

Abingdon Prep News



**INTRODUCING
OUR NEW HEAD,
NICKY BLACK**

FROM THE HEAD

In a final letter, Craig reflects on his time at Abingdon Prep.

What an amazing term it has been! The last few weeks alone have seen events and celebrations coming thick and fast. The Christmas period is always a lovely time in school and this year was no exception. Our Nativity was a wonderful celebration of our Pre-Prep children performing with such confidence on stage, whilst our middle section and senior section carol concerts showcased the terrific standard of music at Abingdon Prep (APS), with all of the children involved through either singing or instrumental performances.

It is hard to remember back to the early part of the term where the sun was shining brightly and the weather set fair, but the inaugural APS colour run was a memorable afternoon and I think the paint has just about been washed away from the playing fields by now!

As always at APS, Music, Drama, DT and Sport have dovetailed with our academic curriculum and superb

Other Half programme and I genuinely believe that the children benefit enormously from the wide ranging approach to school life that is so prevalent here.

It is an emotional time for me this Christmas, as I say my farewells to APS and start on a new adventure at Wrekin Prep. Hannah, Quinn and I have had the most wonderful time at APS and feel immensely lucky to have been a part of this community, where children, parents, teachers and support staff all work together to give the children a fantastic start to their school careers. I want to thank each and every one of you for your incredibly kind wishes and gifts as we make the move to Shropshire. We will miss APS, and all of you, enormously and wish you all the very best for the future.

Best wishes

Craig



Hannah has made a huge contribution to the school over the past eight years, both as Head's wife and in her own right as a devoted teacher of PE, Sports and Learning Support. With her infectious enthusiasm, Hannah has thrown herself into every aspect of school life. She is incredibly supportive to everyone at the school, whether they be a pupil, parent or

another member of staff. In PE and Sport, Hannah has always been the ultimate team player. Her passion for coaching has enthused many pupils across the school. She has taken all of the year groups and has had to be very flexible and adaptable, often taking a team at the last minute without ever moaning or complaining.

On the Sports Field, Hannah is a dynamic presence - I have not come across that many coaches with a louder voice than my own. Once I heard Hannah's coaching voice, I realised that I had more than met my match. Hannah's coaching sessions are legendary, and I am comforted by the fact that although she will no longer be here in person, I will still be able to hear her from Shropshire.

She has also been a one person 'Emergency Cover Quick Reaction Force'.

One minute she can be sitting at home having a coffee in a rare 5 minutes to herself, and the next thing you know, Craig has called and she is in the swimming pool teaching breaststroke to Year 4.

As if she wasn't busy enough as a teacher and mum, it is a measure of Hannah's dedication to the profession that she was determined to retrain as a Learning Support teacher to add another string to her bow. It was a considerable undertaking given the amount of study involved.

We are very appreciative of everything Hannah has done for us in her many roles, as teacher, Head's wife and devoted mother of Quinn. She will be a huge loss to the school, but we wish her every success in new venture.

Richard Sutton



FAREWELL TO CRAIG AND HANNAH

For most of you in the APS community, the School's three aims of 'Be Kind, Work Hard, Get involved' have always been at the heart of APS, and Craig has embodied them. When he arrived at the school just over eight years ago, working hard, being kind and getting involved were an innate part of who he was and still is. The aims of the school crystallised to become what they are today reflecting his own approach to all that he does.

Get involved

When Craig first applied for the job as Head, the job description would surely have included a statement like this: 'a willingness to get involved in wider school life.' An expanded version might have read rather like this:

- The ability to teach many subjects including Sport, General Studies, Swimming, the occasional term of Latin and jump into any cover lesson from Music and DT to Maths and French and do so with confidence.
- Must be willing to run a range of Other Half clubs including cricket, hockey, rugby, football, and cover any other club including drama or sign language.
- Must engage in dressing up for World Book Day. Characters may include cricketers, superheroes and villains.
- Must attend a range of school events including cross country, plays, quizzes, open mornings, musical productions, Art and DT exhibitions. Must not be averse to paint powder being thrown at you as you run around the school field.
- Must be adaptable and, in the face of a global pandemic, deliver online assemblies and communal singing whilst trying to mute individual microphones so as not to hear the ambient dogs barking, parents on work phone calls or loud chatter.
- Must be willing to take part in a range of fixtures and trips, and thrive on minimal

sleep jammed into a tent with your family on the field whilst supervising an excitable bunch of midnight feast eating, chatty Year 4s.

