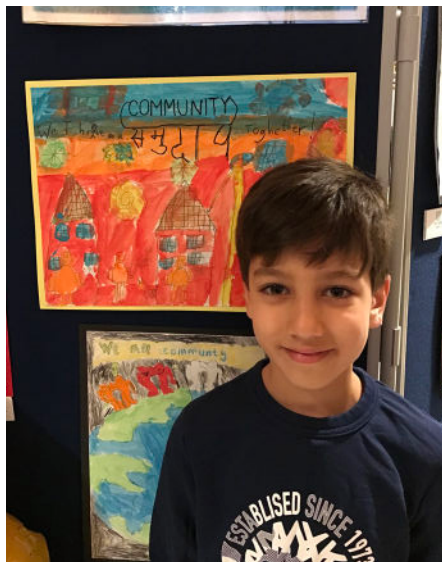
YOUNG ART ABINGDON EXHIBITION

The Young Art Abingdon Exhibition held at the Abingdon School Pavilion, showcased the wonderfully creative art work and sculptures in many different media made by children from Abingdon Prep. Pupils from Reception to Year 8 explored the theme of 'Community.'

The competition, judged by Mr Williamson, Head of Art at Abingdon

School, gave every child the opportunity to create a piece that meant something to them, a truly personal approach to the brief.

Congratulations to those that achieved a highly commended accolade for their work too, and thank you to all of the parents, families, teachers and governors who attended the exhibition.



Perfectionist

Thou judge thee on appearance by thy skin,
Wrinkly and old; no way too good for thee,
Thy body is imperfect, fat or thin,
Thy nails are horrible, how bad thou be.
Eyes of scorn reign evil on all beings,
Terrible eyes. Fingers, long and crooked,
Point up to thine ugly, horrid earrings.
Overall, to everyone, thou art wicked.
But to me, thou art big and beautiful,
Imperfect, but thou art great; amazing!
Like a winter, simply cold, calm. Loveful.
Everyone hates, but I get a great thing.
Love. Thou sayst thee are too slim and long,
But myself cannot witness any wrong.

by Graydon, Year 7



SONNET RECITAL FINAL

The final of the Shakespeare Sonnet Recital took place on the last morning of term, with 18 pupils taking part. Joint winners were Max (Sonnet 67) and Yash (Sonnet 17). Charlie and Harry were Year 7 and 8 runners up, and Alex, Trystan and Monty were also highly commended by judge Miss Sam Kershaw from Abingdon's English department. All the competitors recited their sonnets with aplomb to an attentive audience, a reflection of the high ambitions and standards set by all those from Years 7 and 8 who entered.

Senior Section pupils have also written their own sonnets, and we can share one with you (see left).



PETER PAN

Years 3 and 4 flew us to Neverland, with a wonderful performance of Peter Pan. This magical telling of a classic tale included some brilliantly funny acting and energetic singing. The children had us all truly believing in fairies!



SPRING CONCERTS

The Middle Section Spring Concert was a joyful mix of year group choirs, class recorders and ukuleles, with the emergence of spring being very firmly the theme of the evening. Dotted with highly accomplished solo performances, it was a wonderful celebration of the hard work all the children have put into their music-making this term.

The Senior Concert was an impressive showcase of high-level performances from music ensembles and soloists, with an eclectic programme ranging from the Guitar group's performance of the theme from *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* to Horace's exciting execution of Mozart's well-known *Rondo alla Turca*, and ending with a superbly atmospheric performance of *The Circle of Life* from Year 7&8, giving us a tantalising taste of what is to come in the Senior Production next term.



Our colourful class set of ukeleles is proving very popular in music lessons.

MARCH CONCERT PLATFORM



In a varied programme of musical styles, from pop to Baroque we heard a wide range of instruments - piano, voice, cello, guitar and woodwind. It's a pleasure to hear our young soloists.

MORE FROM ART AND DT...





YEAR 1

PRE-PREP TRIPS

Reception went to Sutton Courtenay Environmental Education Centre with their cuddlies for a day of finding how animals survive in the wild (bottom left and middle)

Year 1 (left) discovered wonderful stories brought to life at Oxford's Story Museum.

