



Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

11th July 2025

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Introduction

Dear Parents, Students, Colleagues, Carers and Friends,

Since 1 July, we have had the honour and privilege of hosting four staff members and 16 students (8 young men and 8 young women aged 15-16) from Mariupol Lyceum. For all the children, it is their first time travelling to the UK. We have witnessed first-hand that, despite the war, Ukraine has its future, and undoubtedly this future will be shaped by children and young people. More than one in seven schools in Ukraine are damaged or destroyed. One of them is Mariupol Lyceum with only its ruins left in the city, occupied since the spring of 2022. The relocated Mariupol Lyceum in Kyiv, led by Andriy Holistiak, the inspirational Principal, is a wonderful example of Ukrainian educational resilience. The sixteen students have acted as ambassadors for their school and their nation. They have enthusiastically participated in a programme of opportunities in the two-week programme which has included attending lessons at Reading School, along with visits to London, Oxford and Windsor. In addition, our Ukrainian partners have learned to row on the Thames, ably taught by Mr Tom Evans and Rev James Stephenson. Of course, no visit to an English school would be complete without sitting a test or examination, and they have also been assessed in English, Maths, Biology, Physics and Chemistry.

Our partnership would not have been possible without the superb positive influence of parent, Ms Olga Manmar. Thank you for being such a good friend of Reading School and an advocate of stronger links between our school and Mariupol Lyceum. I would also like to acknowledge gratitude for the support of The Reading Foundation in enabling the rich and varied programme of activities to be offered. In addition, Year 10 Reading School students have acted as 'Ukrainian mentors', with kindness and character. Of course, it is also important to thank the host families for their care and support. We believe in providing opportunities to flourish and the development of partnerships is one of the most effective ways of doing this. We look forward to a future when we can visit our Ukrainian friends in their homeland so that our links can go from strength to strength.

Effective partnerships have the potential to create significant value, and it is especially important in our 900th year of celebration that we remain outward-facing. Thus, we should redouble our commitment to working with others, and learning from others. We should prioritise partnerships that are transformational. We should prioritise building external relationships that foster educational and social impact. Our partnerships should include local dimensions as we seek to consolidate being at the heart of the Reading community. However, we must not be narrow in our vision and ambition. Our partnerships must include international dimensions. A good place to focus on would be to ensure that we deepen our emerging partnership with Mariupol Lyceum in Kyiv.

Our overall approach to partnerships should be shaped by a desire to have a tangible, sustained impact on students from all backgrounds. Subsequently, we should work in partnership with other schools and organisations to develop and shape best practice. As a school celebrating our 900th anniversary, we have a responsibility to work in collaboration with others, rather than in isolation.

Floreat Redingensis.

Slava Ukraini.

With warm regards,

Ashley Robson
CEO

Key information

All years

Changes to Staffing

Modern Foreign Languages

Elina Hillairet-Humphries will be re-locating to Spain and consequently leaving Reading School. Elina has been an outstanding colleague and an integral member of the Modern Foreign Languages team. We wish her all the very best for her move and exciting new adventure.

Danting He will be leaving the Mandarin Team next week as her UCL placement comes to an end. We are very grateful for her contributions and wish her the best of luck for the future.

We will welcome a new Teacher of Spanish, Laura Freeman, in September. Laura is currently working at Meadow Vale Primary School where she has been a Teaching Assistant and Teacher of French to Year 6 Students. A native Spanish speaker, Laura is keen to transfer her skills to Secondary Teaching.

Sciences

We are looking forward to welcoming Katherine Scott as a new Teacher of Biology. Katherine joins us from The Compton School where she has been a subject lead and ran training sessions for trainee secondary science teachers.

Later in September, we welcome Joshua Ho as Science Technician for Biology and Chemistry, supporting Sian Rollings in those departments. Joshua will be with us for 12 months whilst he takes a gap year after completing A Levels with us, and before going to University.

Having offered exceptional flexibility as a teacher in the Biology team, Laura Pearce returns to her role as Cover Supervisor from September.

Creative Design Lead

Susanna Bradley will join us as Creative Design Lead helping us to develop this area of the curriculum. She has already worked closely with our students through the electives programme and will build on this in her new role.

English

Rose Romano will be leaving us this August so that she can enjoy her retirement. Rose has taught at Reading School since 2005 and we will be losing a wealth of knowledge in her departure. We wish Rose all the very best for the future.

