

April 2024 | No. 66



Abingdon News

Making Nylon

The top chemistry set are finishing the final topics of their GCSE course, the latest being learning some advanced organic chemistry; what better way to bring this practical and exciting topic to life than to make Nylon (which in the wider world can be used to make clothing and complex machined parts)?

Message from the Head

Melvyn Bragg, speaking in the House of Lords recently, argued that the arts were not the cherry on the cake; they were in fact the cake. His reflections were related to the economic impact of the arts in the UK but he also emphasised the value of the arts in shaping our culture, identity and values.

The importance of the arts to school life was certainly underlined by two real highlights of the Lent term: our two joint drama productions with St Helen and St Katharine.

At Abingdon, the Amey Theatre hosted the senior production of *A Monster Calls*. This was a highly innovative production that combined physical theatre with moving and affecting performances and striking use of sound and light to create a hugely powerful effect. The play deals with the death of a loved one - a challenging topic but conveyed with great sensitivity and maturity.

St Helen and St Katharine hosted the joint musical *Made in Dagenham* which highlights the fight of female Ford workers for equal pay in the 1970s - with much humour, rocking tunes and some great dancing. Again, the performances were top notch and the production had audiences on their feet every night.

These productions were very different in tone and approach but both displayed the importance of the expressive arts, powerfully underlining the central role that the arts play in an education at Abingdon.

Mike Windsor, Head



Lower School pupils participated in a workshop run by I Can and I Am. Half the session was spent learning how to make a pizza and the other half about how to promote self-belief and wellbeing. Everyone chatted about how to keep self-belief fully-inflated by doing things that we enjoy and which make us feel we belong, accepting that we are all intelligent in different ways and have different strengths, and learning from setbacks and challenges.



Debating success

On 24 February, we travelled to MCS for the first MCS Model United Nations (MUN) conference since 2022. The morning started with a brief opening ceremony before committees started to flow fully. We engaged in fruitful debate covering a plethora of relevant topics including current conflicts and Lithium and Cobalt mining. Over the course of the day, the students managed to collectively pass the majority of resolutions discussed, highlighting the fine diplomacy and co-operation between schools and nations! The closing ceremony saw great success for Abingdon with the Chinese and Cuban delegations winning a total of 5 individual awards and the Chinese delegation winning overall best delegation, further emphasising the exceptional efforts of all in attendance.

Overall, a great day of debating filled with cooperation, laughter and unity.

German exchange

This year's German exchange with students from Abingdon, St Helen and St Katharine and Ratsgymnasium Bielefeld was another resounding success.

The students benefited from time learning in a German school, experienced some interactive exhibitions and culture as well as doing a number of fun, team building recreational activities.

Students currently in the 3rd Year will soon be able to apply for next year's exchange - so keep an eye out for updates.



Christmas presents for Moldova

Our partner charity, Agape, worked hard over the festive season to bring some much needed Christmas joy to as many children as possible. Using a financial donation from Abingdon, 100 presents were delivered to children from 3 villages. The initiative then encouraged older Moldovan students to design greetings cards and create their own Christmas packages for another 200 children. In the end, 300 presents in total were delivered, making many children happy.



Keen on exploring

In January, Lower School welcomed adventurer chef Mike Keen. Mike spoke about his expedition to the coast of Greenland in 2023, in which he aimed to kayak solo for 3000km in order to raise awareness of climate change. Pupils heard about Mike's Inuit diet and its impact on his health and wellbeing; his close encounters with whales; and handled polar bear claws!



Translation workshop

Our Lower Sixth French students took part in a translation workshop with Dr Jennifer Higgins looking at how best to translate mood from French into English. Beginning with cartoons and short dialogue, discussion turned to the opening of Camus' *L'Étranger* and the challenges it poses. The students enjoyed putting their language skills and creativity to the test.



On 24 January, a number of our students who are studying Chinese attended a Peking opera workshop. Given by two native Chinese performers, students were taught about the characters in the opera and the unique roles they play. Music and singing was demonstrated, followed swiftly by examples of the typical movements the characters would make - and our students were given the chance to have a go too!



Going for Gold

Two teams of Gold Duke of Edinburgh students completed a basic training expedition in February on the Ridgeway. The students completed various training activities, an overnight camp and a long remotely supervised walk. Both teams performed well and will now start to prepare for their practice expedition to Snowdonia.



Peking Opera Workshop



A Monster Calls

The senior play, *A Monster Calls*, was performed for 3 nights in January. Addressing the sensitive subject of terminal illness, the cast



approached their performances with maturity and empathy and the highly professional backstage crew made scene changes look easy. One audience member wrote: "I had to keep reminding myself that the actors are not yet adults... It was so heartfelt." All proceeds raised went to Sobell House, an Oxfordshire charity offering specialist palliative care.



The year of the Dragon

In Chinese culture, the dragon has significant symbolism representing qualities including power, strength and wisdom. As the two week festival marking the beginning of the new lunar year began, our pupils at Abingdon seized the opportunity to learn something new.

Lower School pupils had the opportunity to see their name written in Chinese. Jim and Owen, together with Ms Zhang and two sixth formers, helped with the calligraphy.

Meanwhile, our 3rd Year Mandarin students also had the opportunity to practice their calligraphy skills. Writing the "福" character (which means happiness and luck) with ink and brush on red paper is a traditional way that Chinese people welcome the lunar new year. The students embedded characters and creativity in their writing, creating some very beautiful messages.

Don't waste time. Learn a new language while you are still young.

International student, Alex discusses the strengths and challenges that come with being an EAL (English as an Additional Language) student.

Moving to another country is always hard; it is totally different to visiting it. When you move to a new environment, not only are you leaving your past life behind, but you also face the struggle to adapt to a whole new world. I know this because, in June 2022, I stepped onto English soil for the first time.

I knew I would be moving to the UK in advance, but it wasn't a comfort to me. I had learned a lot of English in school but I wasn't totally sure if I would be able to communicate without trouble. It was unbearably hard for the first two or three months. My main struggles were my poor vocabulary and my heavy accent, which made it incredibly hard to express myself clearly.

Furthermore, when school started, I faced a problem I had not expected: numbers. Specifically, pronouncing them correctly. It was a dreadful experience, knowing the right answer but being unable to say it properly or quickly. Another problem was the frequent use by my classmates of references to books that I had never read, or movies I had never seen. As well as this, I could not reference the books or movies from my country, for a similar reason - no one would have understood me. This created a feeling of isolation in a crowded and noisy classroom. However, despite all of these struggles, there are actually some gifts to being an EAL student.

First of all, knowledge of one or two languages opened a wide range of structures I could use in my writing. I still couldn't reference books, but I could use proverbs or idioms. The only problem was how to translate them properly, without losing the sense of them. With practice, I have managed to master this skill. Before I left home, I had never given any

thought to how specific idioms are to each language. It's only when I try to translate them that I realise they're pretty impossible to translate without losing the meaning or causing confusion. For example, our equivalent of "many hands make light work," is "it's easier to beat your master in a group."

