



Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

7th February 2025

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Introduction

Dear carers, parents, colleagues and students,

In the midst of a busy week, with trips to the Rutherford Laboratory, a French Film festival and our CCF being awarded the Air Squadron Trophy; a Spanish student exchange; the UK Linguistic Olympiad challenges; student-led celebrations of Chinese New Year, a Government and Politics workshop and dozens of sports fixtures, three things this week have particularly struck me:

1. On Tuesday night in an outhouse just outside the school gate, smouldering materials left by roofing contractors started a small fire. Visible from the road, many drivers will have passed by before one person stopped to ring 999. This happened to be an Old Redingensian called Stuart Simpson, who left the school a decade ago! He drove past on Erleigh Road, but returned a few minutes later, concerned about the cause of the smoke that he had seen. It reminded me once again how our character and attitude really are what matter most. Stuart's civic mindedness, care for the wellbeing of others and decisive action averted a much more serious outcome: his examination certificates are instantly proven to be much less important or significant than his character. Thank you, Stuart!

2. Yesterday I had the privilege of enjoying the most remarkable school production I have ever seen. In collaboration with Queen Anne's School, senior students performed 'Little Shop of Horrors' and delivered virtuoso performances as a cast and as individuals. Amongst other things, I learnt that Remi S (11L) should look at careers other than dentistry, and that you don't want Patrick D (12VGG) tending to your plants. I normally see Quan N (13EF), in A Level philosophy classes on Monday mornings. Now I know he's Seymour, a florist in Los Angeles, I'll have to forgive him if he's a couple of minutes late. The whole cast were incredible and for their artistry, teamwork and talent, I extend my praise. Thanks to James G (13EF), Quan N (13EF), Ben H (12FHo), Ollie C (12FHo), Arnab P (12SPe), Patrick D (12VGG), Remi S (11L), Jaden L (11C), Jonty C (11L) and Isaac S-B (11C).

3. Finally, my imagination has been captured by a post to all students from Mr Tuggey, one of our brilliant Physics team. This week he shared the following:

"Cursa is a star at one end of the constellation Eridanus, a long winding constellation named after a sacred river. It is very close in the sky to Rigel, the very bright star at the bottom right of the constellation Orion. It's about 8.5×10^{18} m from Earth – eight and a half million billion kilometres. Another way to say that is 900 light years. Which means that the light you can see now when you look at Cursa left the star in 1125. If any observer at Cursa's position now is observing our Solar System, the light they are receiving would have left in 1125, and some of those photons could have reflected off the first students at Reading School, 900 years ago."

I very much hope that this weekend, and into the last week of the half-term, you are encouraged by Stuart's community spirit, enjoy the same energy as the Little Shop of Horrors cast, and are sustained by lofty thoughts of time and space, and stars and sky.

Chris Evans
Headmaster

Key information

All years

Giving Days – 26th to 27th March 2025

This week, our students were provided with a link to the [Giving Day Challenges form](#) to be completed by **9am** on **Wednesday 12th February**. This is an exciting opportunity for each student to select three challenges they would most enjoy and feel passionate about. By the end of next week, each student will be assigned one of their chosen challenges and a sponsorship link will be provided so they can rally support from family and friends. We hope students will feel that they have the opportunity to make a real difference to the future of their school. Within just one day of the form being released 33% of students have already signed up. Leading the way are students from **Laud House**, with **East** and **County** close behind. Notably, **79 students from Year 9** have already committed to stepping up for Giving Day Challenges.

This is more than just a fundraising effort, it's a chance for our students to challenge themselves, unite as a community, and make an impact on their own School. If parents could encourage students to complete the form over the weekend, it would help ensure they are able to be involved in the challenges they would most enjoy.

Staff Wellbeing & Retention Trial

During November 2024, a slightly shortened school day ahead of the Year 13 Parents' Evening was trialled to assess its impact on staff wellbeing. The school day was shortened for one day on Thursday 28th November 2024, finishing at 14:35. The LRC remained open until 15:45 for any students who needed to remain at school.

Parents and carers were invited to share any comments, and we would like to thank those that got in touch to share their feedback.