Charlotte Mann, who was initially on a fixed term contract will now be joining the department on a permanent basis.

Maths

Matt Hill is leaving us this August to take up a new responsibility at John Hampden Grammar School as the Maths and Numeracy Development Lead. We are grateful to him for the work he has undertaken as Future Stories Maths Lead and wish him all the very best in his new role.

Paul Robson, who you will know through cover and exam invigilation will be joining the Maths team as an Apprentice Teacher for 12 months.

School Community News

New friends from Ukraine



Following our guests from Ukraine spending their time immersing themselves in British culture and life at Reading School, we encourage all to read Anna Z's testimony which captures both the intellectual and emotional dimensions of her experience during the partner programme:

One of the most eye-opening parts of this journey was attending lessons at Reading School. In Ukraine, lessons often focus on memorising information, but here we saw how much value is placed on discussion, debate, and independent thinking.

Students are encouraged to express their opinions, even if they're unsure, and that creates a powerful learning environment. It made me reflect on how education can shape not just what we know, but who we become.

Spending two weeks in the UK helped me understand that culture isn't just about museums or traditions, it's in everyday habits, like how people greet each other, how they queue, or even how they talk during dinner. I noticed how the British are generally more reserved than Ukrainians, but also very polite and considerate. It was interesting to see how respect for personal space and calm communication are so important here. This made me think about how different societies define 'kindness' in their own way.

The Saturday carnival at Reading School was one of the highlights of the trip. It wasn't just about music or stalls - it was about feeling included. Everyone was smiling, laughing, and taking part in something together, and it really showed us what community spirit looks like in action. In Ukraine, we also have school celebrations, but this one felt especially open and welcoming, as if we were part of the family. It reminded me that building community starts with small moments of joy and togetherness.

Living with a Ukrainian family who has adapted to life in the UK gave us a unique view into how cultures can blend and coexist. We spoke Ukrainian at home, but saw British customs at the dinner table, in the way the family planned their day, or in how they interacted with neighbours. It showed us that identity can be layered, you don't have to choose between cultures; you can carry both and grow through the experience.

Walking through the streets of London and Oxford felt like walking through centuries of history. Every building, every museum had a story and yet these cities are also alive with modern energy. Visiting the Natural History Museum, the Victoria and Albert museum and Oxford colleges made me realise how deeply culture and education are connected in the UK. It also made me wonder of how can we protect and honour our Ukrainian culture.

This programme wasn't just about sightseeing or improving our English. It was about challenging our assumptions, building confidence, and understanding how others live and learn. We've made memories that will last a lifetime - not just because of where we went, but because of how those experiences made us think. I'm deeply grateful to Reading School, the teachers, the mentor students and the host families for creating such a thoughtful and inspiring environment for us.

Anna K, 15 years

Events

Support Our 900th Anniversary Gala Dinner: Get Your Tickets & Donate to the Auction

As the final special event in Reading School's 900th anniversary celebrations, we invite you to join us at our **Gala Dinner at Reading Town Hall on Saturday 29th November 2025**. This event promises an unforgettable night of fine dining, live entertainment, inspiring moments, and most importantly, the opportunity to support the future of our school through the **Beyond 900 Fund**.

We're also inviting you all to get involved by **donating an auction item** for the event should you be attending the evening or indeed as a way to contribute towards to the celebrations and kindly support the school. The event is perfectly timed to launch everyone into the festive season, indeed the auction site going live in the run up to Christmas period it is also a superb opportunity for people to find unique and thoughtful gifts, all while supporting a great cause.

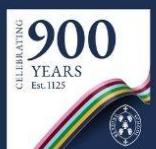
READING SCHOOL | 900TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Celebrating 900 Years: Gala Dinner 2025

Evening Highlights:

Pre-Dinner Reception; Three-Course Dinner;
Keynote Speaker; Live Entertainment;
Silent & Live Auction & Raffle Draw

900th Anniversary Gala Dinner
29th November 2025



Some popular auction item ideas include:

- **High-end or vintage items** – such as watches, jewellery or antiques
- **Signed memorabilia** – like sports shirts, books or prints

- **Tickets or vouchers for local experiences** – including theatre, concerts, sporting events, restaurants, cafés or spas
- **A curated book bundle** – ideally special editions, limited prints, or themed sets (e.g. classics, cookbooks, or children’s favourites)
- **A bottle of wine or small wine bundle**
- **Craft items, artwork or handmade gifts**
- **A gently used or collectible item in excellent condition**

If you have something you’d like to donate, please email us at events@reading-school.co.uk and include a photo of the item. We will then get back to you with details on logistics and delivery.