This year I've had an opportunity to study English literature, mostly Shakespeare and his *Macbeth*. I was quite familiar with Shakespeare before; I studied *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* as a part of foreign literature course back home, and I was able to draw some parallels between English literature and literature in my country. Both of them are similar in genre - drama and tragedy. But whilst English authors seem to focus mostly on the privileged parts of society: kings, knights and nobles, authors at home (even those who were quite wealthy and successful), wrote more about peasants, farmers and workers, who were enslaved by feudal masters. A parallel I can think of in English literature is Robin Hood.

My English has improved significantly. My father once told me, "In an English speaking environment, you will start speaking it fluently in six months". He was right. Even though I am pretty far from fluent, my abilities have improved astronomically, compared to a year ago. Even more so, being fluent in several languages is incredibly useful. With each new language a whole world of new people, literature and media opens up. So my advice is: don't waste your time. Learn a new language while you are young. My message for all EAL students is don't be scared. Your English is way better than you think. Skill comes with practice; so talk, read and listen as much as you can. English is quite an easy language, so with just a little bit of effort, you can achieve some really significant goals.

Believe in yourself and good luck!



Architecture workshop

In February, students participated in an architectural design workshop run by 4 architects from ADP Architects.

The event included a design competition, challenging the students to think conceptually about finding solutions; as well as to consider how the build environment provides a setting for the future of education.

Given a model-making kit, the students were forced to focus on space as an abstract concept without considering the look of the building, enabling them to understand architecture from a more advanced perspective and to hone their presentation and teamwork skills.

Everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable day.



GCSE Geology trip to Sandford Pit

On a drizzly February afternoon, Abingdon's nascent Geology Department made the short trip to Dry Sandford Pit, an old quarry near Cothill. The objective was to investigate the nature of the depositional environments operating in the Boreal Jurassic Seaway during two of the subzones of the Oxfordian Stage of the Upper Jurassic.

Beds were measured, sediments graded, fossils identified and litres of HCl pipetted onto potential carbonate rocks. In the end, and after much head scratching, a detailed graphic log of the exposure was completed and a full(ish) picture of how conditions changed over this relatively short period of geological time was gained. The day was rounded off with the examination of some spectacular Jurassic solitary corals. A splendid afternoon.

Thinking supper

First year academic award holders met with pupils from St Helen and St Katherine in February for a Thinking Supper.

They discussed the pros and cons of space exploration, researching a range of viewpoints. Refreshed by a pizza supper, they then presented their findings to the group.



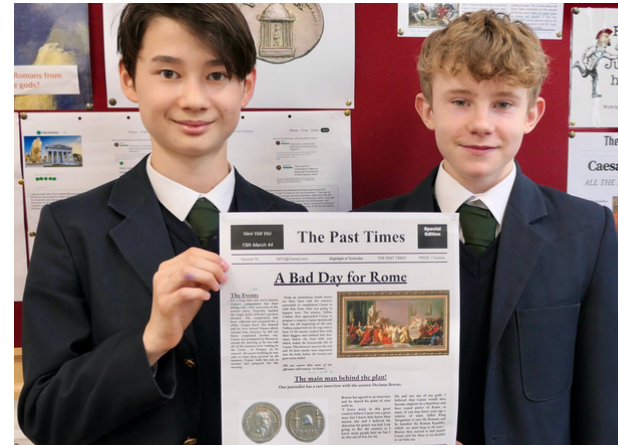


Maths feast

Before half term, a team of 4th Year mathematicians competed in the regional Maths Feast Competition held in Compton, near Newbury.

Maths Feast is a fun educational challenge which tests problem-solving and teamwork skills. There are several rounds requiring different skills and strategies for success.

Our students had to estimate the number of cats, complete a cross number grid, and work out who would wear particular coloured hats, before finishing with a challenging 3D shape construction round. They scored full points in two of the four rounds, and enjoyed spending a morning out on a Maths trip!



Work exhibition

The last Lower School tutor period before half term was used for a work exhibition, providing the chance for everyone to discuss a recent piece of work that they are particularly proud of. A wide range of items were displayed, including pieces of persuasive speech writing created in English, creatively constructed cell models from biology, and Roman newspaper front pages from Latin lessons.



Anyone for chess?

Lower School tutor groups faced each other across the chess board this term at the annual inter-tutor group competition. The grand final saw 2nd Year champs 2C taking on 1st Year winners 1H. The 2nd Years did prove a little too strong for their younger opponents. Congratulations to Albert, Owen and Yantai for winning the trophy.



Stand up for your rights!

Highlighting women's rights, our joint senior production *Made in Dagenham* told the extraordinary story of the 187 working women who went on strike at Ford's Dagenham factory in 1968. Our outstanding performers, supported by band and stage crews, moved the audience from tears to laughter in three sell-out shows.



Surveying trees

Since the start of the academic year, members of the Geography Club have conducted a tree survey to see what impact trees have on the school site. In total, 528 trees were measured for data analysis and students then calculated the average amount of carbon sequestered by using techniques from the A Level Geography course. Our survey showed the positive impact the recent planting of trees on Lower Field is already having.



Revising Mandarin

In March, our 3rd Year Mandarin learners' revision exercise was to solve the Trisha puzzle.

Working together, the students collaborated to find the best position for each piece of the puzzle by matching the English and the Chinese.

Then, they practiced their oral skills by rapping a presentation – all delivered with fluency, confidence and using complex sentence structures as well as a wide range of vocabulary. What a great way to fuse musical talent and performance skills with their linguistic ability!



Election fever

It was great to see so many 3rd and 4th Year students go through the process of applying for next year's student council - an important role that ensures the student voice contributes to making positive changes in school.

A modern approach to linguistics



In March, our 5th Years enjoyed a classic and fun component of an Abingdon Modern Foreign Languages lesson: the competitive vocabulary game Quizlet live.



Candy Gourlay visits

As part of our World Book Day activities, we welcomed Candy Gourlay, award-winning author of *Bone Talk* and *Wild Song* to speak to our Lower School and Abingdon Prep pupils about reading, writing and stories. After an inspiring talk and book signing in the Amey Theatre, Candy ran a writing workshop. Using the example of Narnia, Candy inspired our pupils to create their own characters who explored portals into other worlds.



Geographical quiz

Towards the end of February, 12 students from across the 1st Year to 3rd Year travelled to MCS to take part in the Geographical Association WorldWide quiz. The format involved a University Challenge style face-to-face quiz for multiple teams of 3 students. All our teams performed well, with one of our senior teams taking the runner up spot out of 17 schools. Well done to everyone who took part and, in particular, to Felix, Kwame and Henry who took the runner up spot.



