



# Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

22 May 2026

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# Introduction

Dear parents, carers, colleagues and students,

We know that a picture paints a thousand words. This week's bulletin is therefore a tome.

I'll add very little, expect to ask you to look at the smiling faces that follow in this week's gallery.

I'm particularly thrilled to see our new Director of Drama smiling broadly as he flips on an inflatable on page 40, and our new Head of West House laughing so happily on page 42.

Our staff throw themselves into our life together both literally and metaphorically.

Belonging Week is now in its fifth year, and what strikes me most is not the scale of what we organise, but the quality of what our students give back. Year 10s who planned and led science, music and canoeing sessions for primary school children this week were not fulfilling a requirement. They were discovering something about themselves. Meanwhile, our Year 8s were caving in Wales and wild camping in Dorset, building the kinds of bonds that a classroom simply cannot manufacture.

We also said farewell this week to Lt Col Flexman, who has given 15 years to Reading School CCF and 25 years to cadet forces across Berkshire. The CCF now parades over 300 cadets. When he took command, that number was fewer than 80. That is a legacy measured not in statistics, but in young people who are more capable, more resilient, and more certain of who they are. We are deeply grateful, John.

Finally, I hope you will join us for Speech Day on 23rd June and the MCC cricket fixture on 26th June. Both are wonderful occasions and we would love to see you there.

Dr Evans

# Key information

## Current Reading School Vacancies

**Learning Support Assistant (Maternity Cover)** - Working as part of a dedicated and friendly team, under the direction of the Head of Student Support, we have an exciting opportunity for a Learning Support Assistant to join our Associate Staff to cover a period of maternity leave. You will support a caseload of students, run group activities and associated administration.

For more information about the role and to make your application, please [visit our recruitment portal by clicking here](#).

**Head of History** - We are seeking to appoint a dynamic and inspiring Teacher of History who is ready to share their passion for their subject. The successful candidate will be an outstanding practitioner who can nurture wisdom, curiosity and perspective in our students.

For more information about the role and to make your application, please [visit our recruitment portal by clicking here](#).

# School Community News

## Belonging Week 2026: Launch Week

Belonging Week returned this week, with students in Years 8 and 10 taking part in the first of two weeks of structured activities designed to build community, character, and connection beyond the classroom.

Now in its fifth year, Belonging Week is a Reading School programme unique in its design and ambition. Rather than a single enrichment trip or reward event, it is a carefully sequenced, year-on-year journey. Each year group takes on progressively more challenge and responsibility: from the collaborative residential of Year 8, to the leadership and community outreach that defines the Year 10 experience. The guiding framework is simple: learn, lead, serve.

Day 1 set the tone for what lies ahead. All Year 8 students departed on Monday morning for residential adventures at Rock UK's Summit Centre in Treharris, South Wales, and Cumulus in Dorset, two challenging and enriching environments designed to push boys out of their comfort zones and strengthen bonds within their year group. Meanwhile, a second group of Year 10 students spent the day on the water, teaching pupils from St Mary & All Saints CE Primary School and Newtown Primary School to row. For many of the primary school children, it was their first experience of being on the water. For our students, it was their first experience of being responsible for someone else's learning.

Year 10 students were simultaneously delivering Science, Computer Science and Robotics sessions to primary schools visiting Reading School, with further students leading music lessons. These were not passive volunteering roles. Our boys planned and facilitated the sessions themselves with guidance, developing the communication, leadership, and empathy that classroom lessons alone cannot fully build. Watching a fifteen-year-old patiently guide a nine-year-old through a science experiment is to see the school's values made visible.

As Assistant Headteacher Mr Tom Evans, who leads the programme, has noted, *“What makes Belonging Week distinctive is not what happens during the week itself, but what students carry forward from it. Boys who first encountered rowing or community coaching during a previous Belonging Week have gone on to continue that involvement term after term. The week plants seeds and the school's wider culture tends them.”*

From the riverbank to the rock face, from the science lab to the music room, Belonging Week reminds us that some of the most important learning at Reading School happens when the timetable stops.



## A fond farewell



After 15 years of service to Reading School Combined Cadet Force and 25 years dedicated to CCFs across Berkshire, Lt Col Flexman is preparing to hand over Command of our Combined Cadet Force.

His final parade with Reading and Kendrick School cadets marked a genuinely poignant milestone, closing a near decade long chapter as Contingent Commander that has seen the CCF undergo significant transformation. We sat down with him to reflect on his tenure, the cadets who shaped it, and what the next chapter holds.

