



Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

31st January 2025

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Introduction

Dear Parents, Carers and Colleagues,

Over the past four months, I have welcomed almost 300 parents to Beyond 900 parent evenings, sharing our ambitious plans for the future of Reading School and engaging in positive discussions and feedback. Ms Ayres will be meeting with Year 10 parents on March 3rd, and I look forwards to seeing Year 11 parents on March 10th – anyone who missed earlier sessions is also welcome on March 10th. Moreover, to view a very brief video regarding the school's master plan for facilities, you are welcome to [click here](#) or to read about the impact of our Future Stories work, please [click here](#).

This week, I was delighted to run a series of seven assemblies launching our celebrations of the school's 900th Anniversary. We reflected on the legacy of those who came before us, and I was joined by five ORs as guests of honour who presented each student with an exclusive 900th Anniversary pin badge, kindly sponsored by the Reading School Parents Association.

Colleagues and parents might be interested to know that I talked about the impact of Old Redingensians such as [Tom Dollery](#), ['Punch' Cowan](#), ['Sharkey' Ward](#), [Robert Hedley](#), [Admiral Sir Charles Elliot](#) and [George Pinker](#).

Our key message to all students was that this is *their* school, and it is their character that can make it great. Charles Elliot was sacked as Chief Superintendent of British Trade in China in 1841 for doing the right thing and seeking to limit the Opium trade in China. He wrote, "*It has been particularly objected to me that I have cared too much for the Chinese, but I submit that it has been caring more for lasting British honour and substantial British interests, to protect friendly and helpful people.*" Sharkey Ward was court-martialled in 1969 for low-level flights over Devon and Cornwall – but it was his skill in this dangerous art that saved the lives of hundreds of British troops in the Falklands War. I suggest then, that whether we face triumph or disaster, our character and care for others are always what matter most.

As an example: this week I can confirm that we have 25 offers for places at Oxford and Cambridge – but we have a similar number of equally wonderful students who, through some algorithmic quirk, have not been offered a place. Those facing disappointment and those enraptured with delight are each equally precious and equally called to shape the world around them for good. So Reading School says to them all, as well as to our Medicine applicants still to be interviewed and those applying for even more competitive courses at Imperial College or LSE; it is the good you do in society that matters most – not the accolades or recognition or ephemeral measures of 'success'! Our hope is that none of our students today will push into the queue at the bus stop. That none post demeaning messages on social media channels. That none ignore the needs of those around them. That all show compassion towards themselves and others. That all nurture lives filled with curiosity. Students living lives like this would prove that Reading School is a great school!

Students' responses to the stories and the masterplan for the future of the site were inspiring. Their enthusiasm, pride, and engagement in the school's history and vision were evident. As we now turn our focus to our Giving Day (26th – 27th March), students are preparing to select their challenges and seek sponsorship from family and friends, ensuring they play an active role in shaping Reading School's future. They have been encouraged to look to their wider family and community for support. This demonstrates resourcefulness, initiative, and community engagement. It will help us reach the widest possible network as we seek support for the future of this school. Parents, I will be appealing directly to you for help and contribution in due course. For now, might I simply ask you to 'save the date'? Parents will be warmly welcomed on site on the afternoon of 27th March, and we'd love you to come and join us to see the school in action.

Students are being sent the Giving Day Challenges form and completion is required by Thursday, February 13th. Please discuss their challenge with them and help them do three challenges they might most like to undertake and enjoy. They will also be sent the link for the online sponsorship form. Please do feel free to share this widely. As we build momentum towards our Giving Days, may I thank all in the school community who give so much to sustain opportunity, aspiration, care and compassion in this community. Thank you all for the part you play.

Chris Evans
Headmaster

Key information

All years

Addington Road access – a reminder

From Monday 27th January, the Addington Road pedestrian gate will be out of use until further notice. The closure is due to ongoing repair works to South House (Boarding) that are expected to last for three months.

We are advising parents and carers who normally use Addington Road to drop their children off, to continue to do so. Children should then make the short walk from Addington Road to the Craven Road entrance. This advice is suggested to avoid Craven Road becoming congested with vehicles attempting to drop off students.

School Community News

Excellence in Languages



Our A Level French students have risen to the challenge of competing in the highly regarded [Joutes Oratoires](#) 2025, organised by the Institut Français.