Additionally, if you think your company might be able to sponsor or donate an item or service for the event, we’d love to hear from you, we warmly welcome support from corporate sponsors.

Event Details

Venue: Reading Town Hall, Blagrove Street, RG1 1QH

Date: Saturday 29th November 2025

Time: 6:00 PM – 11:00 PM

Tickets:

- Single Ticket: £150
- Table of 10: £1,400 (ideal for groups or reunions)

Book by 31 August 2025 and receive 5% off, all tickets using the code GALA5 at checkout. *(Limited to the first 5 Group Table Packages and 50 Single Tickets)*

Tickets include:

- Welcome drink at the pre-dinner reception
- Three-course gala dinner
- Wine at your table (cash bar available)
- Keynote speech and live entertainment
- Silent and live auction
- Raffle draw with luxury prizes

To reserve your place, visit our booking page [Gala Dinner - 29th November 2025 | Events | Reading School Alumni Society](#) or contact events@reading-school.co.uk for group reservations.

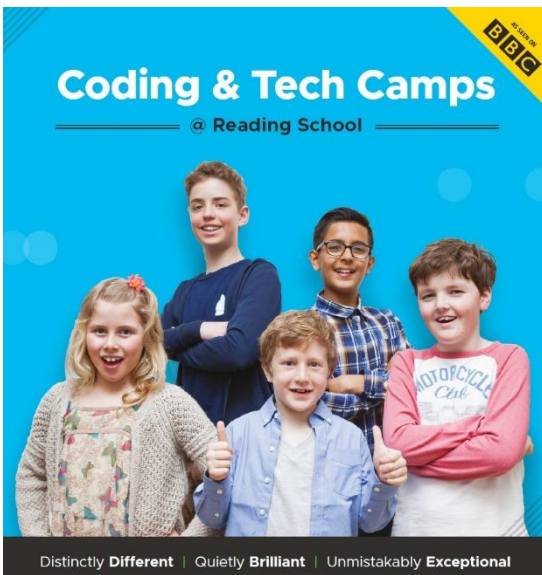
Rugby Festival 2025

Save the date

Please come along to cheer on the Staff & ORs team vs Year 13 Leavers on Saturday 13th September! All students and families are welcome from 9.30am with refreshments available to purchase, live music to enjoy, and parking available onsite.

External events

Coding & Tech Camp – Summer 2025



Looking for an engaging and educational way to keep your child busy this summer?

FunTech is a UK-based education provider specialising in technology and coding courses for children and teenagers. Founded in 1996, the company has over 29 years' experience in preparing children aged between 7 – 17 years for a digital future through fun and interactive courses.

The camp is hosted at Reading School and led by tutors who deliver day courses in coding, robotics, Minecraft engineering, game design and more – all in a safe and supportive environment.

To find out more about the courses, dates, fees and booking information, please [visit their website by clicking here](#).

The camps are independently run by FunTech.

Art Club



Do you want your child to explore their potential through art?

Arty Class is a dedicated school of drawing and painting that offers structured art classes for children aged 5-16 years. Their experienced art teachers nurture children and develop their love of art by bringing out their artistic potential.

Arty Class (in partnership with Artspiration) have been running regular sessions at Reading School each and every Sunday during term-time and they are taking bookings for the Autumn Term 2025:

September 14, 21, 28 / October 5, 12, 19, 26 / November 9, 16, 23, 30 / Dec 7, 14

5 to 8 years: 11.10am – 12.10pm / 8 to 12 years: 9.30am - 11.00am / 12 to 17 years: 12.20pm to 13.50pm

Fees from £10.50 per class and to find out more and book, please visit www.artyclass.co.uk

The sessions are independently run by Arty Class.

RSPA

Limited Edition Reading School 900th Anniversary Cards

The RSPA have created a special edition greetings card to celebrate the 900th anniversary of Reading School. The card has been designed by using an original image by Denys Hinton (OR 1931 – 1939), a former captain of the school from 1938-39.

The digitally printed A6 cards are blank inside and can be used for all manner of occasions.

The packs contain 5 cards and cost £7 per pack, or two packs can be purchased for £12.

They will be available for sale at the Community Carnival on Saturday 5 July, at the RSPA stand. Alternatively, you can contact Kerry O'Brien by emailing kerryobrien2004@yahoo.co.uk.

