



# Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

14<sup>th</sup> March 2025

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# Introduction

Dear carers, parents, students, and colleagues,

Today I'd like to share a message of thanks. This week, students have had access to three lectures from Old Redingensians. Two Inspire Lectures were delivered by Noam Rosenbaum (OR 2011–2018), a British diplomat working in Pakistan, and Nicholas Lax (OR 1995–2000), an actuary at Pacific Life Re. Both emphasised that learning languages has been hugely important in their career journeys and that, rather than making fixed plans, they had found their journeys shaped by making the most of the opportunities that presented themselves and by learning from their own mistakes and failures. They also spoke about the importance of giving back, providing yet another example of the incredible network that Old Redingensians offer current students.

A special mention must also go to Finbarr Sheedy (OR 2015–2022), in his third year at the University of Oxford, reading Law and German. After seeing news of the School's upcoming Giving Days and 900th Anniversary, Finbarr reached out to say that, as a poor student, he could not contribute financially at this point but wanted to come back to give his time and experience instead.

These examples persuade me of how lucky we are to be a real community and to be part of something bigger than ourselves. This was evidenced by the success of a group of Year 13 students who went on to win a prestigious French debating competition - the 'Joutes Oratoires', while representing Reading School. Furthermore, Year 7 and 8 students worked together admirably during the Berkshire Magistrates' Court School Mock Trial Competition and have made it through to the finals. Both successes bring to life the saying, "We succeed by lifting each other up."

John Donne famously said, "No man is an island." If he is right that the loss of one of us is a loss for us all, then perhaps a win for one of us can also be a win for all.

*"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."*

With joy for those who celebrate, thanks for those who give, and sorrow for those who depart.

**Dr Chris Evans**

**Headmaster**

# Key information

## All years

### Student Support Parent Meetup – a reminder

On Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March from 2.15pm - 3.15pm, we are holding a meetup session for parents of students on our SEND register. This is a valuable opportunity for you to see Auxilium, meet with the team and talk to other parents.

If you would like to come along, please email [studentsupport@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:studentsupport@reading-school.co.uk) by Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March.

## Safeguarding & Wellbeing

### GEN AI

Find out what harms children and young people are being exposed to online with new generative AI (gen AI) tools which are now everywhere online. Produced by The National Grid for Learning (LGfL), [this video](#) (11mins 5secs) for parents and carers includes:

- What GEN AI is.
- The harms of GEN AI.
- Statistics.
- Starting a conversation.
- Further support.

# School Community News

## Excellence in Debating and Languages

### Reading School Debating Team Triumphs at Joutes Oratoires Lycéennes



The [Joutes oratoires lycéennes](#) is a French debating competition open to sixth formers, which gathers every year several hundreds of young French learners, all sharing the same interest in practising languages in a creative and challenging way.

Regional heats are organised across the country and allow to identify regional winners. The quarter final, the semi-final and the national final are organised at the Institut français du Royaume-Uni during the Mois de la Francophonie and bring several months of regional heats to a close.

The Reading School Debating Team included: James T, McDylan P-E, James G and Gaurav K. James T shared of the experience:

Our journey began at Marlborough College, where we were invited to compete in the regional heat in late January. In the qualification stage, we debated against three schools on topics ranging from whether we should make school uniforms compulsory to whether countries that violate human rights should be banned from hosting major sporting events. We won each debate, securing a place in the final against Wellington College for the first time ever for Reading School!



The motion for the final – ‘A benevolent dictatorship is always preferable to a weak democracy’, was revealed just 15 minutes before the debate, leaving us with little time to prepare our opposition case. Those 15 minutes were challenging but productive. In the end, we won the debate and qualified for the national final, an unprecedented achievement for our school.

After winning our regional competition at Marlborough College, we were among ten schools invited to compete in the national round hosted by the Institut français du Royaume-Uni in London, and we had to prepare in advance for two debates:

*‘The digitisation of works of art makes them accessible to all.’*

*‘The exploration of space is a necessity for humanity.’*

After scoring well in both, we progressed to the ‘grande finale’ against St Paul’s School. We had fifteen minutes to prepare two introductions, a conclusion, and our arguments in support of the motion: ‘*Science must always have the last word*’.