Representing Reading School, Matthew O'D (13BSa) and James T (13RCh) excelled at the Regional Round of this prestigious French debating competition, held at Marlborough College on Thursday 30th January. Competing against top A Level students from across the Southwest of England, Matthew and James impressed judges and audiences alike with their eloquence, conviction, and exceptional linguistic skills. They worked extremely hard preparing their debates on whether tourism was a destructive force, whether countries, where human rights aren't

respected, should be allowed to host sporting events, and whether France should indeed introduce a school uniform as suggested by the Secretary for Education.

They did not know until arrival whether they were arguing for or against each motion.

Both Matthew and James went through to the final where they only had 20 minutes to prepare an unseen motion on whether 'a benevolent dictatorship is better than a weak democracy', without the aid of their peers, phones, computers, or Mme Fondu!

After a heated debate against a formidable team from Wellington College, James and Matthew were proclaimed the winners. This win means they will be invited to compete in the National Final at the Institut Français in a few months, not knowing their new topics until a week before the final.

This is the first time Reading School has reached the national round, and we are incredibly proud of our French linguists. Very best of luck for the final round and we look forward to updating you on how they progress.

County Speed Swimming Championships 2025

The Berks & South Bucks ASA held the County Speed Swimming Championships over two weekends between the dates of 11th and 12th January and 25th and 26th January 2025 where several Reading School students competed. Aaron D (8S), Eryk K (7E) and Artem B (7E) all swam in the 12-13 years category in individual and/or relay teams with Artem achieving 2 Bronze medals (100m and 200m backstroke) and Aaron achieving 2 Bronze medals (200m freestyle and 200m butterfly) along with achieving a personal best in all the events he qualified for.

Thank you to Mrs. Soshnikova, one of our parents, for sharing news of these achievements. If you have positive news stories, suggestions, or comments to share, we would love to hear from you. Please email us at communityrelations@reading-school.co.uk. We are committed to celebrating and sharing the achievements of our students and do our best to feature as many as we can.

LRC

Book Festival 2025

As part of our 900-year Anniversary celebrations, we are delighted to announce the line-up for our 12th Reading School Book Festival.

Short Story Competition

This competition was set by Noah H (12SAI), our Deputy Head Pupil Librarian and McIlroy essay competition winner.

Write a short story between 500 and 1000 words using one of these sentence starters:

'Mondays are supposed to be boring.'

'Theo was aiming to be the head honcho. Too bad he didn't have a head.'

'Everyone scorns the street rats. But no-one cares what hunts the street bugs.'

Please submit your entries to Mrs Kesteven by emailing ikesteven@reading-school.co.uk by 12.30pm on Monday, February 24th.

Book Fair

The Scholastic Book Fair will be open for business in the LRC from Wednesday 26th of February to Monday 3rd of March. The more books we sell, the more commission we raise for new LRC books. Students can use their World Book Day vouchers, which will be distributed by LRC staff when we return from half-term.

Author talks

Our author talks are designed to encourage a love of reading and to inspire intellectual curiosity. The talks are free and everyone in the year group will be timetabled to attend during the school day. All author talks will be followed by a book sale and signing, so students should bring cash with them on the day of their talk if they wish to purchase a book. Students can also bring their own books by the author to get them signed.

Monday 10th March

Sarah Govett - Year 10 talk on dystopian fiction

10.25 to 12.00

Tuesday 11th of March

Lewis Dartnell - Year 9 talk on his book Being Human

1.50 to 3.25

Wednesday 12th of March

Chris Bradford

Year 7 - Young Samurai - 10.25 to 12.00

Year 8 - Bodyguard - 1.50 to 3.25

Pre-order of books

Year 7 and Year 8 students can pre-order books for the talk by author, [Chris Bradford on March 12th](#).

Students who would like to pre-order books can do so by [visiting his website by clicking here](#).

Any books pre-ordered will be available when he visits Reading School on Wednesday 12th March. Please ensure you choose 'Reading School' from the list of visits and ensure you put your child's full name and tutor group in the 'notes to seller' when placing your order. All books will be delivered to Reading School on the day of the visit, regardless of billing address.

Upcoming Events

Don't Feed the Plants!



Queen Anne's School in association with Reading School will be staging the well-loved classic musical, Little Shop of Horrors. The cast will feature students from both School's and feature a spectacular blend of incredible performances, brilliant comedy, and jaw dropping sets as the iconic show is brought to life.