Well done to our 14 A Level Biologists who took part in the UK Biology Olympiad - a highly demanding national competition challenging students to solve complex biological challenges. Particular congratulations to Rayn, James and Leo who won Gold, placing them in the top 5% of the country; to Samuel and Louie who received silver; and to Lucas, Yubo and Adrian who won bronze.



Comic strips

Second Year French students have been learning how to talk about their holidays. They have created some very entertaining and original 'bandes dessinées' (comic strips) describing a disastrous holiday. We, of course, hope that the inspiration for these was taken from their brilliant imaginations and not reflective of any real life experiences!



Civil War re-enactment

On 14 March, the English Civil War re-enactors returned to Abingdon, demonstrating Civil War military drills, equipment, gunpowder mixing, uniforms and more to 2nd Year History pupils.

As ever, it was a fantastic morning and a superb way for the pupils to be fully immersed in the history of the Civil War. The activities fit neatly into our 2nd Year enquiry question for the year 'Who made Britain: rulers, religion or rebels c.1215-1918?'. Mark, one of our pupils, said that 'although we weren't being fired upon by the Roundheads or Cavaliers, it was fantastic to see everything close up'.



Lego Architecture Club

Under the expert guidance of sixth former Shaun, members of the Lower School Lego Architecture Club have been enjoying the challenge of designing their own model spaceships.

Fair is foul and foul is fair



In March, a group of our 5th Year students went to the Oxford Playhouse to see a production of *Macbeth*. As gripping as it was gory, highlights included the 70s mise-en-scène, surveillance cameras, disco ball and enormous Birnam Oak descending from the rafters. It was a thoroughly enjoyable trip.

International Women's Day

An exciting event was hosted on 7 March to mark International Women's Day and raise awareness of the issues affecting young women and girls.

It included presentations from commentator, Shabnam Nasimi; Equality and Diversity Adviser, Samaneh Savadi; Former Afghan Diplomat, Roya Rahmani; Professors Goriely and Koohy, both from Oxford University; Civic leader, Lina Tori Jan; and Summia Tora, an Afghan campaigner.

Deputy Head Pastoral, Helen Keevil, comments: "The theme "Invest in women: Accelerate progress" resonates deeply with our collective aspirations for a world where gender equality is not just a distant dream but a tangible reality. It is imperative our students play a crucial role in shaping the narrative and fostering an environment where individuals are confident to speak up against injustice and challenge the status quo."



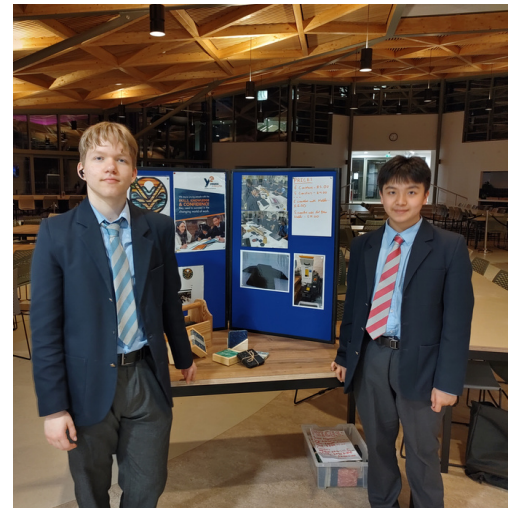
Psychology trip to Warwick

Sixth Form psychologists visited Warwick University in March to listen to a series of lectures and explore diverse topics such as the effects of the placebo in sport and the role of psychology in the criminal justice system. They gained insight into key psychological concepts, held thought-provoking discussions and learned more about the opportunities that stem from psychology.



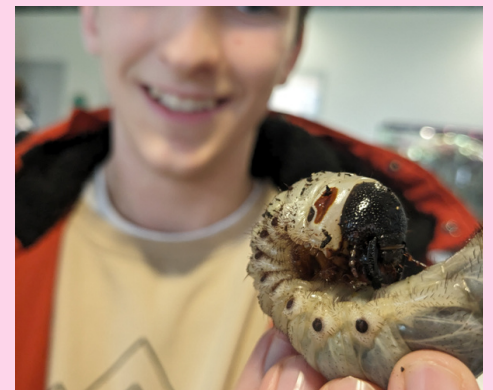
Easter tea party

Abingdon residents enjoyed sandwiches and a selection of delicious cakes at the Easter tea party. They were entertained with poetry readings and a flute solo, while completing a quiz about Easter. There were some tasty chocolate prizes in the eagerly anticipated raffle.



Very enterprising

Young Enterprise team Vividify enjoyed some sales success when they took advantage of the pauses between performances at this years Rock Concert. The team is selling sets of coasters in holders. Made from polymer sheets made from bottle tops, the coasters are machined in DT, and the holders made from upcycled pallet material.



Beetling about

Students in the Entomology Society have been observing the growth and development of this Goliath beetle grub. If successful they will see this specimen through to pupation and the eventual emergence of one of the largest beetles in the world.



GCSE Geology visit Portishead

In March, students visited to Portishead on the Severn Estuary to find out more about key moments in Britain's geological history. They undertook a detailed inspection of the Carboniferous sediment at Battery Point, mapped the fold structures in Woodhill Bay, explored the Devonian exposures of Kilkenny Bay and inspected the evaporite gypsum veins at Aust Cliff.



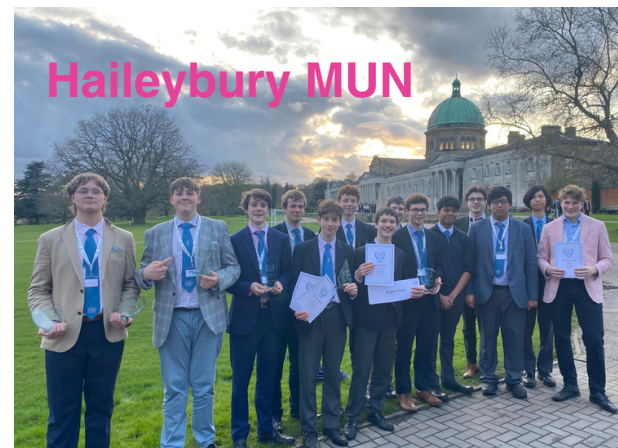
Footie and cake for charity

Nine teams battled it out in the Lower School charity match but it was 2nd Year team N'golo N'golo who emerged victorious after a penalty shootout in the final against team Avocados on Toast with Butter. £154 was raised for The Meningitis Research Foundation and over £100 was raised for The Brain Tumour Charity by a cake stall run by members of 2C.



Road relay

The 52nd Annual Road Relay took place on a cold, windy and grey March day. Undeterred by the conditions, 174 teams of students came together to compete in what has become a firm favourite in the school calendar.