Based on the positive feedback received from staff and parents, a further trial of a shortened school day will be held on 13th February 2025, with the school day finishing at 14:35 for all students, except Year 10s who will have a triple games lesson. Year 12 and 13 students will be asked to arrive at School at an earlier time of 8:30am if they have a Period 2 lesson. Students who need to stay until the end of the school day, or who have Combined Cadet Force commitments, will be able to go the LRC for Period 8.

We thank you for your support of our ongoing wellbeing trial. If you would like to share any comments or feedback, please email communityrelations@reading-school.co.uk

Safeguarding, Health & Wellbeing

Children's Mental Health Week

This year's [Children's Mental Health Week](#) theme is 'Know Yourself, Grow Yourself', which aims to promote emotional self-awareness in order to be able to express emotions appropriately and navigating life's twists and turns.

According to [Place2Be](#):

"Being self-aware means getting to know and understand what we are good at, what we find difficult, our likes and dislikes, what makes us feel joy and what may cause us sadness. It is also about understanding what makes us unique and our fears, hopes and dreams. As we build a sense of self, we grow in our ability to connect with others, as well as develop our skills and talents. It is with this basis we can form strong and healthy relationships, from early childhood right through to adulthood and are equipped to cope with the challenges that life brings our way."

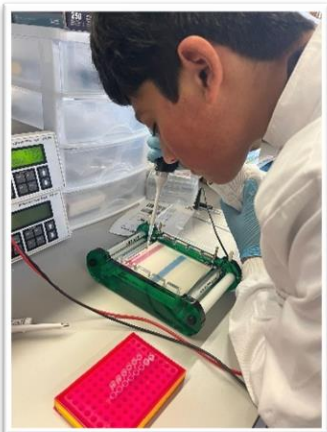
During this year's Children's Mental Health Week, Tutors have been asked to use their weekly Tutor Time sessions in order to deliver ways in which students can recognise and express their emotions, reflect on emotions (especially after challenging situations), set goals, practice active listening, work with others and use their creativity to express emotions, be it through art, writing, playing an instrument, or computer coding.

If parents and carers would like to support our work during Tutor Times, here are a few tips:

1. Encourage journalling – older children and young people can express their emotions and thoughts through journalling. It can be less confronting than speaking out loud and is a helpful way to process what is going on.
2. Make space for reflection - When children and young people reflect on their different emotions, it can help them better understand themselves and what they need. Go for a walk together, drive, or try some mindful colouring or cooking/baking together.
3. Communicate - feedback is crucial for helping us see our blind spots and gain greater insight. Children and young people are no different. Creating safe and supportive ways to share your own experience with your child can help them understand themselves and their impact on the world around them.

School Community News

Research experience at the Centre of Virus Research



A lucky student, Abdul A (11E) recently got to spend two days at the University of Glasgow to experience techniques commonly used in virus research. The University of Glasgow Centre for Virus Research (CVR) is home to leading virologists, entirely focused on the study of human viral diseases and viruses at the human-animal interface.

We spoke more with Abdul about his experience earlier this week:

Q: Tell us more about your two days at the Centre of Virus Research.

My mum's sister is a researcher at the Virology laboratory at the University of Glasgow. I've always been interested in her work, and I got the opportunity to go to the University to shadow her and complete some experiments in PCR, which is short for a polymerase chain reaction. It's basically the technique used to make

vaccines. It's used to quickly copy short sequences of DNA for vaccines, and you need a large amount which you test on. You can post it into cells, so they fluoresce. I also got to try something called transfection, which is when you inject DNA into cells, and then wait for a few days to then look at under a microscope.

Q: What did you take away from your experience?

It was great because I want to go onto study medicine and the experience is really closely linked to that path. If I decide I don't want to go straight into healthcare, I can always become a researcher, because now I know what it's all about. I got to also look at some of my aunts' colleagues work which was really cool.



Q: You're in Year 11, do you have a career path in mind?

Not so much, but probably definitely something to do with chemistry, because I've just submitted my A level application with one of my top choices being chemistry. I definitely want to go onto sixth form and then University.

Q: What do you enjoy about Reading School outside of academic study?

There're so many other opportunities, like Future Stories and Floreat. It's not just about academics. You get lots of opportunities to build good relations and learn how to be a good person. There's also learning how to work well in a team and help other people.

Q: What are your thoughts on Reading School's plans during its 900th Anniversary which you got to hear about last week?