### ***What did Reading School CCF look like when you took command in 2017, and what does it look like now?***

I was lucky to have taken over the Contingent after it had made a number of significant improvements under my predecessor Major Simon Donegan. Major Donegan had, with support from FO McDiarmid engaged with Kendrick School and set in motion an excellent concept, that of a CCF that drew from both schools. Major Donegan had also played a key role in persuading central government not to withdraw all funding from CCFs, by reminding them that whilst public schools might be able to afford it, state grammars most definitely could not. The CCF was probably still a Reading dominated organisation obviously, and it was some time before we saw Kendrick students reach the most senior ranks, nevertheless the future had great promise.

### ***You're described as leading through a "transformational era." What specifically changed, and what drove it?***

It feels to me that we have further professionalised the CCF in order to meet the ever-increasing demands we have seen from both the MoD, and in some respects the Cadets themselves. I very much hoped to build on the important work of my predecessors by ensuring our CCF was indistinct from that of the Regular Army or RAF unit. It was obviously helpful being a Reservist and knowing as an ex Regular what good looks like. In everything we have done, from training exercises, parade nights, flying days, ranges, inspections, dinner nights, recruitment - we have always tried to ask "How would the military do it? What does best practice look like?" This element of consideration before delivery has been key. Two factors driving our success were critical. Firstly, the energy of the Cadets themselves particularly the Senior Cadets, which is something you quickly notice is infectious. Secondly the desire and commitment of a more junior cohort of Adult Volunteers to push boundaries and build a better unit. This combination did not need much more than a clear vision and some corporate knowledge of the Armed Forces, but yes, the hours put in and the work done by the team over the last 9 years has been enormous.

### ***How should the school use its CCF as a differentiator? Most state grammars don't have this. Is Reading School making enough of it?***

The school has made phenomenal progress in better recognising and supporting the CCF and our Volunteer team have benefitted enormously from that engagement. It is 100% accurate to say that without the help and assistance of the Senior Leadership Team, and of course Chris Evans as Headmaster, and before him Ashley Robson, we simply would not have grown the unit from 70-80 parading Cadets to over 300. I think the CCF has plenty of differentiators that marks it out from other co-curricular activities, but the most significant is that it is the only organisation in the school that can both help a Year 13 Senior Cadet get a place at Oxbridge, whilst at the same time providing structure and improvement Year 9 Cadet who may be not reaching his potential. It also provides invaluable

support for our more neurodiverse students, offering the structure, planning frameworks and organisational scaffolding that help them thrive.

***The boys who went through CCF under your command are now in their 20s and 30s. What do you hope the experience gave them that they might not even recognise yet?***

Funnily enough I was stopped on the concourse of Waterloo station the other day by a former Cadet I had not seen in 15 years who was so kind and really did re-iterate that without the structure, enjoyment and diversity of CCF he feels he would have been a very different person. His career is going brilliantly, he is happily married and starting a family. He was incredibly generous in his praise of the organisation and he left university 10 years ago. I say to our Cadets that even when they leave, they are in the Alumni so they never really leave and it is so good to see so many come back for our Annual Dinner each year. It is also very good for the Adult Volunteer team to know that people don't just do ok after CCF, they generally do brilliantly.

**Reading School is known for the strength of its academics. How do you make a case for the CCF to a boy who thinks his time is better spent on A-levels?**

I think once we have had a Cadet still in the CCF in Year 11 it is often obvious how service as a Cadet NCO will enhance their UCAS form. It is sometimes less obvious to parents. Most of the boys and girls who have made it to interviews for Oxbridge and been successful, have told me that their responsibilities in CCF featured heavily in at least one of their interviews. I have developed a view, particularly in recent years, that if a Cadet manages to stay for 12 months in Year 9, they will receive substantial benefit. Any time beyond that is clearly fantastic, but if they are pursuing other interests, or play competitive sport, then we understand they do need to prioritise carefully.

**Is the CCF model still fit for purpose for Gen Z students, or does it need to fundamentally reinvent itself?**



We feel that most still holds true, but also recognise that for some a hierarchical structure and leadership does feel somewhat strange. In my experience in recent years, we have seen many of those that fear hierarchy and structure come to embrace it. The UK military is also catching up on technology and we have already seen how well Reading and Kendrick students perform in this space with our RAF Air Squadron Trophy crowned National Cyber Champions.