Haileybury MUN

On the 15 March, 15 students, representing Algeria, Argentina and Belarus participated in 3 days of rigorous debate, showing exemplary deliberation, discussion, and collaborative skills. Abingdon ended the weekend with 4 individual awards (3 highly commended; 1 distinguished); won best overall delegation for Argentina; with 5th Year Nathan winning the memorial award for an outstanding written resolution.





Service of thanksgiving



On 19 March, members of the choir were joined by the Prep School choir, parents and key members of Foundation staff in the School Chapel for a dedicated service of thanksgiving to mark 25 years of the coming together of the two schools. Officiated by the Reverend Dr Steer, there were rousing hymns, readings from pupils of both schools and an address on how to be thankful by Mr Windsor. It was a beautiful service.



House ensemble competition

This new initiative saw a small ensemble of musicians from each house play a musical item to their peers towards the end of term. Mr Stafford had the unenviable task of adjudicating the astounding range of music, proclaiming Pygott's the winners!



Pro Corda

Congratulations to The Claritones who qualified for the final round of the Pro Corda national chamber competition in London. Complimented for their choice of repertoire, they demonstrated an amazing standard of play, impeccable behaviour and a professional attitude from start to finish.

Abingdon Music



Lower School lunchtime concert

This term's Lower School lunchtime concert was a true celebration of the music making going on among the younger pupils of the school. After a rousing start from Lower School Band and Junior Strings, a series of soloists took to the stage and performed in front of all their peers. With everything from bagpipes to harp, and from classical favourites to the Match of the Day theme music, there really was something for everyone to enjoy!



School Choirs Concert

In March, the School Choirs performed a concert at St Michael's Church. The programme showcased the voices of our 3 Upper Sixth choristers who performed Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel* with real verve. The second half of the concert featured Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto* and closed with an enthusiastic performance of Vivaldi's *Gloria*. A huge congratulations to all involved.



Evensong at Salisbury Cathedral

On 7 February, the Chapel Choir had the privilege of singing Choral Evensong at Salisbury Cathedral. Following the opening *Responses* by Ayleward, they sang the Psalm with clear diction. The chosen canticles included Charles Wood's *Setting in Eb No. 2* and Elgar's wonderful anthem *The Spirit of the Lord* from his oratorio *The Apostles* - this provided the choir with subtle and refined quieter and reflective moments, whilst the majestic acoustic of the Cathedral enabled the climaxes in this anthem to soar. An extraordinary opportunity and our students sang with clarity, style and nuance.



Make some noise

In January, 40 children from 4 Prep Schools were invited to Abingdon to take part in a 'make some noise' music workshop. Abingdon's music department spent the day working with the children to improve their techniques, and they then performed a number of select pieces to their parents on the Amey Theatre stage in the afternoon. Encore!



Rock on!

In January, plenty of strong acts auditioned for our annual Rock Concert which took place in March. Students played with great energy encompassing music from Ozzie Osbourne, The Beatles, Guns n Roses and Harry Styles.



Life is a cabaret
old chum

2 March saw the launch of Cabaret - a new event featuring songs, music and commentary, interspersed with a 3 course supper. Big Band, directed by Simon Currie, were front and centre and there was opportunity for a number of singers to perform, whilst smaller chamber music items featured, with music by Tom Poster, Claude Bolling and Astor Piazzolla. In the second half, the Joint Chamber Choir performed alongside some impressive performances from students at St Helen and St Katherine. A night to remember.

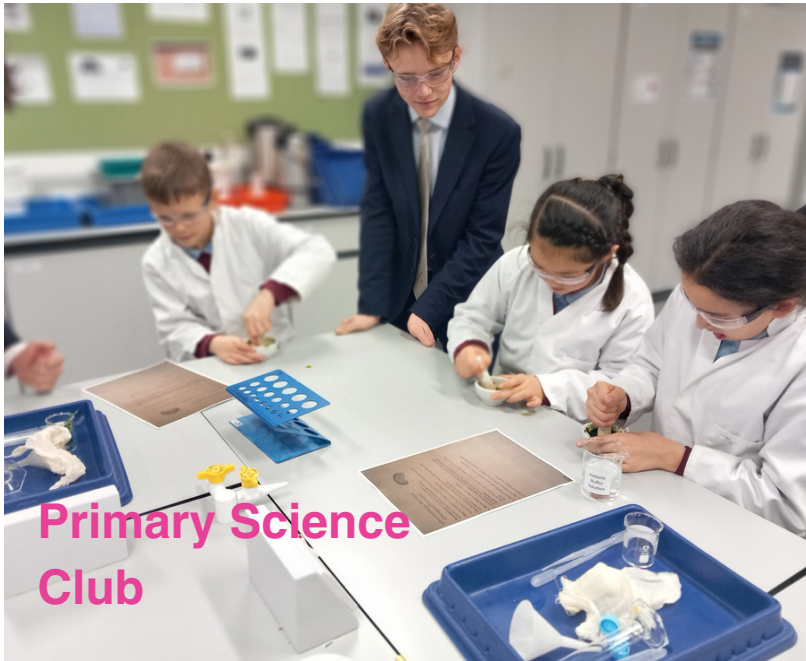
Cello masterclass

In February, some of our top cellists had the opportunity to perform and participate in a masterclass with Robert Max, principal cellist of the London Chamber Orchestra. Opened by the Middle School ensemble and followed with refined works by individual cellists. All students engaged with the constructive advice finishing the session with ideas for improvement.

Mark Stone visits

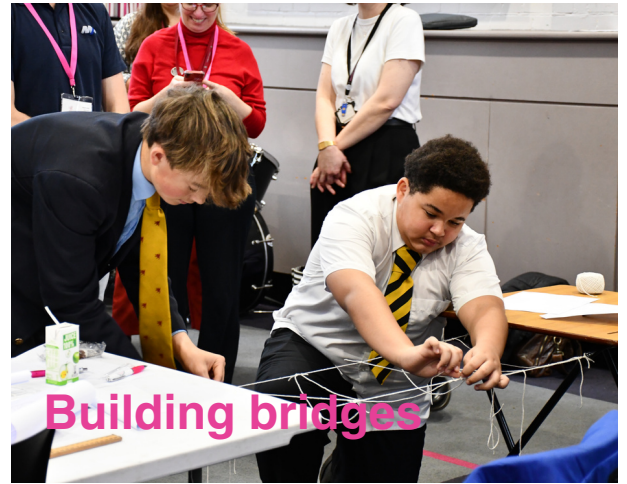
In March, international baritone Mark Stone visited Abingdon to provide a vocal masterclass and recital of Schubert's famed *Winterreise*. Each proved a huge help to the development of our singers and an inspiration on how to perform. Everyone was gripped and left wanting more.