- Above all, must be able to leap into a minibus to drive anywhere at any time without notice. Being adept with a cloth, mop, vacuum cleaner, pair of rubber gloves etc is a bonus.

Whether Craig anticipated what was behind the phrase 'must be willing to get involved in wider school life' I don't know, but I can think of no better person to have got involved with such enthusiasm and an endless skillset.

Work Hard

Our second school aim is 'Work hard'. A simple, and not exhaustive list of some of the tasks Craig has performed regularly, will demonstrate Craig's own commitment to this target.

- Almost daily, he leads tours of prospective parents and pupils around the school. You may have experienced your first taste of APS on such a tour.
- Every week he attends meetings: e.g. with the governors at the senior school, and more at APS, including ones with pupils, such as the School Council feedback meetings.
- During the holidays, Craig may have been in, doing more tours or supervising works going on including a whole new wing of the school.
- At the end of the day, Craig will often be the last person here.

There is also his contribution to Sport...

In developing Sport at APS, Craig's contribution could extend 'Work hard' to include 'Play hard', or more precisely, to 'Play hard and fairly'. While it is true to say that the provision of sport was in a good position when Craig arrived, it is now one of the real strengths of the school.

- Every pupil has had an opportunity to represent the school in a team.
- Hockey was a relatively minor sport when Craig arrived. Now it is thriving.
- Tag Rugby: Craig has encouraged its development for those who prefer to focus on running and handling rather than contact.
- Craig was instrumental, along with the rest of the PE department, in hosting sports day in a real athletics stadium.

- Cricket nets: Craig has supported increasing the facilities so that more pupils can train all year round to develop their cricketing skills.

Thank you, Craig, for all the hard work you have done for APS in your time here.

Be Kind

The third aim is 'Be kind'. This is the most important to Craig and many of us. It is the root system which allows the other two aims to flourish. When you are kind to others, you are more likely to feel positive, work hard and get involved. When you are on the receiving end of kindness, similarly, you are more likely to apply yourself fully to all areas of school life.

Craig's root system of kindness is far reaching and the impact has been felt by all. For pupils past and present, he has shown a genuine interest in getting to know them as individuals whether that is as they arrive in the morning, over lunch, while teaching them sport or around the corridors in school. He has been a calm and supportive Head for the staff, always willing to listen and help and is generous with his time in doing so. The Leadership Team fully appreciates his resilience, practicality, stoicism and sense of humour, a combination which assists in even the most challenging of circumstances.

In conclusion

If we ask ourselves why Craig embodies our three aims to 'be kind, work hard and get involved' so well, I think we would find it is because they allow all of us to be the very best we can be and to get the most out of our lives at school and in the future. And this genuinely matters to Craig because he cares.

We'd like to thank Craig for all he has done for the school and us as individuals over the years. We will miss him and wish him, Hannah and Quinn all the very best for their new school.

Rachel Pairman & Stefan Gerrard



Y8 GEOGRAPHY FIELD TRIP



Year 8's field trip to the Jurassic Coast, Dorset, started at the magnificent rock arch at Durdle Door examining the coastal geomorphology of St Oswald's Bay before walking over the hillside to Lulworth Cove. We then split in two for a closer look at the unique geology of this UNESCO World Heritage coastline at Stair Hole and the Lulworth Crumple. We finished the day with some well earned fish and chips!



Year 5 didn't let the rain spoil their day at the Black Country Living Museum, supporting their work on the Victorian era.

YEAR 5 - BCLM

We set off for Bath in terrible rain, thanks to Storm Claudia, in mid November. We had plenty of time to look around the Roman Baths, with so much to see and learn amongst the museum displays and buildings. After lunch the pupils were treated to a taught session by volunteers on why the Baths were so important and they were able to handle and examine some artefacts. A very worthwhile trip enjoyed by all.