For me what matters is that we generally do offer distinctly different co-curricular. By way of example, a drone flying competition is still an outdoor activity in a largely indoor age!

**What's the one thing you'd tell your successor to protect at all costs?**

The Senior Cadets are hugely impressive but there is one cohort that is more important than anyone else. The Cadet Force Adult Volunteers are the absolute critical lifeblood of this organisation - without their commitment there are no parade evenings, no exercises, no flying days and no camps. They need to feel a sense of value and appreciation if they are to be retained and the school has done fantastic work to improve that, but we do need to make sure we continue to recruit and keep people of their calibre. Command is truly a privilege when leading people like them.

**In closing, 25 years across Berkshire CCFs is a significant commitment. What kept you coming back?**

Without doubt the memory of what I was like at 12 years of age when I joined Presentation College CCF. I was a very young, very immature and a rather over-confident, somewhat arrogant young man. My time as a CCF Cadet changed my life, it made me better and it made Sandhurst a realistic possibility. That in turn shaped my career, firstly as an Army Officer and in more recent years as a Consultant. I realised how far you can push your own boundaries and how important teamwork was. I learnt about leadership in a really practical way. The journey every Year 9 Cadet embarks upon has the ability to be transformative and making such an investment in a young person is probably one of the most worthwhile things that anyone can do in life. If I was ever in a position of power I would shovel money into the Cadet Forces; it cannot fail to be an investment worth making for as long as high calibre Adults are willing to give their time and communities and schools can provide support.



From everyone at Reading School, John: thank you. Twenty-five years of service leaves a mark that no handover parade can fully capture.

# Reading School Events

## Speech Day 2026



Reading School is delighted to introduce the inaugural **Speech Day 2026**, taking place on **Tuesday 23rd June 2026**, kindly sponsored by the *Reading Foundation*. This new event brings together the former Junior and Senior Prize Giving ceremonies into a single day celebrating our students.

The day will include:

- **Junior Celebration (09:00–12:00)** for Year 7–10 students and their parents/carers
- **Senior Celebration (13:30–17:30)** for Year 13 students and their parents/carers

The Junior Celebration will feature prize giving, speeches, performances and student showcases by year group across a range of subjects and activities. The Senior Celebration will include prize giving, presentation of A-Level certificates, student performances and guest speakers, followed by refreshments.

*Students receiving individual prizes will be notified separately by email, no later than Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June.*

Please note that the School will not be running timetabled lessons on Speech Day. Year 12 students will instead complete structured independent study tasks at home, with a small number of incoming prefects supporting the event during the day.

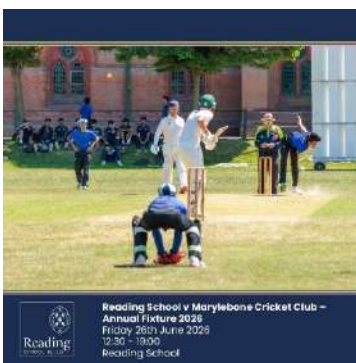
Further details are included in the letter sent earlier this week. Parents/carers are warmly invited to attend and are kindly asked to confirm attendance by **9:00am on Friday 5th June** via the links below:

[Junior Celebration](#)

[Senior Celebration](#)

If you have any queries regarding the Speech Day, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Chong at [events@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:events@reading-school.co.uk).

## Reading School v Marylebone Cricket Club 2026



Now in its 129th year, this historic fixture has been proudly contested since 1898, making it one of Reading School's most enduring sporting traditions.

Come along for a fantastic afternoon of cricket. Parents are invited to join us **from 3:15pm for the second session**, where you can watch the match and enjoy pizza and ice cream from on-site vendors. From around 5:00pm, there will also be friendly taster cricket sessions for anyone who would like to take part. Simply bring a blanket, settle in and enjoy a relaxed picnic while watching the cricket.

**Date:** Friday 26 June 2026

**Time:** 12:30pm – 7:00pm

**Venue:** School Field, Reading School

**Booking:** [RSVP by clicking here](#)

# External Events

## Summer Coding Club – Early Bird Sale



FunTech will once again be returning to Reading School to deliver their summer technology camps, giving children aged 7 to 17 the chance to code, create and build exciting digital projects.