I think it was great to hear about and see the history of the School and also the plans. Everyone I've talked to has been excited about the plans for renovating the school and they all love it, but we're all kind of sad that we're not going to get to be able to see the new facilities. But we're hoping that we can come back in the future and have swim in the new swimming pool! The school gives us a lot. I think, it's important to give something back to improve the school. And people who are going to join the school after we've left, we need to make sure they also gain a lot from the school like we have.

Q: If there's one thing you would want people to know about Reading School, what would it be?

I think everyone who has joined the school, especially when they prepare for the entrance exam might feel really daunted. Thinking 'if I get in, everything would just be focussed on learning.' But I get to do my hobbies like swimming or playing piano and have time outside of my homework and outside of my revision, even in Year 11. I'd want people to know that the School is more than just academic study.

Poem of the Month

An extensive list of what ruins pizza

By Henry R

Too much cheese, Too little sauce,
Extra spicy pepperoni,
Too much dough, A second course,
Having vegetables only,
Burnt crusts, a raw centre,
Boiled down into a mist,
Piled high with *CENSORED*,
Deep fried, juiced – you get the gist,
When it talks back or starts a fight,
Debates the ethics of eating food,
When it burns your mouth's insides,
But the waiter said it "should be good"
Human head, shoulders, knees and toes,
Rat carcass or the fur of mice,
Elephant ears, anteater's nose,
Lion's roar- would that be nice?
Mickey Mouse, Donald Trump,
Aristotle, You?
Taylor Swift, Forrest Gump,
God or Dr Who?
The lovers' romance, the hiders' lies,
Just music? Indie or the blues,
The meaning of life,
As Douglas said, the number 42,
The mind and conscience and all their mysteries,
Why not the entire person's head?
The whole course of Human history,

Be normal – add pineapple instead.

LRC

Your Money, Your Future – Rathbones Financial Awareness Course (Year 11 or above only)



Help your child take the first step toward securing their financial future. This 90-minute virtual session, hosted by experienced Rathbones Investment Managers, is designed to provide essential financial insights for 16 to 25-year-olds.

Date: Tuesday 11th February 2025

Time: 16:30 - 18:00

Location: Virtual (a meeting invite will be sent to registrants)

Topics covered include:

- Financing life goals (house, education, pension)
- Career insights into finance and fund management
- Understanding the cost of university and buying a first home
- Risk vs. reward and different asset classes like gold and equities

This course offers practical advice and expert guidance on making informed financial decisions.

Encourage your child to register and gain valuable knowledge directly from professionals at Rathbones, one of the UK's leading investment firms. [Click to register here.](#)

External events, clubs, and classes

BilinguaSing - Love Learning Languages



Is there a younger child in your family that would benefit from learning a second language? A new Saturday morning multi-award winning children's French and Spanish language club will be starting from Saturday March 3rd, 2025. The 45min sessions help develop young children's early communication skills, build their confidence, and enhance physical and emotional development through music, language, and sensory classes.

"Fleur is so kind, lovely, fun, and engaging with my son who has attended these classes since he was just 4 months old. I love that he has access to another language in his early years, especially in such an age-appropriate sensory and fun way. Would highly recommend! Thank you Fleur!" S. Haines

"Amazing effort by the team to teach a new language to children in a fun way. My daughter thoroughly enjoys the sessions at school." A. Rani

To book a trial class and to view all further information, [please click this link.](#)

For all enquiries, please contact Fleur by emailing fleur@bilinguasing.com or calling 07963 727677.

Sunday Arts Class

[Arty Class](#) (in association with [Artspiration](#)) have held weekly arts classes every Sunday during term-time at Reading School since September 2023. Classes are run from:

- 9:30am – 11am (Ages 8 to 12 years)
- 11:10am – 12:10am (Ages 5 to 8 years)
- 12:20pm – 1:15pm (Ages 12 to 15 years with a 10% discount for all Reading School students)

The 12-week courses are structured and designed to inspire children and young people to explore new art forms along with developing their core drawing and painting skills. The Spring 2025 course will focus on seven visual components: line, shape, space, form, colour, texture, and value. The tutor will also explore texture in the line drawings of Vincent van Gogh, the shapes inspired by M.C. Escher's tessellations, and expansive space created by Salvador Dali amongst other.