Year 2 had a wonderful time at the Planetarium at the Senior School this term. The children went into the planetarium and learnt about planets, and we were even sucked into a black hole! After the planetarium, the children went into the Science Lab, learnt about constellations, and made their own constellations. We had a fantastic time!



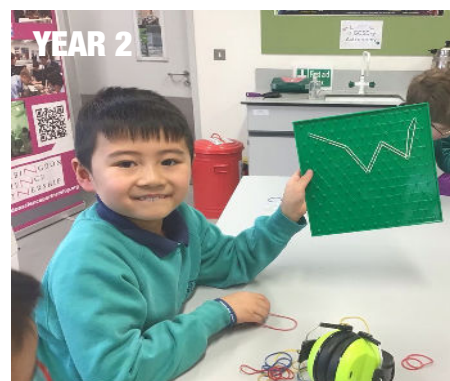
YEAR 1



YEAR R



YEAR R



YEAR 2

GRANDPARENTS AND SPECIAL FRIENDS' VISIT



In March, grandparents and special friends were treated to a homemade three-course meal and goodies by the children in Pre-Prep. The children loved seeing photographs of their special guests from when they were at school. A highlight for many was the portrait activity, where everyone completed a portrait of each other. A heartfelt thank you to all who came and made the afternoon so memorable.



NETBALL CLUB



A group of keen Pre-Prep children have been 'sticky-steppy'-ing their way to the Sports Hall to learn some key netball skills. They have shown fantastic control over their footwork and distance from their opponents, and they have worked super hard at shooting, enjoying learning how the game is played.



CHINESE NEW YEAR

With help from our Mandarin-speaking pupils, Pre-Prep enjoyed making book-marks to celebrate the Year of the Snake.



100 DAYS SMARTER

Reception celebrated their first 100 days of school with a fun party and colourful hats!



WORKSHARES



HAPPY EASTER!

The children enjoyed a wonderful Easter egg hunt this term, complete with a surprise visit from the Easter Bunny! The Pre-Prep pupils have halved their food waste since being in the dining hall. Paula, our catering manager, kindly treated everyone to ice cream!





Y2 Hockey morning at Tilsley Park



U11s meet Giselle Ansley at IAPS Hockey



U11 IAPS Football



SPRING SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

CROSS COUNTRY: The APS squad competed at two national championships in one weekend. The first saw the Year 7 and 8 team travel to The Grammar School at Leeds to compete in the rearranged English Schools Final, after Storm Darragh forced it's postponement in the Autumn Term.

The squad were inspired by a stop off at Loughborough University, where they were toured around the facility by Martyn Rooney (Olympic 400m runner), bumping into Katarina Johnson-Thompson and Richard Kilty. The team ran remarkably well to finish in 14th place overall.

On Sunday, not content with appearing at one Championship, the U13 team made the trip to Malvern College, along with the U11 team, for the annual Prep School National Championship. On a perfect spring morning both teams tackled the steep hills and packed start lines to come away with some fantastic results.

The U13s placed 2nd overall, behind a strong Monkton Combe School and the young U11 team placed 39th overall, with a number of the team returning next year in the same age bracket.

HOCKEY: Hockey teams from U8 to U13 had an exciting start to the season,

showing great progress in both skill development and competitive spirit. Pupils are beginning to master new techniques and have battled it out in closely contested matches. Highlights include the U8 matches v Magdalen College School and U12/U13 matches v Cothill and Abingdon School.

Teams from U11 to U13 have experienced some high level hockey at both county and IAPS championships, where they met England Olympic Gold Medallist Giselle Ansley. Congratulations to the U12 team who played some superb hockey in the U12 County Tournament, finishing in 3rd place overall.

Year 2, meanwhile enjoyed a morning of hockey at Tilsley Park, coached by Abingdon pupils.

FOOTBALL: In the first half of term, the football club was in action against Abingdon School. A fiercely contested set of matches with both Year 7 and 8 pupils within the Foundation going head to head. Well done to all who took part.

In February, the U8 and U9 played home and away fixtures against Moultsford. It was great to see the U8 pupils play in their first fixtures, showing tenacity, teamwork and some fantastic footballing skills.