With over 30 years' experience, FunTech makes coding fun and purposeful, helping children design games, code robots and create digital worlds while developing real coding skills in small classes. From Minecraft and Roblox to Python, Java and AI, each course turns children's interests into valuable technical skills.

FunTech has also launched its new **AI Vibe Coding** course for students aged 13+, helping them use AI to turn ambitious ideas into impressive coding projects.

FunTech's Early Bird offer is currently running, with **£150 off all summer camps while spaces last.**

For families balancing summer plans, FunTech also offers:

### **Flexi Camps**

Designed for hybrid-working families, Flexi Camps keep the full week experience while allowing children to attend from the centre or home on different days.

### **Camp Swap**

Families can secure the Early Bird rate now and change the camp date, location or course up to two weeks before the camp start date.

[Explore courses and book here.](#)

# RSPA

## Green Park Marshalling fundraiser for RSPA

We are looking towards our next event on 31st May at Green Park, Reading where we can raise £250 if we can supply volunteers to manage the bag drop, and hand out the prizes, medals and teddies to the runners.

Please do email [t\\_lorrimore@hotmail.com](mailto:t_lorrimore@hotmail.com) if you wish to volunteer.

We are especially looking for some year 12 students to volunteer. Their help can be part of their university statement as a charitable activity, raising money which we provide for Reading School.

We are also delighted to announce that the monies raised will go towards installing a designated outdoor learning area in the school grounds, as part of the varied and unique floreat and electives programme, Future Stories, and opportunities for outdoor study, rolled out by Reading School.

## Year 13 Replica Tutor Group Photos – last call!

The RSPA is delighted to share a special fundraising project for the Year 13 cohort.

In the weeks leading up to study leave, the RSPA worked with Reading School to recreate the tutor group photographs taken when this cohort first arrived in Year 7. The result is a set of images that place the same group of students side by side, seven years on.

All proceeds from this project will go directly to the RSPA and will be used for the benefit of students and the School.

Details & how to order:

- Photos are all ONE size, A4, and available for £20.
- Sample images available for all houses.
- For further information please contact Kerry O'Brien at [kerryobrien2004@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kerryobrien2004@yahoo.co.uk).
- Please email me your request indicating your son's house; payment details will be forwarded.
- All photos will be printed over the exam leave period and can be collected in School on Speech Day taking place on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2026.

Thank you for your support.

## The RSPA Committee

Since February 2026 we've introduced you to our current committee members, all of whom willingly give up their time to be involved in your Reading School Parents' Association. Through weekly introductions, we have focused on each committee role and what each member does. As a team, we have raised thousands and thousands of pounds over the years which have been used to provide much needed equipment and facilities that normal school funding cannot provide.

We all have different skills and attributes which are brought together to benefit all our boys and the School. We support one another in our roles, so we can operate as effectively and efficiently as possible and this involves regular meetings and social functions, so it's not all work and no fun!

For some of us, our boys' will be leaving the School this year and so the focus must be on finding other parents/carers who would love to be involved in this wonderful group and keep this amazing community together for many more decades to come. It won't run by itself!

If you would like to find out more about how you could help, please get in touch or come and speak to us at one of our several school events before the end of term. Thank you.

# RSPA

READING SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION



Claire Kirby  
Fundraiser



Neil Devanand  
Vice-Chair



Kerry Kingston  
Chair



Terri Lorrimore  
Treasurer



Anya Alderslade &  
Jaspreet Dhanjal  
Uniform Shop team



Jayne Sturge  
Hoodies Manager



Helen Sturk  
Lost Property Manager



Menaka Murthy  
Events Manager



Pallavi Chube  
Membership Manager



Julie Bellingham  
Volunteer



Jaideep Das  
School Lottery Manager



Rohini Luthra  
Social Media Manager



Yogakshi Munjal  
Notifications Manager

# Highlights: Summer Term Week 6

Join the Reading School community online and never miss a moment.