For all enquiries, please contact Adrienne by emailing artyclassuk@gmail.com.

RSPA

Book Donation for the LRC

Reading School will soon be hosting Future Stories sessions with pupils from a partner primary school. To support these sessions and to update the LRC, there are some extra books needed. If you are decluttering your home, please can we request that any of the following books are taken to reception marked "LRC Future Stories"

Books for the Future Stories sessions

- Peter Brown the Wild Robot series
- The Sad Ghost Club comics
- Michael Morpurgo, Kaspar Prince of Cats
- Dog Man
- Bunny vs Monkey
- Mega Robo Bros Real Pigeons
- Fact books about Sharks
- Ultimate Heroes (Ronaldo and Messi)
- Tom Gates series
- Wimpy Kid series

Books to replace old LRC copies

- The Cherub series by Robert Muchamore
- The Percy Jackson series by Rick Riordan
- The Heroes of Olympus series by Rick Riordan
- The Murder most unladylike series by Robin Stevens
- The Young Sherlock Holmes by Andy Lane
- Anything by M.G. Leonard
- Simpsons comic books
- The adventures of Sherlock Holmes
- Agatha Christie novels

The Pre-loved Uniform Shop

The uniform shop will be open on the following dates:

- Friday 28th February from 3.30pm – 4.30pm
- Saturday 1st March from 10.30am – 12.30pm
- Friday 28th March from 3.30pm – 4.30pm
- Saturday 29th March from 10.30am – 12.30pm

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.

The RSPA Team

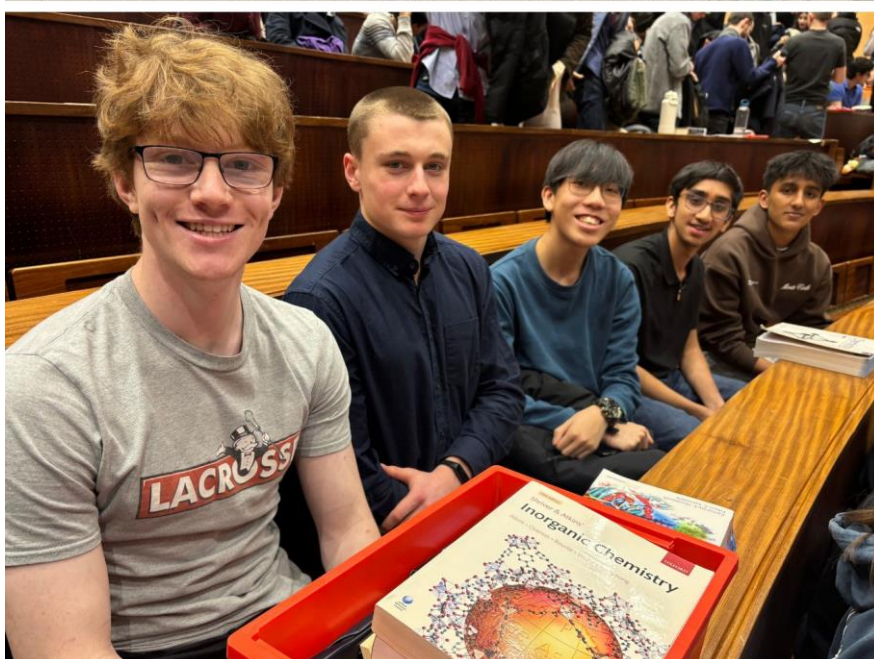
Lent Term – Week 5

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.



