



Reading
SCHOOL Est. 1125



Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

21st March 2025

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Introduction

Dear parents, carers, students, and colleagues,

This afternoon, I would like to express my gratitude to two particular members of staff.

Firstly, today we celebrate Mr Sellwood's 20-year work anniversary. As our network manager, many parents may never have met or heard of him, but his care and professionalism have guided the School through two decades of IT advancements. The internet was still in its infancy when Mr Sellwood joined Reading School, and now he plays a crucial role in keeping our children safe by filtering, monitoring, and providing a stable platform for all our online services and IT infrastructure.

I am equally grateful to Mr Pedlow. Yesterday, under his tutelage and coaching, our U14 and U16 badminton teams were crowned champions at the Badminton England National Schools Finals. Mr Pedlow has coached these teams for more than two decades, and under his leadership, we have remained undefeated national champions since 2017. My congratulations go to, in no particular order: Advait N, Aditya V, Arhant Y, Vihaan G, Kaushal N, Nived N, Akhil G, Emin B, Jimmy B, and Sid S.

From the badminton court to the stage, this week also saw our Drama students perform in the third theatrical collaboration between The Abbey and Reading School. Mr Sandiford and Ms Friend co-directed *The Playhouse Apprentice* by Jessica Swale, and both deserve commendation for their dedication to continuing these annual collaborations, where talented students from both schools come together to deliver compelling performances.

I would also like to thank the eight Year 7 parents who booked parents' evening appointments with our Drama department and the 14 who booked PE appointments. In a recent survey, 12 boys said that Drama was their favourite subject, while 28 named PE as their favourite. I strongly encourage parents in the years to come to celebrate the broadest possible interests of their sons and to engage with the exceptional teaching in these departments, which were left with more than 100 available parents' evening slots.

Finally, as we prepare for next week's highly anticipated Giving Days, I would like to express my appreciation for the 200 students who have secured sponsors. We are hoping for a flurry of activity this weekend as we gear up for 36 remarkable hours involving cubing to canoeing, rowing to reading, maths to model-making and much, much more. The stage is set for a joyful celebration indeed.

Dr Chris Evans

Headmaster

Key information

All years

House Achievements

This week the Headmaster delivered House assemblies to remind all students to join together in their Challenges to support our Giving Days. He thanked students who are on their way to getting sponsorships and encouraged others to engage families, friends, neighbours and networks for support.

For sponsorship to be included in House achievements please ask friends and family to complete the sponsorship form below:

Send this sponsorship form to supporters to make their pledge: <https://forms.office.com/e/BA1BPawKWn>;

OR

If supporters would prefer to donate early, they can do so by sharing this link: [Reading School's Giving Day 2025](#) or wait until it goes officially live on Giving Day next week.

Safeguarding & Wellbeing

Richard Dimbleby Lecture

Ex-England Manager, Sir Gareth Southgate delivered this year's Richard Dimbleby Lecture this week and his talk addressed the challenges faced by young men today. As well as exploring the concept of belief, unity and resilience in young people, he also expressed concern over the influence of "callous, manipulative and toxic influencers" who exploit young men's insecurities, promoting a misguided notion that success is defined by wealth and dominance. Furthermore, he went on to highlight the decline in community structures and mentorship, leading many young men to seek guidance online, where they can be vulnerable to harmful influences.

The lecture is available on [BBC iPlayer by clicking here](#) (54mins).

Reading School Vacancies

Teacher Vacancy - Teacher of Spanish, starting September 2025

Please see our recruitment portal for full details: [Teacher of Spanish at Reading School](#)

Deadline for Applications - 8am on Tuesday 22 April 2025

School Community News

Excellence in Code Breaking

The National Cipher Challenge

An annual online cryptography competition run by the University of Southampton for secondary school students, the [National Cipher Challenge](#) tests participants to solve increasingly complex ciphered messages, encouraging problem-solving, logical thinking, and a passion for cryptography. The challenge is an excellent way for students to develop mathematical and computational skills while learning about classical and modern encryption techniques and two Reading School students won a silver medal – awarded to the top 200 students in the country (the top 1%).