YEAR 7 BATH TRIP



TEAM BUILDING AT PGL

Year 5 had a fantastic time at PGL, Liddington early in the term, which offered time for the pupils to get to know each other well. Straight away, they plunged into activities including: climbing, the giant swing, Jacob's Ladder, raft building, orienteering and archery, supplemented by evening games and campfire. As always, the children were well fed by the PGL canteen and gave a big thumbs up to all meals! They were brilliant at helping each other out with harnesses, cheering everyone on and working on important communication and teamwork skills.





YEAR 8 VISIT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, OXFORD

Year 8 visited Oxford University's Natural History Museum, where they took part in a workshop on Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection. They all pretended to be barnacles, they discovered whether they were 'supertasters' or not, and those brave enough could handle the Madagascan Hissing Cockroaches. After the workshop they toured the museum and its ever-popular shop!



YEARS 3-5 PANTO TRIP

Despite some technical hitches, Years 3 to 5 all enjoyed Dick Whittington at the Playhouse, Oxford, especially when Kirsty was dragged on stage!



YEAR 4 HABITAT SAFARI



Year 4 visited the Environmental Education Centre at Sutton Courtenay for a day of exploring different habitats. They scoured the woodland for creepy crawlies, sampled a stream for freshwater invertebrates and fish! Finally, they became Nature Detectives identifying a range of mammalian bones and tracks.



YEAR 4 VISIT CHRIST CHURCH

The pupils in Year 4 had a wonderful time visiting Christ Church in Abingdon. The children learned about the various functions of the Christian Church and the services that they provide. They learned about baptism and communion and developed a greater understanding of the Christian faith as a whole.

SNOZONE TRIP

A group of 17 pupils from Years 4 to 8 enjoyed a fantastic afternoon at the Milton Keynes SnoZone. Split into two groups, novices and intermediate/advanced, they received great tuition from the SnoZone staff, and it wasn't long before they were whizzing down the slopes. Huge fun was had by all, and we look forward to booking another trip there soon!



BAH HUMBUG!

Year 5 and 6 started their Christmas a little early this year with a fantastic show of *Bah Humbug*, a musical based on the much-loved story of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. After a busy week of rehearsals, all the children excelled on stage for a superb performance to parents.





The Middle Section performed their Christmas Concert to a packed APS hall, with wonderful singing and reading from the children, taking us on a journey around the world, and leading us to think about the meaning behind Christmas. Highlights included some outstanding instrument solos from Wilson, Jacob L, Rishi and Felix, a fun performance of *Must be Santa* from Year 3, and a festive whole section song *Sing Up it's Christmas* to round off the evening.

At the Senior Section Christmas Concert, held in the atmospheric setting of St Helen's church in Abingdon, we were entertained by a lovely array of readings, singing and instrumental performances to begin our Christmas countdown. Congratulations to Alex S for starting the concert with a beautifully assured *Once in Royal David's City* solo, to Year 6 for their outstanding choir singing about Christingle, and to our soloists, Damon on violin and Charlie on flute, both of whom performed unaccompanied. Thank you also to Daniel who played drum kit in jazz band, accompanied choir, conducted orchestra, and had us all captivated with his moving performance of the first movement of Elgar's Cello Concerto.



CONCERT PLATFORMS This term we have enjoyed three well-attended Concert Platforms. Performers included children from Year 2 to Year 8, on an array of instruments, from piano to drum kit, violin to trumpet, and this year, a harp soloist – an APS first! We also invited some Abingdon School (AS) students performing for us, helping to inspire our students in their musical journey.



JOINT ORCHESTRA - We welcomed some AS musicians to play alongside our APS orchestra for a joint session and side-by-side performance. Ably conducted by our Year 8 student Daniel, the ensemble played a varied programme, including the themes from *Chariots of Fire* and *Jupiter*.



SCHOOL COUNCIL



Richard welcomed all the new members of the School Council at its first meeting, congratulating them on being appointed by their classmates. They were all proud to receive their badges and eager to start to address some of changes that pupils would like to see.