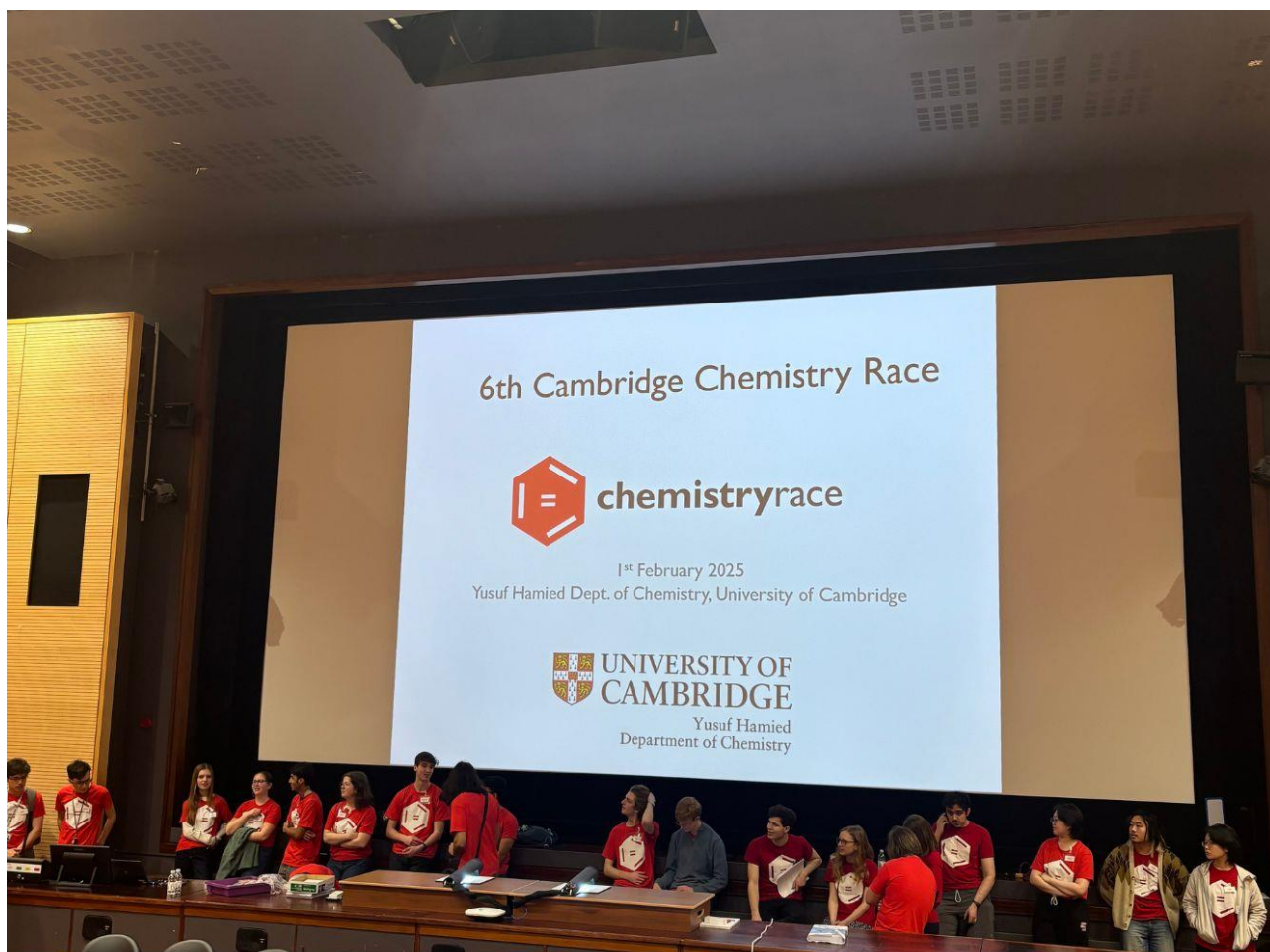
Excellence in Chemistry

The Chemistry Race is an annual competition for teams of sixth form students organised by the Department of Chemistry at the University of Cambridge and Rugby School (and supported by the University of Oxford). On Saturday 1st February a team of Reading School Sixth Formers, led by Miss Rosser-Evans, Ms Batty and Mr Wheal, took part alongside 60 other schools from across the UK.



From left to right: Rupert R (13VGG), Max B (13EFo) Joshua H (13LDo), Raghav N-S (12MCo) and Parthiv V (12LDo)

Congratulations to the Sixth Form Team who achieved 13th place out of 60.



Chinese New Year (also known as Lunar New Year)

On Friday 31st January, Chinese New Year (Year of the Snake) was celebrated with a student-led charity food market which featured home made food featuring a variety of traditional Cantonese dishes. All proceeds went to [Reading School's Charity of the Year, Royal Berks Charity](#). The Royal Berks Charity is dedicated to enhancing patient care and treatment at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.