Akshith A (12SHu) and Darshan L (12RCh) were interviewed earlier this week about their achievement:



Q: Tell us more about the competition.

Akshith: Registration for the 2024 Cipher Challenge opened in September, and challenges began in October. The competition consisted of two parallel challenge streams: Challenge A, which was designed for beginners, and Challenge B, which featured more complex cryptographic puzzles scored based on accuracy and speed.

Each round included two parts that formed a progressive narrative, often inspired by historical cryptographic events or figures, with the difficulty increasing over time. Scoring for Challenge B was done with time-banded scoring awarding more points for faster, accurate submissions. While accuracy was prioritised over speed, later rounds placed greater emphasis on time. With each subsequent challenge, the number of points lost per time band got sharper. The competition followed a structured timeline, beginning with warm-up rounds in October that did not count

towards final rankings, followed by the main competition which ran from early November to mid-December.

Q: What was the most exciting part of the competition for you?

Darshan: My favourite part of the National Cipher Challenge was the thrill of solving the ciphers programmatically. There was something incredibly satisfying about watching the solution appear on the terminal screen within seconds, all thanks to a few lines of code. It felt almost magical, like unlocking a hidden secret with just a click of a button.

Q: Is there anything you would have done differently?

Akshith: Though we are incredibly grateful to take part in the Cipher Challenge and achieve a good result, our only regret was not finding out about the challenge in previous years, since our keen interest in computing would have been aptly paralleled by the cryptographic puzzles posed in the challenge. It was a challenge we came across randomly, and decided to take part in and we highly encourage those students with an interest in problem solving to get involved with the challenge next September, regardless of what field they wish to pursue, since the experience offered is invaluable.



Darshan: If anyone has any questions about the challenge, feel free to email us or talk to us in person. We also recommend taking an algorithmic approach to breaking ciphers for those who enjoy programming, as writing scripts to automate decryption can be both efficient and rewarding. Personally, we found it satisfying to crack a cipher with just a few clicks, though solving it by hand is equally impressive and builds a deeper understanding of the techniques involved. The National Cipher Challenge is a fantastic way to expand your mathematical horizons, improve your problem-solving abilities, and strengthen your coding skills, making it an enriching experience for anyone interested in cryptography.

Congratulations to both of you.

Events - external

Jo Trott Lecture – Personalised Medicine & AI

THE JO TROTT MEMORIAL LECTURE 2025

with Dr Detina Zalli



The Abbey School is hosting a lecture on Thursday, 27 March 2025 featuring Dr Detina Zalli, Associate Teaching Professor at the University of Cambridge. Her studies have taken her from earning her PhD at the University of Leicester to Boston for her postdoctoral research training at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine, and then on to leading and directing courses in life sciences and chairing important events such as Harvard Leadership Conference whilst collaborating with institutions across Asia to develop and deliver biomedical science courses. Most

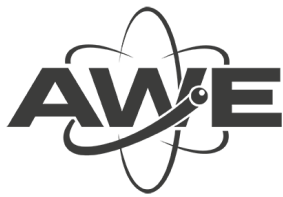
recently, Dr Zalli joined the University of Oxford where she served as the academic lead for the MSc course in Precision Cancer Medicine.

Dr Zalli will be speaking about Personalised Medicine and AI, and will also share insights into her personal journey, highlighting the challenges she has faced and the lessons she has learned.

This is an ARCH 'sign up and show up' event and places can be booked [via this link](#). Please note that students under the age of 14 must be chaperoned.

Careers

Year 10 Engineering Taster Sessions



Is your child curious about engineering but unsure where their skills could take them? If they've got an interest in engineering but need a little guidance, AWE has the perfect opportunity for them to explore.