HEAD FOR THE DAY



Wilfred's name was chosen from the hat to be Head for the Day! He toured classrooms with Craig, discovering all the amazing things the children had been learning that week. In Reception, he captured everyone's attention by reading the story *The Gruffalo* - the children loved it. He got involved in planning future lunch menus and even helped write the Head's letter. A fun-filled day of learning, laughter and leadership!



ECO CLUB LITTER PICK

Eco Club organised a successful litter-picking activity around the school grounds. Students enthusiastically wielded litter pickers and bags, as they combed the area, collecting lots of discarded wrappers, bottles, and papers. Their teamwork and commitment improved the school environment and also inspired classmates to be more conscious about waste disposal. The event concluded with participants sharing their experiences and discussing the importance of keeping the school and community clean. More Eco Club activities beckon...!

HOUSE MERIT CUP



UNICORN

Unicorn won the first House Merit Cup of the year - well done to all house members. Termly totals are reset for Spring, then added up at the end of the year.



Well done to our catering team, who kept their top Food Hygiene rating after a surprise inspection.

HOUSE SHOE STACKING



In the annual House Shoe Stacking contest, given their past exposure to these competitions, many pupils have acquired quite sophisticated construction skills meaning that some huge towers were created using only their own shoes. The pupils created some very impressive buildings, several in excess of 1m tall! A fun team activity enjoyed by all!

Gas Between Branches

That very first night I lost my way
In pitch black swamps where shadows
play,
Almost drowned in Tortille stream,
A place of unfathomable mystery and
dream.

The night before, without a trace,
A mutinous cart vanished in that place.
A shell-crater vast, crusted with mud,
Hidden deep in the wilderness flood.

I made good my escape, then tried
To reach the nameless woods nearby.
Shelling low-level, unremitting sound,
British detonations shook the ground.

I headed there, pretty insouciantly,
Veteran ammunition fired distantly.
A puff of wind, oniony smell,
Then came the shout, a gas-born yell.
"Gas, gas, gas!"—the cry so small,
Like crickets chirping through it all.
Next morning brought the bitter news:
Men died in the woods, poisoned by fumes.

With weeping eyes, I stumbled back,
To Vaux woods, misted visor black.
Plunging from crater into the next,
The night was eerie, solitude vexed.
Each time I blundered into troops,
Lost sentries roving in ghostly loops.
Icy sensation, demons instead,
Off the charted world we tread.
An enormous dump, inhospitable space,
We wandered far from time and place.

James, Y8

*(Based on an extract from 'Storm of Steel'
by Ernst Junger)*

REMEMBRANCE



Pupils and staff commemorated Remembrance Day in a number of ways. The week began with a special assembly led by the Reverend Gooding, Abingdon's chaplain, with pupils from Y8, reflecting on the service and sacrifice of past pupils who gave their lives in military service. On the 11th, the entire school gathered outside to hold a two minute silence marked by the playing of the Last Post and Reveille by Zac in Year 8.



MYVISION ASSEMBLY



Both our school charities visited to give assemblies this term. First Flexicare, followed by MyVision Oxfordshire who explained what visual impairment means, how technology and equipment helps, and the invaluable role played by guide dogs like Grover and Maisy. Grover was happy to demonstrate his skills at stopping at hazards and finding chairs and doors. We plan to work with the charity to develop our understanding of visual impairment as well as raising some money for them.

CLASS PAIRINGS



**Young and older pupils
teach each other games**

TO BE A JEDI

Our year in the world of Junior Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) got off to a flying start with 30 pupils eager to contribute to various projects in this group. Our projects involve displays and assemblies promoting the inclusive ethos of APS, and all members will help with one of them. We also learned more about Autism from Sarah, our Head of Learning Support. The group was challenged to remember what JEDI stands for and be able to explain it to proudly receive their JEDI badges.

We have now created two displays, one celebrating clothing from around the world and the other showing where the

children in our school or their parents and grandparents have lived. Some have helped with assemblies celebrating the achievements of older people, Black History and para sports. Our learning theme was Autism and Sarah explained that it is a wide spectrum and that it is important we see the person inside not just the difficulties they may have.





THE TERM IN DT

Students have worked incredibly hard this term showcasing their fantastic DT skills. Here are some of their project highlights.