Goal!



On the final Wednesday of term the whole school came together to compete in the annual House Cross country competition.

On a beautifully sunny spring afternoon it was lovely to see pupils from all year groups trying their best whilst supporting and encouraging each other around the course. Well done to all involved and congratulations to the winners of each age category.

1st Place:

U8 - Sam	U11 - Harry
U9 - Charlie	U12 - Will B
U10 - Tomas	U13 - Arthur



House Results:

Pre-Prep

1st Phoenix
2nd = Unicorn & Griffin
4th Dragon

Years 3 and 4

1st = Unicorn & Phoenix
3rd Dragon
4th Griffin

Years 5 and 6

1st Griffin
2nd Dragon
3rd Unicorn
4th Phoenix

Years 7 and 8

1st Unicorn
2nd = Dragon, Phoenix, Griffin

Overall winners - Unicorn.

CROSS COUNTRY IN PICTURES



CHAMBER MUSIC EVENING

The annual Chamber Music evening featured a diverse range of ensembles, showcasing the skill and versatility of our students. Performances included string quartets, woodwind groups and trios, as well as an impressive 16-cello ensemble and a clarinet group. The evening was a testament to the high musical standards upheld at Abingdon. Well done to all involved.



Joining the debate

A team of debaters took part in the regional qualifiers of the Oxford Schools' Debating Competition on 6 February. Fifty teams battled it out and, after two gruelling rounds, Isa and Will reached the top three and selection for the finals in August!



German Exchange

Over half-term, 16 Fourth Year Germanists stayed with their German exchange partners' families to experience everyday life in Germany. They attended a variety of lessons in German and also had a good amount of the day at their own disposal for activities and socialising.

Other highlights included visits to the Dortmund football museum and Nixdorf computer museum. The students returned home with greater German fluency and range of vocabulary - it was a real success.



UK Biology Olympiad

Congratulations to the 19 students who entered the UK Biology Olympiad in February. Between them, they won six Golds (getting to the top 5% of results in the country), five Silvers, two Bronzes and one Highly Commended. Those who won Gold move on to the next stage of selection for the UK Biology Olympiad team.



BOAT CLUB DINNER

After a block fixture against Radley on 1 March, the rowers, parents and coaches gathered in the Pavilion for the annual Boat Club Dinner. This year, we were privileged to welcome back former Captain of Boats, Head of School and, recent Paris Olympic Gold Champion in the Men's 8+, OA Tom

Digby as our guest speaker. Tom shared his journey from a not very sporty 13-year-old to Olympic champion and all the lessons he learned along the way. Truly inspiring for our current rowers and a huge thank you to Tom for all the time he spent chatting to our students throughout the evening.

Single sex vs co-ed: a view from 2025

by Graeme May, Senior Deputy Head, Abingdon School

Founded in 1256, Abingdon School is one of the oldest in the UK - and it has been an all-boys school for all of its 750 plus years since that point. With such a history behind it, one might expect it to be steeped in tradition and very reluctant to contemplate change. And yet, in May 2024, the school made public its plans to start accepting girls from 2026 (and indeed, girls have already started arriving in its prep school).

There are multiple reasons for this move but concern about the prospect of falling pupil numbers is not high. Abingdon has been consistently over-subscribed and maintains long waiting lists for places. So what is the rationale behind the change?

The first thing to know is that Abingdon has never made a big deal out of its single sex status or suggested that it felt that 'single sex is best'. If you look at any of its marketing and publicity for at least the past 20 years, it talks about being highly academic, about its enviably wide co-curricular offering and about its excellent pastoral care: you won't find it championing the idea that boys-only is better. Its teachers don't believe that boys and girls learn in distinctly different ways. Differences in 'preferred learning styles' are as observable across the individual sexes as they are when you look at both sexes put together.

When asked why it has kept all-boys up until now, it points to three things. Firstly, as an oversubscribed school, the impetus for change has been on a gentle build, with an argument of "don't fix what isn't broken". Secondly, its partnerships programme and liaison with St Helen and St Katherine have provided some co-ed opportunities for pupils. Thirdly, the benefits that come from the simplicity of boarding and sports arrangements for only one sex.