Please do come and join us at the stand and support your RSPA, where the funds raised will go back to the school for the benefit of all the boys!

Year 10 Tutor Group Photos

Following the huge success of last year's Year 10 tutor group photos that raised much needed funds for the RSPA, we will be offering photo prints of all Houses in order to continue to raise funds to provide three interactive whiteboards for the Science department.

Details

*Photos are available in 6"x 8" format for £10 or A4 for £20. Both in a matt finish.

*There are sample photos available which can be viewed in advance. The photos are lovely and the first group photos taken since Year 7.

*For further information, please contact kerryobrien2004@yahoo.co.uk

*Please indicate your name and your son's House.

Thank you in advance for all your support and looking forward to hearing from you.

The Pre-Loved Uniform Shop

Will be open on:

- Saturday 2nd August from 10.30am – 12.30pm
- Saturday 30th August from 10.30am – 12.30pm

We would love donations of the following as our stocks are running low:

- All sizes of macron kit- particularly games tops
- Ties in all houses and Sixth Form
- Small size blazers
- Trousers up to age 13
- Shirts up to age 13
- A Level textbooks
- GCSE and A Level Revision books

- GCSE English Lit set texts

All unwanted items can be dropped to Student Services next to Reception in a bag marked 'Uniform Shop'. All donations will be gratefully received.

In the event of a poor weather forecast the opening will be cancelled- 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

Summer Term – Week 12

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.



A fond farewell

We said goodbye to Elina Hillairet-Humphries after 8 years at Reading School this week. This is an exciting moment for her personal and professional life as she will be moving to Spain with her family at the end of the academic year.

Head of MFL, Mme Fondu shared that, “For me personally and professionally, it is difficult to see Elina go as she has been a rock in the MFL department, driving Spanish forward like no one else had before.

Under her leadership, Spanish grew, from a new A Level which had just been introduced to a well-established and thriving department, inspiring many students over the years to take up Spanish at GCSE, A Level and university. She has constantly gone above and beyond, not only leading Spanish, but also running cultural events at school, organising inspire talks, events with other local schools, and leading on countless residential trips to Spain to immerse our students in the language they study. She has also contributed significantly to the French department, teaching KS3 and KS5 classes, and showing the same passion to share her love of languages with all.”



We are excited to welcome Laura Freeman, a native Spanish speaker, from September 2025.



The Mariupol Lyceum & Reading School Partnership Programme

The Mariupol Lyceum a state secondary school that was originally based in Mariupol until it was relocated due to the invasion in Ukraine to Kyiv in 2023. It had become one of the region's top schools, winning the "Golden Scythian" regional award in 2002 for educational achievements and ranking among the top eight institutions in Donetsk.



“We are grateful to Reading School, Mr Ashley Robson and Dr Chris Evans for welcoming our lyceum students into their school. This has been an incredibly valuable experience and an amazing opportunity for talented children who might never have had the chance to visit the UK. Most of our students come from occupied territories, and their time at Reading School serves as a form of rehabilitation after the tragic events they have endured.

We are also deeply impressed by the Reading School students who have been their mentors and friends. And of course, we cannot fail to mention the Ukrainian community in Reading and the Ukrainian families who have welcomed our children into their homes.”

Andriy Golyutyak, Principal of Mariupol Lyceum



“Our time in the UK has been an unforgettable experience. We had a unique opportunity to visit Reading School and learn more about the British education system, while also comparing it to the Ukrainian one. The programme was rich and engaging - we explored London, visited museums, took part in workshops, and enjoyed the Community Carnival. What impressed us most was the atmosphere of kindness, respect, and openness from British students and teachers. It was fascinating to observe the cultural differences in communication and learning approaches. We gained valuable knowledge, made new friends, and created memories that will stay with us forever. We are truly grateful to everyone who made this incredible journey possible.” Aryna N



“I noticed a significant difference between Ukraine and Britain, especially in our daily social habits. In Ukraine, we are not used to being so open and communicative as people are in Britain - we don't greet everyone on the street, we don't talk about the weather, and we don't gather as a whole community to walk our dogs. I really like this about Britain - people here are very friendly and kind! Children's rights are also highly valued here. At schools, instead of memorizing topics, students are asked for their opinions and given tasks that develop logical thinking. I am truly grateful to the organisers of this project for giving me the opportunity to gain so much valuable knowledges, useful skills, and new friendships.” Daria K



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