- Year 3 made fun moving monsters
- Year 4 made lighthouses and Christmas cushions
- Year 5 engineered cam toys
- Year 6 modelled balsa wood planes
- Year 7 made clocks and boxes for them
- Year 8 made LED moodlights
- The Year 8 DT Award students also had a fascinating day out in London at the Design Museum in Kensington.



ART AWARD: The Art Award students have also flourished this term, preparing portfolios, taking a trip to Compton Verney in Warwickshire and having a 'day of clay' at school with ceramist Alison Holmans.

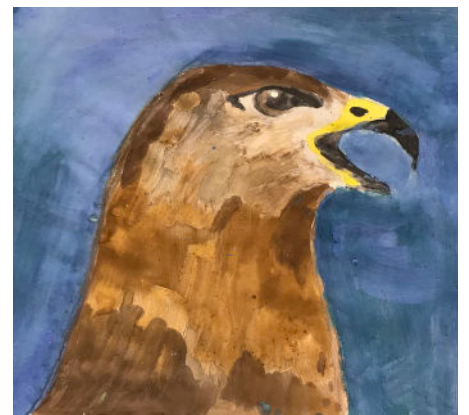




Autumn term in Art has been a busy one. The clubs have been full of creativity from vortex photography and Scandinavian elf paintings to Christmas racoons.

In class: Year 2 have made cookies, Year 3 moulded characterful insects in clay, and Year 4 explored the patterns of African masks through printing. Year 5 became ornithologists, painting and sculpting owls, toucans, hawks and penguins. Year 6 delved deeper into their identities, demonstrating their hobbies, and personalities through objects and composition. Whilst Years 7 and 8 were introduced to Art History with visitor and lecturer Lizzie Rowe, discussing portraiture, pottery and etching.

Finally special thanks go to our fabulous Young Leaders, Will, Rory, Eden and Noe for their wonderful support of the younger children during art clubs.



COLOUR RUN



On the day before half term, APS pupils and staff took part in our first ever colour run. As APS' contribution to Abingdon's Giving Day programme, parents sponsored pupils to run in aid of our Other Half activities, raising nearly £3,500. Thank you to all who gave so generously. The weather held, and with parents cheering on the runners, Pre-Prep went first, loving becoming rainbows. Years 3-8 followed swiftly and even our Chair of Governors and both Heads joined in. A glorious riot of colour, enjoyed by all!



CHARITIES ROUND-UP

This year we are supporting two whole school charities. **My Vision Oxfordshire** and **Flexicare**.

We started the fundraising efforts with a 'wear it green to be seen' day, which was a blend of their logo colours of yellow and blue. More recently the school hosted an 'Astro adventure' community event including a planetarium and many fun activities for children of differing ages to take part in. Money raised from this event went towards Flexicare. Another event will take place in the future for My Vision Oxfordshire.

Our wonderful end of year concerts, productions and Tycoon sale have also

raised money for both charities and our total is now well over £1500! The fundraising will continue into the new year with events planned such as the annual Silver Coin trail and Sponsored Swim, which was a huge success last year.

Representatives from both charities have visited the school, sharing details of their work in whole school assemblies, both of which were extremely interesting and insightful. Further work with the charities in school will continue over the coming months.

Finally, House Charities have been chosen and fundraising events for them will take place over the Spring and Summer terms. Plenty of time for children, parents and staff to get their thinking hats on and come up with some exciting fundraising options!

Thank you to everyone for their continued support with all things 'fundraising!'

As part of our support of the Nasio Trust, we have continued to sponsor four children in Kenya. Earlier this term the Senior Section helped Lorna celebrate her 12th birthday with a gift of a family food parcel and a girl's teen pack. This photograph shows her receiving her gifts. It's a privilege to be a part of such beneficial work.



RECEPTION'S FIRST DAYS AT SCHOOL



Our newest and youngest members of Abingdon Prep, joining Reception, got stuck straight into school life from the moment they arrived.