AWE is hosting a hands-on experience designed to help young people discover the right trade for them before committing to an apprenticeship or career path. The event is a fantastic way to try out practical tasks, meet current apprentices, and get a real feel for what engineering has to offer.

What's included?

- Interactive sessions with AWE apprentices.
- Practical tasks to see if engineering is the right fit.
- Insight into the exciting career pathways available in engineering.

Where? Tadley Community Centre

When? Tuesday, 27th May 2025

Time slots and sign-up links (advance registration required, limited spaces allocated first come, first served basis):

- 9:00–10:30 AM: [Discover Your Perfect Career Path In Engineering - AWE Year 10 Workshop \(9 - 10:30am\). - Pathway CTM](#)
- 11:00 AM–12:30 PM: [Discover Your Perfect Career Path In Engineering - AWE Year 10 Workshop \(11 - 12:30pm\). - Pathway CTM](#)
- 2:00–3:30 PM: [Discover Your Perfect Career Path In Engineering - AWE Year 10 Workshop \(2 - 3:30pm\) - Pathway CTM](#)

PwC Parent Information Session



Helping students make informed career choices can be challenging, especially with so many opportunities available. Join the **PwC Parent Information Session** to gain valuable insights into PwC's career pathways and how you can support your children in their journey.



Event Details

Event: PwC Parent Information Session

Date: Wednesday, 26th March

Time: 3:30pm – 4:30pm

Location: Virtual

Why Attend?

PwC is one of the world's leading professional services firms, offering exceptional career pathways for students through **Flying Start Degree Programmes, Apprenticeships, Work Experience, and Graduate opportunities**. This session is designed to provide parents and teachers with valuable insights into:

- The range of career opportunities available at PwC
- How students can stand out in the application process
- The skills and attributes PwC looks for in future talent
- How PwC supports young professionals in their career development

This event is open to **parents, guardians, teachers and careers advisers** who want to understand the opportunities available for students at PwC and how to support them in making informed career decisions.

Register Now

Secure your place today to gain expert insights into PwC's career pathways and recruitment process.

Register Here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PwC-Parent-Teacher>

Jobs of the Future - the fusion of creativity and technology



CreaTech is a fusion of **Creativity** and **Technology**, referring to the intersection where creative industries (such as media, design, fashion, music, and the arts) meet cutting-edge technology (like AI, VR, AR, blockchain, and immersive experiences).

It's particularly relevant in areas like:

- **Digital storytelling** (AI-generated content, interactive media)
- **Virtual and augmented reality** (for education, entertainment, and marketing)
- **AI-powered design and art** (from generative design to automated video production)
- **Blockchain in creative industries** (NFTs, digital rights management)
- **Smart textiles and fashion tech** (wearable technology)

A report detailing how the fusion of emerging technologies and the Creative Industries can be [accessed by clicking here](#).

RSPA

Request for 'Gift Aid Forms' from members of the RSPA

Did you know that the RSPA can claim a further 25% of most RSPA members donations, for free, from HMRC? Surprisingly, many families join the RSPA, but don't complete the 'Gift Aid form' when submitting their application.

If you are UK taxpayer, this would boost your £50 membership donation by an additional £12.50.

If you were not aware and did not submit a 'Gift Aid form' with your original donation, please can we ask that you complete the consent below and then forward the details by emailing treasurer@readingschoolparents.co.uk. *This applies to all donations made in the last four years.*

**

Please return this form to provide your agreement as: YES

I want to 'Gift Aid' my donation of £50.00 and any donations I make in the future, or have made in the past 4 years to:

READING SCHOOL PARENTS ASSOCIATION Charity number: 1101822

My Details

Title: _____

First name or initial(s): _____

Surname: _____

First Line of your Home address: _____

Postcode: _____

Date: ____/____/____ (Please provide the date you paid your RSPA member's fee. Earliest date is 6th April 2021)

Signature (optional) _____

Please also read the following statement before you send us your form.