Abingdon School in Partnership



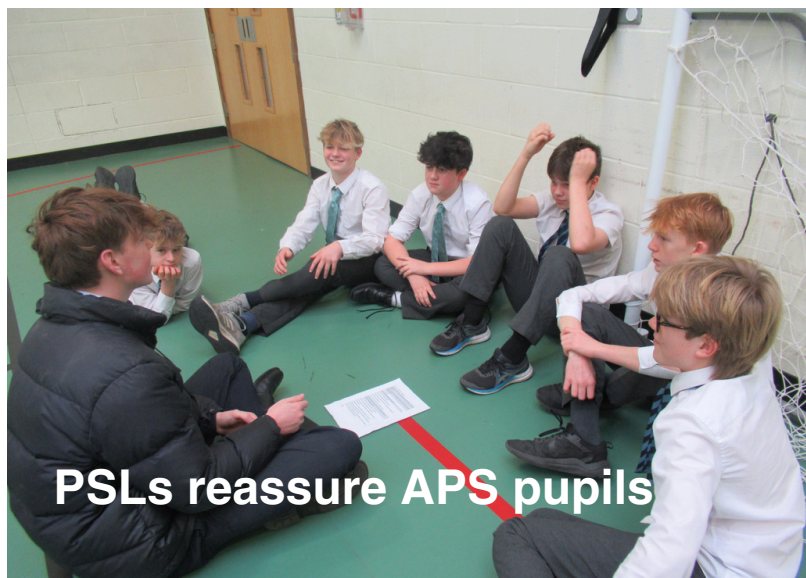
Primary Science Club

It's been a busy term for the Primary Science Club. Supported by the Abingdon School Science Ambassadors, in January, pupils from Drayton, Marcham, Thameside and Thomas Reade primary schools learned how to extract chlorophyll from plant leaves. Then, in March they applied the engineering design process to build a rubber band powered car as part of the international Science Buddies Engineering Challenge – we can't wait to find out how they fared!



Building bridges

In January, 50 students took part in a Bridge Building competition with MJA Consulting. Students worked in teams to design and build the lightest, strongest bridge they could using only A4 paper, sticky tape and string. Representatives from MJA Consulting were on hand to advise and each resulting design was unique. The winning bridge was able to withstand more than 10kg of weight. This was a brilliant way to introduce Civil Engineering as a possible career path and for students across the community to work together.



PSLs reassure APS pupils

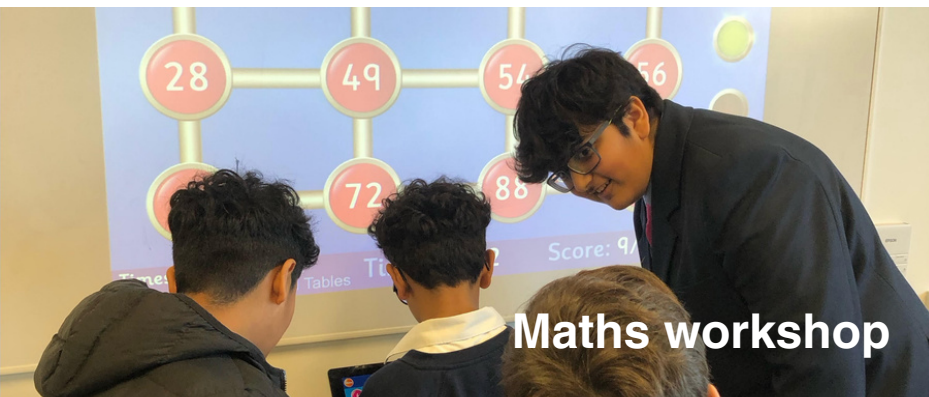
The PSL programme has continued to work collaboratively with our Prep School. Across several visits, sixth form PSL students have broken down all the intimidating misconceptions about the mysteries of senior school life, drawn from their own experiences.



Care in the community

Arth and Josh from the AFU interviewed residents at Old Station House care home for their new film. Our volunteers have also held a board game club on Tuesdays which includes Jenga and Scrabble. For those who are suffering with dementia or Alzheimer's, this interaction is fun and provides important brain stimulation.

Abingdon School in Partnership



Maths workshop

In January, our Primary School Partnership team hosted a maths workshop for Year 4 and Year 6 students to celebrate NSPCC Maths Day. The pupils completed a carousel of activities, including magic squares, arithmagons, shut the box and sudokus. They returned back to their school with lots of sparkly stars showing just how many puzzles they had completed.



Careers insight

On 29 January, students across the OX14 Learning Partnership in Years 10, 11 and Sixth Form attended a career insight talk. Co-hosted by Abingdon and St Helen and St Katharine Schools, industry leaders talked about the different professions which can be accessed from the study of Geography including Property, Surveying and Planning; Campaigning and Advocacy; Business Supply Chains; Environmental Consulting; and Government and International Relations. Michael Triff, Head of Career Guidance at Abingdon, said: "This was a well attended event providing a useful opportunity for those considering, or currently taking, Geography A Level to find out more about the career paths to which it can lead. My thanks to all who helped to organise it."

Lending a helping hand

Continuing our focus on wellbeing and support, at the end of February, we welcomed the two charities The Abingdon Bridge and One Eighty into school to help lead and facilitate our Peer Support Lead (PSL) training session. Students worked in groups to discuss a selection of scenarios and how they might provide support. Spokespeople from both charities then also shared their expertise and experience with the PSLs, giving them some practical ideas. Topics included balancing work pressures, making friends, family issues, anxiety and stress. The PSLs were encouraged to reflect on the impact they have on the people they help to support and to recognise what a difference it can make to the life of a young person.

Primary sports club

This term has seen the launch of an exciting new club for children in local primary schools. Held each week at Tilsley Park, it provides an opportunity for our Sports Scholars to take the lead in coaching a range of skills and games. Overseen by our Sports and Partnerships Departments, there is a range of fun activities to promote getting active and building on skills. So far, between 10-15 pupils have joined us from two of our partner primary schools, Caldecott and Thameside. The club is set to continue into the summer term with a focus on hockey and cricket.

Abingdon School in Partnership

Frantic February

Jeremy Taylor shares his view on why February is very far from being a month for hibernating if you are one of the students involved in the arts at Abingdon or through the OX14 Learning Partnership.



Of all the months of the year, February is perhaps the least likely to stir the heart. Whilst autumn months are famously the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, and summer's charms have long been trumpeted by poets, few of us get excited by the prospect of February - a time of freezing temperatures, frosty skies, and seemingly endless rain and flood. Many dream of nothing more than curling up by the fire and sitting it out until Easter.

Unless, that is, you're one of the many involved in arts activities across the town of Abingdon... in which case February is often a frantically busy and exciting time. Major drama productions grace the stage of the Amey Theatre in the first part of the month, followed immediately by GCSE and A Level practical exams. In other areas of the arts, there will be many who have been relishing an extra February day (courtesy of the leap year) in order to have more time in which to write, film, rehearse or edit work in preparation for the challenges ahead.