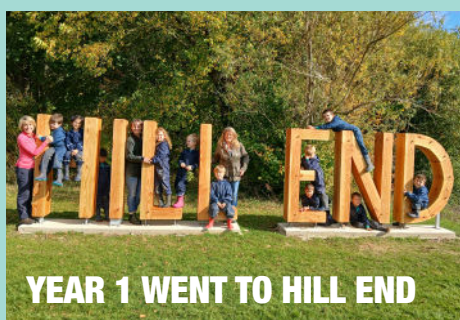


PRE-PREP AUTUMN TRIPS



YEAR 2 AT COMBE MILL

Year 2 pupils were fascinated by seeing all the old machinery and the forge at Combe Mill near Blenheim. After lunch, they tried traditional crafts to make willow baskets and bird seed fat balls.



YEAR 1 WENT TO HILL END

Year 1 did outdoor team building activities at Hill End, crossing a swamp with planks and tyres, but finishing with a campfire, toasted marshmallows and s'mores.



Reception's first trip was to Cogges Farm, where they followed the story of the 'Little Red Hen', collecting eggs, planting corn and baking bread.



RECEPTION AT COGGES FARM



PRE-PREP HARVEST FESTIVAL



Two visits by Rupal
For Diwali and as a Dentist



Year 2 Photography in IT



Year 1 DT



When I grow up I want to be...



Christmas Storytime in the Library



Decorating the Tree



Christmas Lunch

PRE-PREP TWINKLY NATIVITY

Our brilliant Pre-Prep Nativity performances delighted everyone who saw them, with the children performing to the School in the morning and parents in the afternoon. They worked so hard over several weeks on the *Twinkly Nativity* to bring the story to life, and their efforts truly shone on stage. Well done, everyone!



PRE-PREP VISIT ROVES FARM

Pre-Prep enjoyed a magical visit to Roves Farm, a well-earned treat after all of their hard work on the Nativity! The children were delighted to meet so many animals up close including adorable piglets. Naturally, no festive trip would be complete without a very special meeting with Father Christmas. The children had an incredible time. A big thank you too to the parents' association for their generosity in paying for the entrance fees.



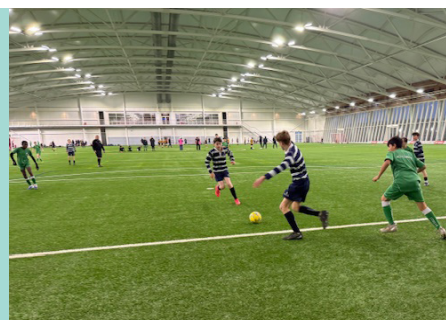


ST GEORGE'S PARK U13 FOOTBALL TOUR

Our U13 football squad enjoyed an unforgettable trip to St George's Park, the home of England's national teams. The pupils were able to train and compete in world-class surroundings, making full use of the amazing facilities on offer.

Throughout the visit, the team played some brilliant football, showing real skill, teamwork and determination. Their hard work paid off as they finished the event as Plate Play-Off Winners, a fantastic achievement and a proud moment for everyone involved.

It was an inspiring and memorable experience for the pupils—one that will stay with them for a long time. The team returned home buzzing with confidence, motivation and plenty of great memories from a superb visit to an iconic venue.



RUGBY

The rugby season has begun with great energy and enthusiasm. Our teams have already enjoyed two fantastic foundation fixtures against Moultsford and Summer Fields as well as U8 and U9 tournaments against the likes of St Hugh's, The Manor, Christchurch, Cokethorpe and Hatherop Castle, showcasing impressive effort and determination. It has been wonderful to see the children developing new skills on the pitch while demonstrating excellent teamwork and sportsmanship throughout. Their positive attitude and willingness to learn promise an exciting season ahead.



IAPS U13 FOOTBALL

The U13s travelled to Moultsford for the annual IAPS Football tournament. The pupils played with great spirit, showing determination and teamwork against strong opposition, and some moments of brilliant football. Won: 2, Drew: 2, Lost: 3.



Earlier in the season a team of our U11s had the chance to play in a tournament on the hallowed turf of Twickenham Stadium, the home of English Rugby. An amazing experience for them all. The tournament was followed by watching a thrilling international fixture: South Africa v Argentina.