Assessed on multiple criteria – including the quality of our arguments and language, our ability to persuade, and our performance as a team – we were delighted to be announced as the winners.

Both Matthew O-D and I are incredibly grateful to the Institut français for hosting the event, to Madame Fondu for her constant support and guidance, and to James G, McDylan P-E, and Gaurav K, without whom this result would not have been possible.

## Excellence in Law

### Legal Eagles Soar: Reading School Advances to National Mock Trial Finals



The Berkshire Magistrates' Court School Mock Trial Competition is an annual event where students take on roles of magistrates, lawyers, legal advisors, defendants, witnesses and ushers in order to take part in a criminal case in a real court room. It is one of the largest national law events for Year 8 and Year 9 students in England and Wales and students get the opportunities to:

- Build leadership and public speaking skills.
- Develop analytical and critical thinking skills.
- Learn about how criminal courts work and see how decisions of innocence or guilt are reached.
- Get to experience what a career in law or one of the many other careers available in the court service is like.

On Saturday 8th March, 13 of our Year 8 and Year 9 students took part in the Mock Trial Competition and we are delighted to share that our student team won their heat and made it through to the finals being held in May 2025. Their achievement could not have been possible without the support and guidance of Dr Stefan Fafinski (OR 1978 – 1985) JP DL and Dr Emily Finch.

Dr Fafinski shared earlier this week:

“We could not be prouder of the way the boys performed on Saturday. Courtrooms are designed to be intimidating, and there is a huge difference between running through the trial in a History or Modern Languages classroom, or the Lecture Room, and standing up in an actual court performing against students you don't know and have no idea how will answer your questions. And they just got on with it. There were no weak performances from anyone in the team - that's not to say we can't make things even better (we have a list already!) but we are starting from a very strong position.

The boys also now know exactly what to expect in the Regional Final (other counties do participate) and we think the sense of achievement they must have in coming from a position of not having done this before (and the School having no recent history in the event) to winning (against schools which are there every year) should give them a huge confidence boost and momentum in pressing onwards. They worked as a team and are now a really tight unit - supporting and encouraging each other, while not being afraid to offer constructive feedback to each other (and to act on the feedback of peers, teachers and coaches). A microcosm of what Reading School has been about for 900 years.

Dr Fafanski also highlighted several performances from:

Kacper L – “Who delivered a breathtakingly good opening speech on Saturday (I overheard others saying ‘*Did you see Reading School's first prosecution lawyer?*’) - an absolute star.”

Joshua O – “Who changed roles during preparation from Legal Advisor to prosecution lawyer 2 and produced a clever line of questioning worthy of someone in practice.”

Toby B – “Who was clever, confident and adaptable in the face of difficult witnesses (if a little theatrical!)”

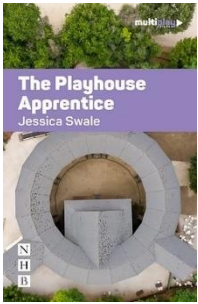
Owen S – “*Was absolutely composed and unflappable and already has the air of a barrister about him.*”

Neel S – “Who took the role of Legal Advisor and made it his own (it is often done so very poorly)”

On behalf of Reading School, we would also like to thank Mr Whitehorn (Head of History) Miss Loft (Library Assistant) who have supported the student team throughout the competition and we are looking forward to the final being held on May 10th at Reading Crown Court.

## Events

### The Playhouse Apprentice – tickets now on sale



Reading School Drama Department are delighted to announce tickets are now on sale via the links below for our annual Drama collaboration with The Abbey School.

This year sees our senior students from Years 10 - 12 delighting us with an Elizabethan caper with serious undertones on the importance of the arts for all. A wonderful, atmospheric ensemble piece, *The Playhouse Apprentice* will make you laugh out loud as we follow the journey of John Pygge to save his theatre from closure. The performances take place at [South Street Arts Centre](#) where the students' fabulous work will be adorned by a professional technician, in a professional venue.