This term, for example, has seen Year 9 pupils from several OX14 schools taking on the ultimate acting challenge of preparing an extract from Shakespeare for the first town-wide celebration of

the bard on 22 March in which Anur, Arran and Rex took part. Earlier in the term, they joined 13 pupils from Fitzharrys for a joint drama workshop with OA and professional actor Max Hutchinson, who delivered a superb introduction to the demands and joys of performing Shakespeare's work.

Those who prefer film have been travelling far and wide to capture footage for films they hope to complete later this year. Students from Abingdon, Larkmead and Fitzharrys are working on 19 new films whose subjects range from a pioneering engineer who's developing more efficient electric car motors to the young jockey who's hoping to ride the next Gold Cup winner. Particularly exciting is the work of 2 Larkmead students who are striving to make a film on the theme 'filming otherness' for an international project called Le Cinema cent ans de jeunesse. Ben and Aaron have made their focus the Marcham Astronomy Group, whose weekly meetings in the village hall to gain a better understanding of the heavens have presented a delightful contrast between familiar everyday lives and the unknowable vastness of the skies above.

Meanwhile, Abingdon's claim to be a training ground for the next generation of media moguls continues to gain credibility via the activities of the Oxfordshire Academy of Broadcast Journalism. This programme of workshops led by professional broadcasters Olly Hogben and Blythe Lawrence is open to students from schools across the OX14 Partnership and provides an introduction to the core areas of media work - text-based, sound and visual media - platforms. Students have worked on creating blogs, podcasts and video items which they will share in the summer term.



Top training

In March, England Rugby men's U18s prepared for the upcoming Six Nations Festival in Italy at an intensive training camp held at school. The culmination of years of hard work, dedication and passion for the sport, these young athletes were able to hone their skills and strategies as they prepare for one of rugby's most prestigious international age group tournaments.

National U18 Plate Final

The 1st hockey team has registered 13 wins; 1 draw and 1 loss during the course of the National U18 Plate competition in what has been a busy term with regular weekend fixtures.

Defeating Scarborough in a tightly fought semi-final with the team battling fatigue as much as a determined opponent, Abingdon held firm to score 5-1 in a well deserved result, putting them into the final. This will be held at Lee Valley on 24 April, where they will play Bradfield College. We wish them all the best of luck.



In March, 12 Abingdon climbers attended the ISC climbing competition in London. Competitors had 5½ hours to attempt 12 boulder problems, 10 top-rope routes and 8 lead routes; with students earning more points for completing harder routes or using fewer attempts to top them. Well done to all who took part and in particular 4th Year Daniel who won best boulderer, best top roper, best leader and best climber for the juniors; to sixth former, Jay who won best senior boulderer; our juniors who won 1st place and senior A who came 3rd.



Hockey

In March, during their core sport lesson, Lower School tutor groups clashed on the hockey pitch in the annual internal competition.

In 2nd Year, the winners were 2M, with 2P coming 2nd and 2C, 3rd.

In 1st Year, joint winners were 1H and 1V with 1G coming 3rd.

Abingdon Sport



Collegiate School Rugby competition

On 25 February, the 1st VII rugby squad played their inaugural tournament of the season at the Collegiate School in Bristol. Competition was high with 16 schools taking part from around the South West. The squad secured the runner-up position in their pool, falling short in the Plate semi-final against Exeter School. Despite the loss, it was positive and constructive day. Well done to all who took part.



Knole run

On 13 January the Seniors travelled to Sevenoaks School to compete in the iconic 9.4km course. Conditions were perfect, despite recent snow with a firm and fast course. All 8 team members ran excellent individual races and there was great team work, with pairs pushing each other on. The senior team picked up silver medals behind the Judd School, beating our previous best 3rd place from 2011.



And, they're off

In their first PE lesson of the term, Lower School pupils took part in the annual inter-tutor group cross country competition, running two laps around Albert Park and Upper Field. Congratulations go to Angus (1st Year) and Daragh (2nd Year) for clocking the fastest individual times.

Canoe polo success



Two canoe polo teams travelled to Malvern College in March for an afternoon tournament with Malvern College and Queens College. Abingdon A came in 1st place and Abingdon B in 2nd place, only losing one game against Abingdon A. Everyone enjoyed themselves with students from all schools creating a fun and supportive atmosphere.

Wycliffe Big Head

On 3 February our crews took part in the Wycliffe Big Head, providing the first opportunity for all age groups to race against national competition before Schools Head of the River in March. It was a promising start to the season with all our crews performing well. Particular congratulations to the J15 8+ who became joint winners in a dead heat with Wallingford.



Fencing success

Congratulations to Fin who has been selected for the 2024 Junior Commonwealth Games in New Zealand. So far this year, Fin has won the Regional and National Fencing Championships, become a European team silver medalist, and has 7 national medals. He is now ranked 2nd in Britain and has a world ranking of 30.

County champions

The Cross Country County Championships took place in January. Well done to Quinn and Monty on becoming county champions; and to Daragh and Ralph for qualifying for the English Schools Championship. The result qualified them all to race at the ESAA Cross Country Championships representing Oxfordshire which came 9th overall.

Abingdon Sport



Bath Robe Regatta

It seemed plain sailing to the sailing team who placed 5th in the Bath Robe regatta on Chew Valley Lake on the weekend of 24 and 25 February. The regatta was organised by Bath university and included many top university and alumni teams from the South West. Abingdon sailors achieved remarkable success given this was the team's first ever participation in a team racing regatta.



GB Trials

The possibility of international selection edged ever closer as the boat club took part in the second round of the season's water trials in Lincolnshire in February. The standout result saw Eddie and Calum finish in 4th place in race one, then partnering with top athletes from other schools to finish 3rd and 6th respectively in race two. Well done to everyone for taking part and best of luck for the rest of the season.



Quite a racket!

Having lost to Harrow last term, our 1st VIII were keen to restore some honour when they competed against them on 20 January. There were some closely fought matches including a 27-25 game where Nikhil and Harrison (2nd pair) lost to Harrow's 1st pair. In the end, though, we took the win with an overall score of 12-4.

Abingdon Sport



Ollie wins coveted Rugby Scholarship

Many congratulations to sixth former Ollie for winning a prestigious scholarship with Ealing Trailfinders Rugby and Brunel, offering him the rare opportunity to pursue academia alongside professional rugby training with the aim of reaching the BUCS Premiership.

Ollie says: "Abingdon has provided an exceptional platform for both academic and athletic development and I am grateful for the mentorship and coaching that have guided me to this pivotal moment in my rugby career."

Matthew Gold, Director of Rugby, adds: "We take immense pride in seeing a student progress from Abingdon Prep School through to the Senior School and beyond with such ambition and potential. Well done Ollie."

Sevens success

Our U14 Rugby Sevens team demonstrated exceptional skill and determination at the 48th Queen Elizabeth School Barnet Rugby Sevens Tournament in March. Despite challenging weather conditions, they emerged as undefeated, clinching the Plate title in a captivating display of passion, commitment, and teamwork. This was a well-deserved triumph.