Kickstarting football fun for all

CRAIG'S BIG CRICKET DAY - HOWZAT!



To allow all the children to help celebrate Craig's last week at APS, he was taken off timetable so he could spend all day in the Sports Hall playing cricket with them.

From Year 1 to Year 7, quick cricket was the game. Craig bowled (underarm), if you hit the ball you ran round the cones to the side and back to the wicket, hopefully before he bowled the next ball. Three misses and you were out! Bowled first ball - out! Tough rules, but they allowed everyone to have an innings. Reception turned the tables, by bowling at Craig.

For Year 8's turn, Craig was joined by Elliot and Richard and all three padded up to face the pupils' bowling in the nets. Each pupil got to face all three batters, who showed their prowess in strokeplay.

Everyone totally enjoyed themselves and many benefited from some coaching from Craig along the way.



We've discovered our Other Half

The hidden talents that power Abingdon's co-curricular programme.

A fundamental part of life at Abingdon is developing skills and talents beyond the classroom in what is known as The Other Half. With over 150 activities from board games to Model United Nations to robotics to Young Enterprise, there really is something for everyone. But none of this would be possible without the extraordinary talent of our dedicated staff, who have already discovered their own Other Half.

It's a delight to find out exactly what our staff can do. Recently (having worked at the school for over three years) I discovered that one of our Biology teachers is a qualified helicopter pilot, whilst another member of staff is a boatbuilder in her spare time. I wear beautiful jewellery made by one of our German teachers who is a professional goldsmith. I attend yoga run by a Philosophy teacher and circuits run by a female Geography teacher (who is also an ex-GB Powerlifter and England Rugby player). Our female Contingent Commander, has a Meritorious Service Award for the work she does leading our cadet force.

These personal passions aren't kept secret though, they are shared directly with our students and staff. Through activities as varied as the flight simulator club, silversmithing workshops, student yoga, and rugby coaching, our staff don't just support excellence; they also model it.

Beyond the classroom door

Music is a key component of The Other Half. Many teachers, including our Head, actively role-model participation and support the phenomenal work of our Music department. Our Head of Middle School is a talented clarinetist, and a Deputy Head plays the tuba. Both regularly join the orchestra to play alongside the students. I am equally impressed by the Staff Choir (as someone who genuinely cannot sing!), and it is a pure joy to see staff singing alongside students in the Chapel Choir. The recent House Singing competition showed how music can bring our community together and foster a deep sense of belonging.

The power of performance and belonging

Every Other Half activity is valued, however, sport is clearly an important player in The Other Half timetable.

International excellence in sport

It is appropriate, then, to mention the incredible talent pool not just within the PE department, but across the entire staff.

We are proud to have nine members of staff (seven female and two male) who have represented their country in sports ranging from volleyball and hockey to rowing and

rugby. Additionally, four members of staff have coached international teams. Many others have competed at county and national levels and hold nationally recognised coaching qualifications in diverse fields such as swimming and climbing.

One of the great joys of working at Abingdon has been seeing students in a different light, away from the formality of the classroom and doing something we all truly enjoy.

The privilege of passing it on

When I started coaching rowing, I was surprised by how much joy I got from sharing my passion for the sport. There is nothing better than the golden moment when you see a student suddenly 'get it' - especially, for me, on a glorious spring day when the boat just flies through the water. At that moment, the rain, cold and flooding of the winter are all but forgotten.

As adults, we continue to discover and nurture our Other Half beyond our school roles. It is a privilege to have the opportunity to not just tell, but show our students why this balance is such an important part of school life - indeed life in general.

By encouraging staff to share their passions, we create a stronger sense of community and belonging, forge powerful small connections between staff and students, and open the door to deeper learning, richer conversations, and greater personal growth - for everyone.

By Lucinda Powell, Director of Teaching and Learning, Joint Head of Psychology, J14 Abingdon Rowing Coach, and England Commonwealth Women's VIII (2002).