"I am a UK taxpayer, and I confirm that I have paid Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax greater than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, otherwise it is my responsibility to pay any difference. "

[If you haven't yet joined the RSPA then please click this link.](#)

Finally, to all existing RSPA members with a 'Gift Aid form' already in place. When you next make any donation to the RSPA please do let us know if you have changed your name or home address from your original 'Gift Aid form'. Please also let us know if you want to cancel your declaration, particularly where you no longer pay sufficient tax in any tax year.

We do try to make Gift Aid claims on all donations received if we could match a consent form to a gift, and it's important that we keep our (and yours) records up to date.

On Behalf of the RSPA we send our thanks, as always, for your continued support.

The Pre-loved Uniform Shop

The uniform shop will be open on the following dates:

- ~~Friday 28th March from 3.30pm – 4.30pm~~ **CANCELLED**
- Saturday 29th 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

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

The RSPA Team

Lent Term – Week 11

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.



The Playhouse Apprentice

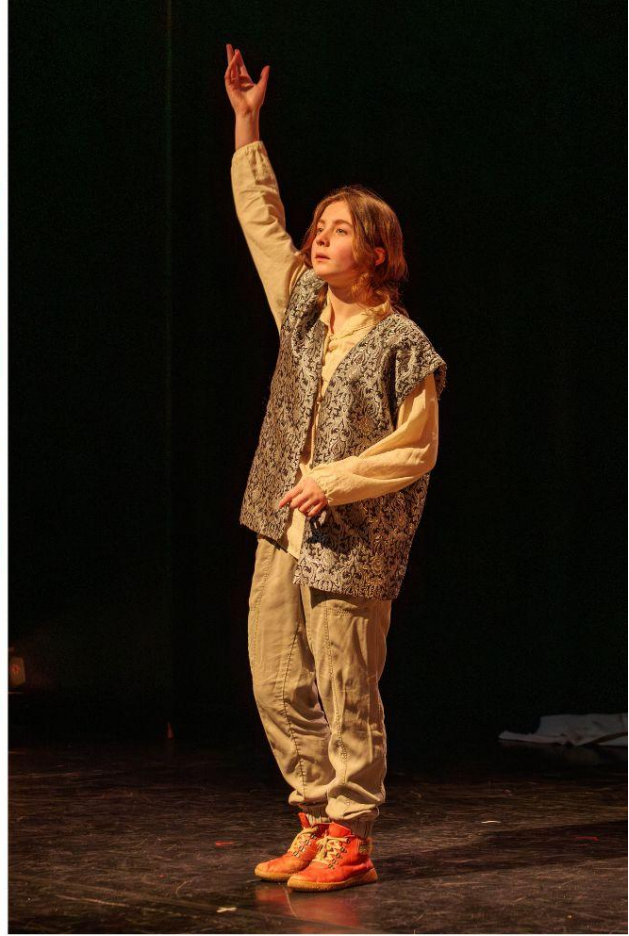
Behind the scenes for the final dress rehearsal of the opening night of The Playhouse Apprentice – the third theatrical collaboration between The Abbey School and Reading School.



The Playhouse Apprentice by Jessica Swale is an exhilarating, hilarious and timely story about theatre, bravery and how a little voice can make a big difference.



The joint production would not have been possible without co-directors, Cassie Friend and Benedict Sandiford.







House Rowing Competition 2025

The second House Rowing Competition was back this week with a new format, as our Heads of House aimed to create an exciting event that required organisation and genuine collaboration between Year groups within each House.



150+ students competing and officiating, 5 x 5k races with every year represented, fuelled by House spirit!

"House competitions are naturally competitive, and we always hope to see students' willingness to do their best for their House, remembering that teams require different contributions from different people to reach their full potential."

Mr Tridgell, Head of County House



This year's House Rowing Competition was just as much about being supportive, motivational, resilient and kind as it was about how hard you can pull on a rowing machine!



Congratulations to the winners...County House!



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