Radley Relays

The cross country club faced a slow and muddy course on 6 February. The Juniors eventually finished 5th despite a strong lead out leg of 12.53 from Xavier. The Inters won their race by 35 seconds with the fastest leg of their race coming from Ralph (11.31) while Harry continued his good form in 11.36. The Seniors finished 2nd behind St Albans despite a great third leg of 11.09 from Monty.

Runaway success

Very many congratulations to Quinn who has been selected as part of the GB squad to compete at the World Athletics Cross Country Championships in late March.



Abingdon Prep



Forest School

Year 5 have been enjoying their regular Forest School sessions, working hard to light their own 'fairy fires' using a flint and steel in sub-zero temperatures. All of the pupils listened carefully to the rules and showed an impressive level of resilience as they kept trying until the sparks caught the cotton wool and they made fire.



Goals galore

The football club has had a tremendously successful season with the U13 and U11 teams going unbeaten throughout the season. The U12s went one better than this, keeping a clean sheet for the entire season, scoring 75 goals and conceding 0.

Within the Foundation, our U13 team played against the Senior school U13 team in what is always a hotly contested and competitive match. After two halves of end-to-end action and multiple rattles of the crossbar, the final score was 2-2 with the AS team equalising in the final minute.

Safety is a priority

Years 3 and 4 had a very memorable day at Hazard Alley in January. This interactive, immersive, and memorable safety education experience teaches children about how to stay safe, understand risks and avoid accidents. The children learned about keeping safe at home, on the roads, near water, by railways and online. They also had the chance to practise making a call to the emergency services. It was a hugely important day for our pupils and lots of fun too.



Who dunnit?

In a wonderful twist of whodunnit, our Year 6 had to solve who might have 'kidnapped' Craig from his Head's conference at the imaginary Inkwell Manor.

A pen was dropped at the scene but could Year 6 work out, from their Chromatography lesson, who was responsible?

In their lesson, Year 6 used water as a solvent to separate the different colours present in the ink and record the different distances each travelled on some blotting paper. Each ink had a distinctive pattern - this enabled Year 6 to discover the culprit and release Craig from captivity!



As part of their topic on Earth and Space, Year 5 have been studying the moon's eight phases. They created 'living' models of how the Moon and Earth rotate and revolve by acting these movements out. Then, they recreated the moon phases with oreos(!), thinking carefully about how their diagrams would be impacted by which side they placed the sun. Well done Year 5.



It was a particularly exciting start to a January day when Pre-Prep invited their families into school to showcase their work. It was great to be able to share the progress, hard work and learning through fun, along with a few tasty home made biscuits too! Well done Pre-Prep, keep up the good work.



The Easter Bunny visits school

Children in the Pre-Prep were very egg-cited when they received a surprise visit from the Easter Bunny who wanted to wish them all a 'Hoppy Easter'.

Sporting Easter themed hats and grasping baskets, the children had great fun hunting around the play area to see what Easter surprises had been left.

Abingdon OA Club

London Drinks Reception

The OA Club was delighted to welcome OAs to the Royal Thames Yacht Club on 17 January for the now well established London Drinks



Reception. The Head updated attendees on life at Abingdon, the newly opened Pavilion and recent extensions to the boarding houses. OA Club Chair, Julian Denée (OA 1991), launched the Club's Work Experience Scheme and highlighted the imminent publication of the Griffen, expressing appreciation for the support of so many OAs.

The World in Chaos? What Happens Next?



On 1 March, Lord Darroch of Kew (OA 1972) was in conversation to a capacity Amey Theatre audience on the theme of The World in Chaos? What Happens Next? Mr Pygott and three Upper Sixth students, presented Kim with questions regarding climate change, the US primaries, the Russia-Ukraine War, Brexit and more.



Hockey and Football

OAs gathered at Tilsley Park for the first events of the year – OA v OA Football and an OA and guests hockey match, followed by wood-fired pizzas enjoyed by all.



Forthcoming Events

Friday 26 April

OA 50s, 60s Dinner:
Phyllis Court, Henley

Saturday 27 April

OA Gathering
Brisbane, Australia

Friday 10 May

OA Golf Day
The Springs Golf Club, Wallingford

Friday 14 June

1st XI v OAs Cricket
War Memorial Field, Abingdon School

Saturday 15 June

Year Group Reunions,
Abingdon School:
Leaving Years - 1954, 1959, 1964,
1969, 1974, 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994,
1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019

Friday 5 July

Strawberries and Pimm's Event,
Henley Royal Regatta

Saturday 31 August

OA Rugby: Waste Court Field,
Abingdon School

The OA Club Small Grants Programme for OAs

The Personal Fund is open to any individual OAs applying for support of a personal or professional development opportunity.

The Group Fund is open to all OAs applying as a group to support experiences in sport, music, art, drama, or other collective endeavours.

When to Apply

Grants are made annually at the June meeting of the OA Club Committee. Applications should be submitted **by 1 May 2024**. You can find out more and how to apply on The Club's 'OA Small Grants' within our new Abingdonian Community hub.



Lunch for pre 1970 leavers

We were delighted to welcome OAs back to Abingdon on 6 March for a lunch hosted by Mike Windsor and Christopher Pickup (OA 1960), Chairman of our 1563 Society. It was poignant hearing OAs reminisce in detail over shared memories. Current sixth formers also treated guests to personalised tours around the school site in the Spring sunshine.

Spotlight on supporters

We asked Bradley and Katherine Wickens to tell us in a nutshell, why they chose to support the school.

What is your relationship with the Abingdon Foundation?

Our eldest son Jamie (OA 2023) went to Abingdon school.

What were your reasons for wanting to support bursaries at Abingdon?

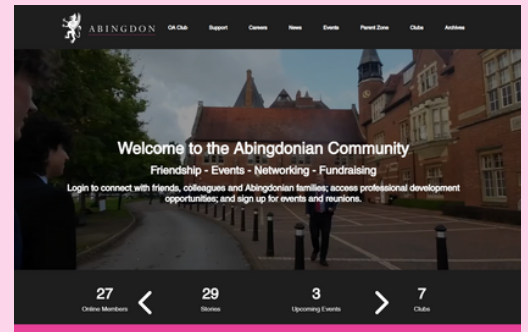
We wanted to give something back to Abingdon in return for the great education our son gained from going to the school and supporting a bursary was the obvious choice.

Why did you decide to support our 7 years to change a life bursary campaign with your gift?

Giving to the 7 years to change a life campaign makes sense. Our planned annual donation, together with other regular donations, supports one child's place at the school.

And lastly, what piece of music would you take to your Desert Island and why?

Bastille *Pompeii* as it reminds me of happy times doing the school run with a car full of boys, and a special summer's evening at Wilderness surrounded by family and friends.