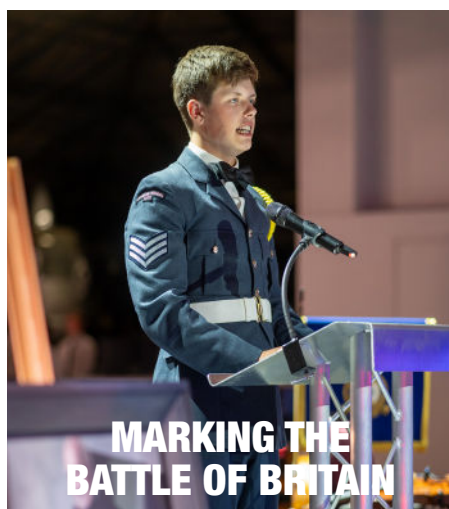
WALK THIS WAY

On 23 September, our entire school community took part in a sponsored walk to raise much needed funds for Homeless Oxfordshire. Each student was challenged to raise a minimum of £25 and the total surpassed £23,000. The ten mile route including sections of the Thames Path and Oxfordshire Greenbelt Way, provided a healthy and engaging way for students to raise money. Well done to all who took part and in particular to Mr Johnson and the Charities team who co-ordinated the entire day.



BUSINESS LANGUAGE CHALLENGE

Over 75 students from five schools took part in OX14 Learning Partnership's business language challenge before half term. The full day event was an opportunity for linguists from across the town to work in teams on a range of business tasks. Organised by Abingdon's modern foreign languages department and led by external group 'Business Language Champions', the day consisted of fun and hands-on activities using the chosen language for each team. The highlights were creating an advert for a famous confectionary brand, pitching to the judges and making a trade stand.



MARKING THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Four senior cadets, Max, Harold, Harry and Fynn as well as Major Lee Edwards and Lieutenant Colonel Rebecca Cottam, were invited, as guests of Tony Edwards (OA 1962), to a Battle of Britain 85th anniversary dinner held on 10 September at the RAF Museum, London. Fynn read a poignant vignette about three Battle of Britain pilots, made more touching by the fact that he is the same age as one of them

BIOLOGICAL INSIGHT



Congratulations to our two Abingdon teams, who were placed 9th and 10th out of 914 teams nationally at the Cambridge University Biology Challenge. This is an event over four rounds where students are invited to answer thought-provoking questions that challenge them to use their biological knowledge in novel ways. The teams answered questions such as: *Do behaviours fossilise? Do animals dream? What are hallucinations? and how might Santa Clause manage to survive eating all those mince pies?*



SWIMMING SUCCESS

Abingdon School's Intermediate and Senior swim teams delivered outstanding results at the ESSA National Finals in Birmingham in November. The Senior team of Elijah, Ralph, Ethan and Monty finished 7th in the medley final, breaking the U18 school record. The Intermediate quartet (Clement, Kaan, Alex and Satoshi) secured a phenomenal 4th place in their medley final. Both teams also placed in the top 10 for freestyle, cementing Abingdon's status among the UK's elite school swimming programmes.

CHRISTMAS AT ABINGDON PREP

The penultimate day of term is a fun time at APS! Colourful festive jumpers replaced uniform, and soon our annual 'Gifts for Grown Ups' mall was open for business for pupils to shop for presents for their families - and pets too! A huge thank you to Lindsay, Claire and the JPA elves for helping run such a successful event.

Year 8 made way for Pre-Prep to eat a delicious and tasty Christmas lunch in the hall, taking their lunch in the Art room. The afternoon was full of parties and was capped off by the Year 7 Business Tycoon Mini Market, masterminded by Alison Thomas, where an array of stalls selling biscuits, flapjacks, popcorn, and smoothies proved very popular. Thank you to all the Year 7 parents who supported the childrens' activities and making the treats. The profits will go to our school charities. What a wonderful way to end the term!



THE JPA ELVES - THANK YOU!



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR JPA

It's been a busy term with Macmillan Coffee Morning, Firestorm Fireworks, Christmas Cards, Christmas Wreath Making and Gifts for Grown Ups & Pets. Thank you to all the parents who have helped at events this term - we really couldn't do it without you.

Next term we've got our Quiz Night in February/March which will be open to all parents and Year 5 to 8 pupils.

Wishing you a Happy New Year!

Claire and Lindsay, JPA Chairs.

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