[Tickets for Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March](#)

[Tickets for Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March](#)

### Inspire Lecture

**Tuesday 18th March (After School, 3:45 - 4:45pm)**

**The quest for the world's highest magnetic field [Year 10 or above]**



Dr James Ellison (ETH Zurich) will showcase cutting-edge research into compact HTS magnets and their potential applications in energy storage, battery research and carbon capture.

He will also share insights into his journey from Cambridge to ETH Zurich, exploring how advancements in magnet technology could shape the future of science and sustainability.

Register here: [Inspire Lecture: The quest for the world's highest magnetic field | Events | Reading School Alumni Society](#)

We have been promoting the Inspire Lectures to students across year groups. If you think your child would be interested, please encourage them to register.

# RSPA

## Request for second-hand book donations – update

We're delighted to report that the LRC continues to receive many donations from the original list of books shared with our community – thank you so much. The list has become smaller due to the requested donations and we are now only seeking copies of the remaining two books:

### Books to replace old LRC copies

- The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
- Agatha Christie novels

If you or your wider family network have unwanted copies at home, and no longer need them, please do consider donating them to the LRC. Please take them to reception marked "LRC - Book Donation" and let the LRC put your unwanted books to good use.

### The Pre-loved Uniform Shop

The uniform shop will be open on the following dates:

- ~~Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March from 3.30pm – 4.30pm~~ **CANCELLED**
- Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March from 10.30am – 12.30pm

Please come along to purchase pre-loved school uniform, games kit and cricket whites. We are starting to gather stock for new Year 7s who will arrive in September 2025, and would welcome donations of the following items:

- Ties
- Macron kit
- Small size trousers -up to age 13
- Small size shirts - up to age 13
- Blazers -up to 34"
- Lab coats

In the event of a poor weather forecast the opening will be cancelled and if this happens, information will be sent out via WhatsApp groups and Classlist.

We are always looking for more volunteers to join our shop team. It is a great way to meet other parents and to find out about more about the school. If you would like to join the team, please email [shop@readingschoolparents.co.uk](mailto:shop@readingschoolparents.co.uk)

Have a lovely weekend, and thank you to all those who support the RSPA.

The RSPA Team

# Lent Term – Week 10

To keep up to date with student life at Reading School, click the icons below to follow, be part of, and stay connected with the Reading School community.



## Debating Champions

Winners of the national [Joutes Oratoires competition 2025](#)