New community hub

We are delighted to introduce a new place to connect and engage with Abingdon. The Abingdonian Community hub will launch in the summer term. Through this, you will be able to easily connect with friends, colleagues and current families; access professional development opportunities; and sign up for events and reunions.

Boarding house development

We are incredibly grateful to those who have already committed to sponsor a room in Austin, Crescent and School Houses.

For those who would like to find out more about sponsoring a room, there is still time - please do get in touch with us via email: development@abingdon.org.uk

Both Austin and Crescent Houses are now fully open and we are currently finalising our plans for the extensive refurbishment of School House.

We will keep you updated on progress with this project in due course.



Celebrating Safer Internet Day

As we approached Safer Internet Week in February, Deputy Head (Pastoral) and Designated Safeguarding Lead, Helen Keevil advised families to switch off their devices and enjoy a meal together around the kitchen table.



When was the last time you and your family spent quality time eating a meal together with all devices switched off? Sadly, I suspect that for the majority of us, it hasn't happened in a while...

That's because, in this digital age of ours, the primary way to communicate is via technology and we are bombarded by it - websites, emails, apps and social media. It doesn't matter whether we are arranging to meet friends or doing the weekly shop - almost everything we do, we do using these technologies. This makes it incredibly easy to get lost in the virtual world and ever more challenging to focus on genuine human connections.

It also means that the message we are sending to our children is that communicating via technology is more valuable than personal interaction. The reality is that the online world is where people now spend their time and there are both positive and negative elements to it. Young people I work with talk about all the help they've found from others online.

Equally, though, some young people are emotionally unprepared for what they can view and this, together with them being at an impressionable age, can mean inappropriate content and images

are only one small click away.

To strike the right balance between recognising the positive aspects of technology whilst also appreciating the value of personal interaction and the beauty of the world around us, individuals need to understand that stepping away from a screen doesn't mean that technology is being abandoned! Rather that, by being constantly plugged in, we are missing out on the richness of life and the laughter, conversations and experiences that shape us. It is this point which is particularly pivotal for parents.

In his book 'Working with Boys' Andrew Hampton discusses the different forms of masculinity asserting that the relational culture of boys cannot be significantly changed once it has become established in Year 8 and above. Boys aged between 9 and 12 need clear boundaries and to understand there are consequences to their actions if they have made poor decisions. This cannot be properly accomplished without open dialogue and genuine human connections - either at home or at school.

Throughout the Abingdon Foundation, we are heavily invested in the quality of our PSChE delivery. Pupils are taught the importance of self-regulation, staying safe online and are actively encouraged to enter into a dialogue if they feel something is unfair or to raise anything they feel worried about. Our older students take on ambassadorial roles, mentoring and supporting our young people so they can be confident in expressing their own voices whilst embracing being part of a community which is kind and inclusive.

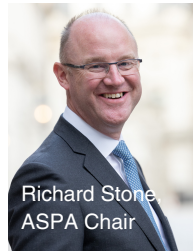
Connecting in this way involves mindfulness, focusing on being fully engaged in the present and, yes you've guessed it, turning off mobile devices!

ASPA

Abingdon School Parents' Association

Connecting parents, supporting school life.

It hardly seems possible that it is the summer term already. Last term, ASPA held a Burns Night Supper and Ceilidh in the new pavilion which was a great success - and many thanks to Toby in Year 7 who gave a superb performance piping in the Haggis!



Richard Stone
ASPA Chair

I am pleased that since my last appeal we have welcomed a number of new members to ASPA but, as others step down due to their sons leaving the school, we still need more. If you have time, energy and ideas, please consider putting yourself forward.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Email: aspa@abingdon.org.uk

Burns Night Supper



Well! What can we say?

Apart from what a wonderful evening! In fact, we had such a good time that the committee has agreed to do it all again in January 2025.

ASPA vacancies

A huge thank you to Kathy, Christina and Caroline for their collective 18 years of service to ASPA. They are stepping down at the end of this year and we are now looking for energetic and willing newcomers to join the committee - in particular in the roles of **Treasurer** and **Committee Secretary**. Being part of ASPA is a fulfilling way of supporting other parents, your children and the school.

Abingdon News

Travel Awards

Applications for this year's travel awards close on **1 May**. Each year, ASPA and the OA Club offer sixth formers the opportunity to apply for financial help for overseas adventures. Students can be awarded up to £500, depending on the nature and value of their proposed project. They submit an application and then a panel will quiz them on their proposed adventure. The variety of applications over the few years I have been involved in this initiative have surprised and impressed me. The only thing we ask is the lucky recipients share the experience with their peers when they return to school to inspire others who might like to follow them.



Quiz Night - 10 May 2024

Get your thinking caps on and teams organised! Places will be able to be booked through the box office – look out for further details in the weekly newsletter. Great fun was had last year with prizes for the winners, and losers!

Abingdon Out of the Past

The Tesdale Panel - Once Lost Now Found!

It might not look much to you but the Tesdale panel is one of Abingdon's treasures, once lost but now found.

In 2006, the History of Abingdon School in 63 Objects featured this panel as Object No. 5 with the words:

Object No. 5 is conspicuous by its absence. It used to exist, it can be seen in a print of the schoolroom in the 1840s, and again in a drawing of the Common Room in 1922, so it survived the move to Park Road but its present whereabouts is unknown and there is a suspicion that it doesn't exist anymore...

But it does! At a recent OA event, Martin Andrews OA 1970, told our archivist that one day in a ceramics class he was handed a dirty board on which to knock up some clay. When the board got wet, he noticed that there seemed to be a painting underneath the old clay. He showed it to the art master who dismissed it as 'some old Victorian thing' of no interest, so Andrews asked permission to take it. He cleaned it up and has had it hanging on his wall for over 60 years, unaware of its significance.



The Tesdale panel



The old schoolroom, 1842. The Tesdale panel behind the usher's desk (right) and the Roysse panel above the headmaster's desk (left).



Masters' Common Room in 1922.
The Tesdale panel is above the door.

The panel shows the coat of arms of Thomas Tesdale (spelt Teasdale in the panel) impaled with those of his wife, Maud. It was donated to the school in 1763 as part of the bi-centenary celebrations of John Roysse's endowment and commemorates the fact that 'Thomas Teasdale founded this Ushership in the year of our Lord 1609 & of his age 63'. The Ushership was the office of second master, which Tesdale endowed with the rectory and tithes of Upton, Warwickshire.



The Roysse panel in Boarders Hall

The panel hung behind the usher's desk in the old schoolroom, and a companion piece depicting John Roysse's coat of arms hung at the other end of the room behind the headmaster's desk. The Roysse panel survived and hangs in Boarders Hall where the Tesdale panel will join it. We are very grateful to Martin Andrews for rescuing the panel all those years ago and for now being happy to give it to the school.