However, the feeling that Abingdon's single sex model appears old fashioned and not suited for the 21st Century has been increasing for more than a decade. Single sex education was born in an era when the expectations for the sexes were vastly different and opportunities for men and women, mismatched. Thankfully today, things are different and Abingdon believes the education it provides should reflect that. People learn about themselves and the world in relation to each other, so it would seem odd that girls and boys are separated from one another during a crucial period of their adolescence.

The changes Abingdon anticipates are all positive - as cultural diversity and enrichment tends to be. The

school's amazing educational offering will be available to the other half of the population (i.e. the girls) and those girls will bring with them an exciting difference of viewpoint and approach which will make the educational experience deeper.

There will still be a place for single-sex education in the UK, though it will probably become the preserve of the all-girls schools. Despite educational research suggesting that, when you filter out for differences in things like socio-economic background, there is effectively no difference in outcomes for pupils in single sex schools versus the co-educational ones, some schools (and parents) nevertheless continue to believe there is a difference. Abingdon has done its research on this issue and points to pieces of work like the Alan Smithers report for HMC in 2006 that concludes with this telling final sentence, effectively debunking the notion girls and boys necessarily do better if they are separated:

"There are excellent single-sex schools and excellent co-educational schools. Our conclusion is that they are excellent for reasons other than that they separate, or bring together, the sexes for their education."

Abingdon has considered the argument that girls are put off from taking STEM subjects in Sixth Form if they come from a co-ed background but the research does not back this up when considering high-ability pupils. A study by the Institute of Physics, identifies that there is a large difference observed when considering girls of all abilities, when just the top band of GCSE achievement is considered, the picture is rather different. In other words, academically selective co-ed schools - such as Abingdon - will be places where girls feel empowered to study STEM subjects if that is where their interests lie - just as is the case for boys.

In conclusion, Abingdon is tremendously excited about the richness and diversity that the arrival of girls will bring.

CHARITIES

Charities Update

The APS whole school charity this year is 'Down's Syndrome Oxford' (DSO), which is organised and funded by volunteer parents and supporters to provide information, support and activities for children and adults with Down's Syndrome and their families living in Oxfordshire.



Spring term has seen a blossoming of charity fundraising events! The term's fundraising started with the sale of beautiful handmade Chinese New Year bookmarks, soon followed by the Year 3 & 4 production of Peter Pan. The ever popular Silver Coin Trail (held on World Down Syndrome Day itself!) and the Spring concerts created a huge flurry of donations, along with the APS Easter Eggstravaganza with the latest DSO charity total being over **£2250!**

House charity events have so far included a Tuck shop sale by Unicorn, raising money for Marine Conservation and a cake sale by Griffin raising money for their chosen charity, Oceana. Huge thanks go to the generosity of the Abingdon Prep School community for their support in all of these events.

With best wishes,
The Charities' Team



Silver Coin Trail

March 21, the date chosen for our annual silver coin trail, coincided with the 14th Down's Syndrome Day. APS celebrated with the children coming to school in odd socks, and the whole school taking part in the coin trail event. Each pupil was asked to bring in a handful of silver coins, which they laid on the charity's logo - a beautifully colourful poster which Sherrey made specially for the occasion - with the older pupils helping the younger ones with the 'aesthetics' of coin positioning! It was a fantastic event, made even more special by having Ellie and her young visitors, who work closely with DSO, in attendance to approve of our efforts. The final total from our Silver Coin Trail was over £ 270!



Nasio Trust update

We have continued to sponsor four children in Kenya through the Abingdon based charity, The Nasio Trust. Pre-Prep sent sponsor child Lorna an 11th birthday present, and the Senior Section celebrated with their sponsor child, Ahmed, who turned 12 in March, by sending out a handmade card and paying for birthday celebrations for him and his family; both also received food packs. Year 4 have taken part in an exciting book collaboration project, where Abingdon pupils and pupils from Musanda School in Kenya were tasked with writing short stories based on the theme of 'Heroes.' The stories from both schools will be combined and published in a book, with money from the sales being donated to the Nasio Trust.



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