Adults: £12

Students: £8

Show dates and times:

Thursday 6 February: 19.30 – 21.30

Friday 7 February: 19.30 – 21:30

Saturday 8 February: 19:30 – 21:30

(Paid bar in Café 6 from 19:00, seated by 19:20)

Venue: Queen Anne's School, 6 Henley Road, Reading, Berkshire RG46DX

Air Ambulance Charity Concert 2025 – save the date

The long-running annual joint student-led charity concert between Reading School and Kendrick School will be taking place on **Wednesday 12th March at Kendrick School**. Students across all year groups work together to practice and perform as choirs, orchestras, and bands. More information will follow in an upcoming Bulletin.

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

RSPA Weekly Lottery – update



Our regular weekly Lottery has been one of our top fundraisers for the last few years, and we have recently surpassed the **£9,000 fundraising mark** from ticket sales alone!

Our lottery draw takes place every Saturday evening and there is always a lucky winner with a weekly prize typically around £30. Each ticket consists of 6 numbers. Match all 6 numbers and you can win a jackpot of £25,000!

Tickets cost £1 each, and you can play regularly or as a one-off. [Please do support this fundraiser by clicking this link.](#)

Each month there's also a "Super Draw", for an additional chance to win a prize where players are entered for free. This month's Super Draw is "A Year of Adventures!." An annual family membership for English Heritage, the National Trust, and a Merlin Pass too (or £1,000 cash alternative). Get your tickets before Saturday 22nd February for your chance to win.

Once you're signed up, you can refer friends and family to Your School Lottery. When they buy a ticket, both you and your friend receive a free entry into an exclusive referral rewards draw where you can currently win a £200 Amazon gift voucher.

Good luck everyone, and we look forward to welcoming you to our list of prize-winners!

We also wanted to take this opportunity to thank those kind families that won a prize and decided to donate it to the RSPA to use towards School resources. We are so appreciative of this additional generosity.

Year 7 Disco – update



Last Friday, the RSPA hosted a vibrant Year 7 Disco, bringing together students for an evening of fun, music, and socialising.

Recognising the importance of a well-rounded social experience in an all-boys school, the RSPA team extended invitations to The Kendrick School and The Abbey School, creating an inclusive and lively atmosphere.

The event was a resounding success, with 170 enthusiastic students taking part and making wonderful memories.

Beyond the fun on the dance floor, the disco also served a meaningful purpose – raising significant funds that will directly contribute to school development initiatives.

Simultaneously, the RSPA team organized a Year 7 Parents' Meet-and-Greet, providing a warm and welcoming space for our parent community to connect. Over delicious refreshments, parents had the chance to mingle, share ideas, and engage collectively in supporting the school and their children's journey at Reading School.

A huge thank you to our incredible RSPA committee: Menaka Jasti (Event Organiser), Veena Baggley, Deval Gujrati, Pallavi Chube, Yogakshi Munjal, Jayne Sturge and Kerry Kingston (with her amazing cupcakes highlighting the school's 900th year!).

We are equally thankful to parents and class representatives who volunteered on the day: Sarika Yeety, Phuong Pham (Amy), Mei Ang, Sarah George, Amna Haq, Huda Siddiqui - your time and help were valued and deeply appreciated.

Thank you also and a special mention to our heroes, our exceptional sixth-formers Bharat J, Paarth G, and Armaan C, who unconditionally offered their time and support, staying through the event until the very end. Their dedication and willingness to help truly embodied the Reading School values of excellence, integrity, leadership, and community.

Your dedication, along with the support of everyone who attended and contributed, made this event truly special. Your participation and generosity continue to strengthen our school community!

The Pre-loved Uniform Shop:

The uniform shop will be open on the following dates:

- Saturday 1st March from 10.30 am – 12.30pm
- Friday 28th March from 3.30 pm – 4.30pm
- Saturday 29th March from 10.30 am – 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 4

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.



900th Anniversary Assemblies

This Tuesday, the Headmaster led a series of seven assemblies for all year groups in Big School, where he reflected on Reading School's rich history and shared his vision for the year ahead and beyond.