蕃薯糖水
Sweet potato soup
£1 per cup

contains: sweet potato, cane sugar

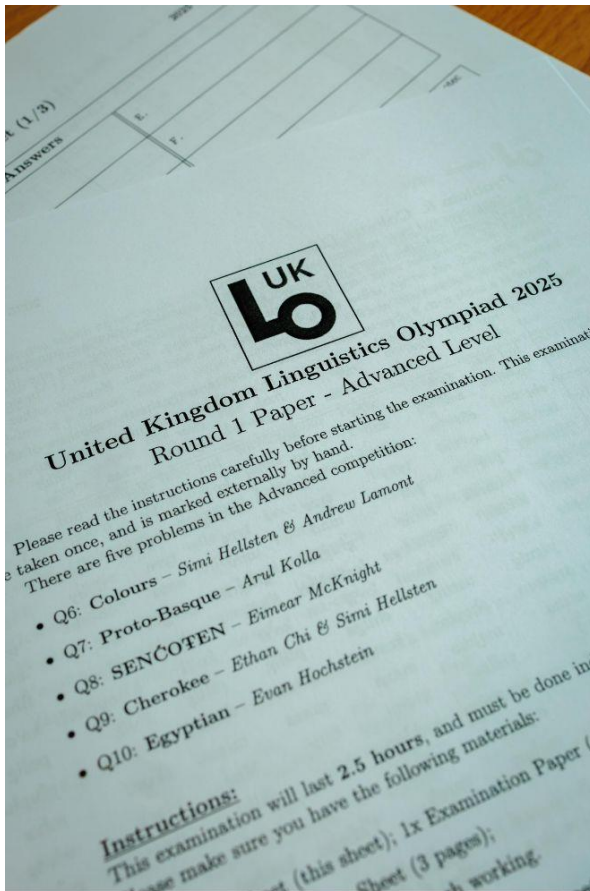
“Over £240 was raised for Royal Berks Charity - a wonderful demonstration of the core values of shared fortune behind Lunar New Year celebrations. A big thank you to all who volunteered to help with the sale, especially Avesta S (10L), Yicheng L (11S), Keith L (12EFo), Ethan L (13LDo), Saad Ahmad (13SAI) and all members of the Hong Kong Cultural Society.” Joshua H (13LDo).



From left to right: Ethan L, Bosco C and Joshua H

UKLO

Curiosity is one of the defining traits of Reading School students, and it was on full display today during the United Kingdom Linguistics Olympiad (UKLO), an annual language-analysis competition open to all Year groups which took place this week.



"The job of the linguist, like that of the biologist or the botanist, is not to tell us how nature should behave, or what its creations should look like, but to describe those creations in all their messy glory and try to figure out what they can teach us about life, the world, and, especially in the case of linguistics, the workings of the human mind." Arika Okrent, American linguist



Through the UKLO, students hone a wide range of valuable skills, including structural thinking, pattern recognition, problem-solving, attention to detail, and lateral thinking. These attributes not only sharpen their analytical abilities but also inspire a deeper appreciation for the complexity of language.



We possess an impressive track record of students progressing to the International Linguistics Olympiad, and we extend our best wishes to this year's cohort as they tackle the challenges ahead.



Government and Politics Workshop

Reading School had the privilege of hosting The Right Honourable Sir Ranil Jayawardena on Thursday 6th February for an engaging and though provoking workshop: "An Introduction to Government and Politics."



'Sir Ranil's talk was extremely useful in understanding both the intricacies and challenges presented in a life of public service. His thoughts on the importance of compromise and communication in a new modern political theatre were especially interesting' Harvey M (12ACr)



French Trip - Contemporary and New Wave cinema

On Thursday 6th February, our French students headed to the British Film Institute to take part in a lecture delivered by Professor Muriel Huet (Wits University, South Africa). Conducted entirely in French, the lecture introduced the concepts of the French New Wave, highlighting key films and how they influenced the style and themes of contemporary French films.

Our students enjoyed the screening of *Bande de filles* (Girlhood), a coming-of-age film portraying the life of a teenage girl living in a deprived area on the outskirts of Paris. The film discusses and challenges notions of race, gender and class.

Mme McAllister and Mme Fondu were particularly impressed with our Year 11 students who attended this A Level event and demonstrated an excellent understanding of the lecture. Our students took up the challenge with flying (tri)colours.



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.