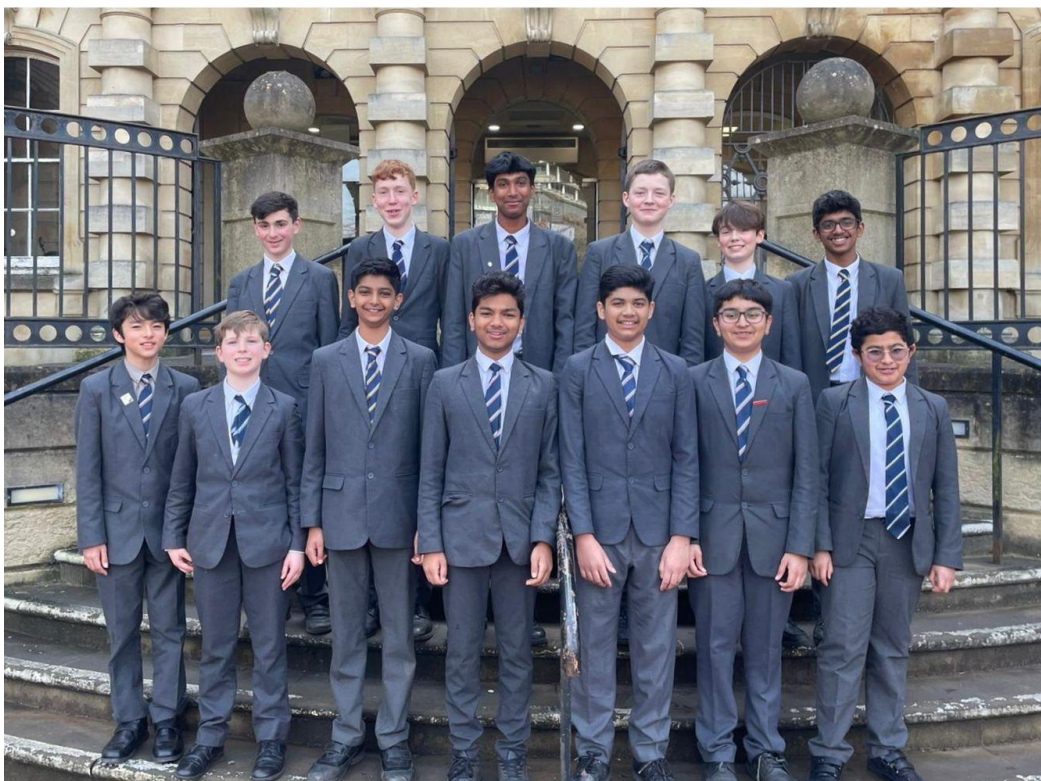
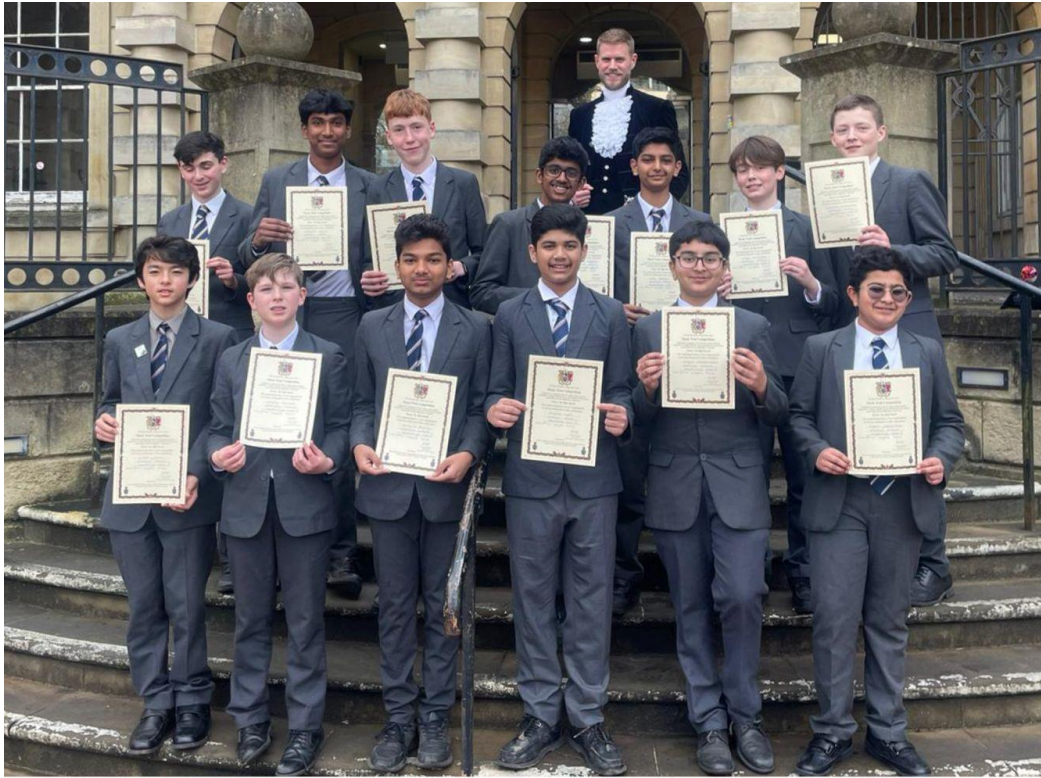


## Legal Eagles Soar

Reading School Advances to Berkshire Magistrates' Court School Mock Trial Final

Congratulations to (in no specific order): Samarth M, Shreyas K, Darsh P, Neel K, Kacper L, Joshua O, Aarav K, Lucas Y, Toby B, Owen S, Rutwick B, Austin H and Dawood S.

We look forward to following your progress and supporting you during the Finals.



## A message from Mr Allen, Head of Sport & PE

Please click the thumbnail to view the video



Feedback is important to us and if you have any positive news, comments or suggestions, please contact the Community Relations Office by emailing [communityrelations@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:communityrelations@reading-school.co.uk)