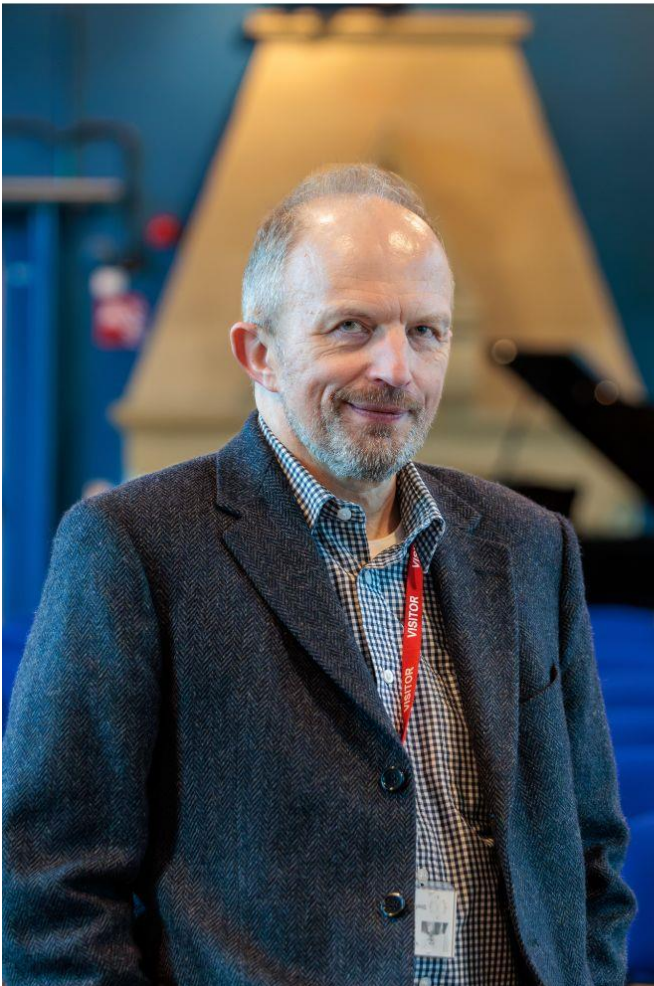


Some of our most talented musicians performed accompanying pieces, while special guests of honour presented commemorative 900th Anniversary pin badges to every student.



What is one thing you took away from the assembly?



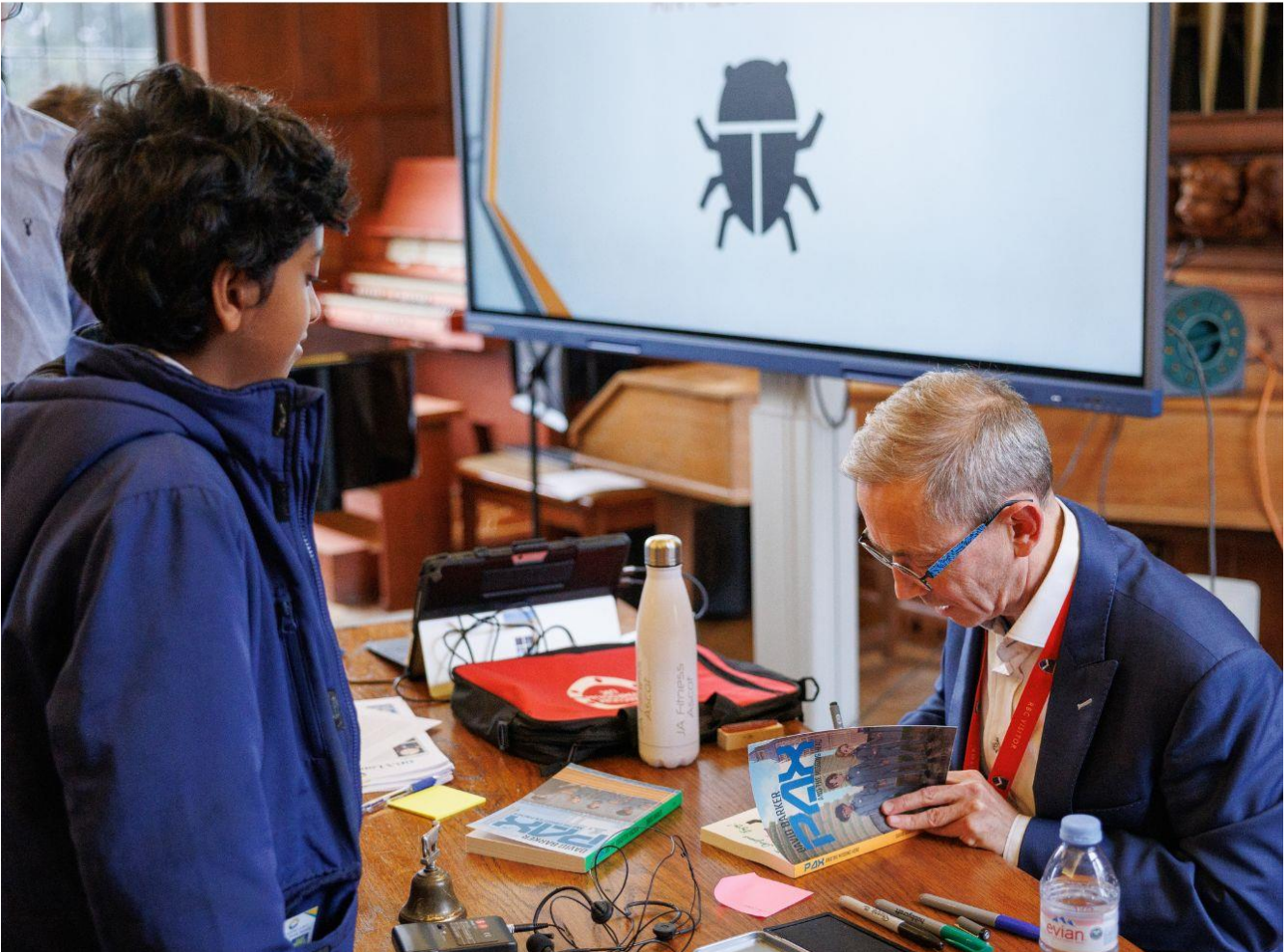




Berkshire Book Awards 2025

The Berkshire Book Award Shortlist Event 2025 was held at Reading Blue Coat School and six of our Year 8 Book Club members were lucky enough to attend.







Appointment of Combined Cadet Force Honorary Colonel

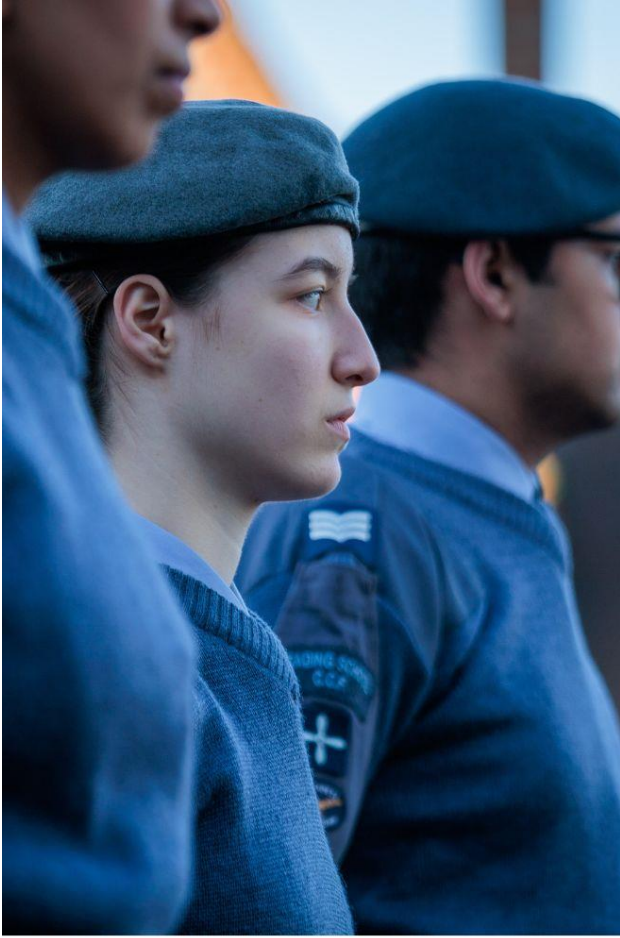
Reading School has had Cadets in service for 125 years and is believed to be one of the oldest Cadet units in the country.



On Thursday this week, the Headmaster Dr Chris Evans appointed its first ever Honorary Colonel. Dr Stefan Fafinski JP DL OR was a member of the CCF as a pupil, is now Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire and addressed the parade to pass on his thanks to those in service as he takes up his Hon Col role for the next 3 years.



'I am exceptionally proud to have rejoined the Reading School CCF and look forward to supporting the contingent to the very best of my ability during my appointment' Dr Stefan Fafinski JP DL OR



County Speed Swimming Championships 2025

Artem B (7E)



Aaron D (8S)

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.