**Facebook:** ReadingSchoolOfficial **Instagram:** @reading\_sch **LinkedIn:** school/reading-school

## Belonging Week

*“Belonging Week is the perfect opportunity to get our students together to bond further than they can ever in a classroom. The experiences that they have, the challenges that they push themselves to, it's incredible to see kids who you think are incredibly brave and willing to do everything, and they see a climbing wall, they see a leap of faith, and there's just no way that they're willing to do it, and the quietest student is always the one that manages to convince them and encourage them to the top. I think that's the essence of Belonging Week, kids supporting kids, bonding with staff, and just having a great time together.”*













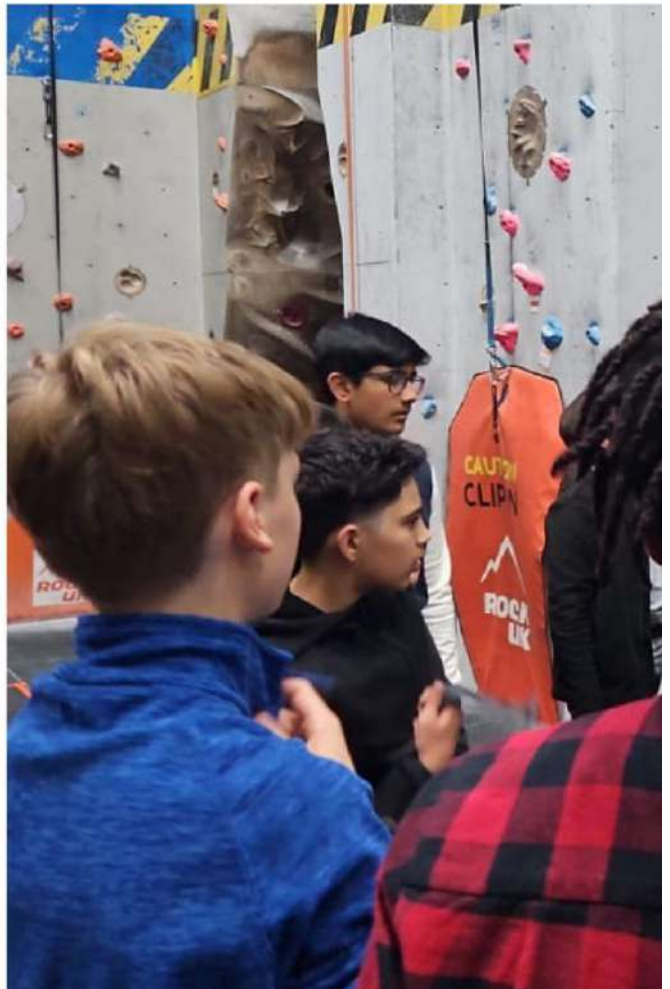




Team Rock







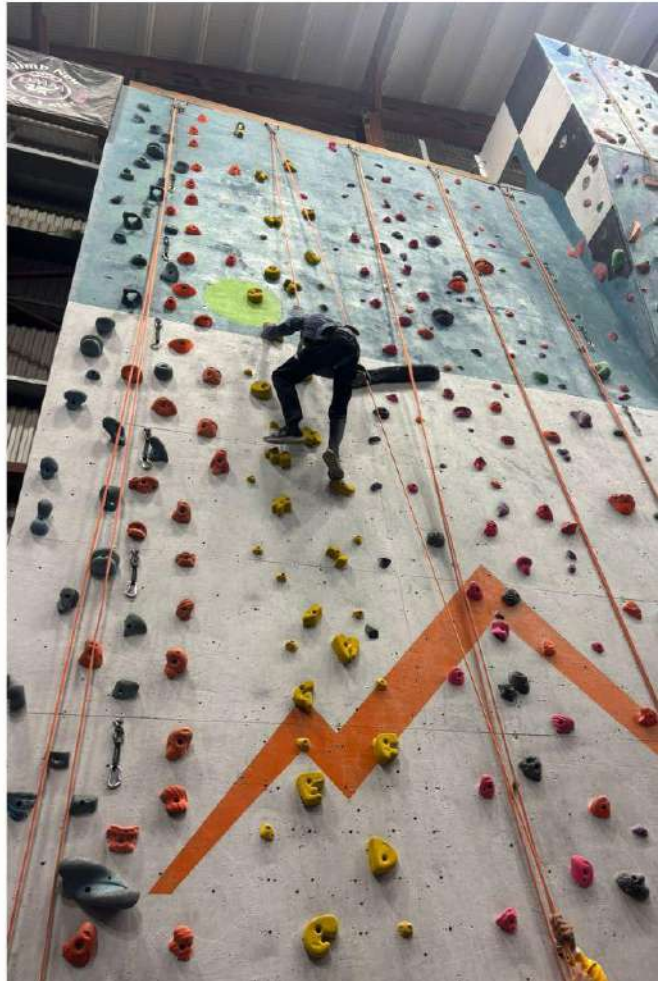
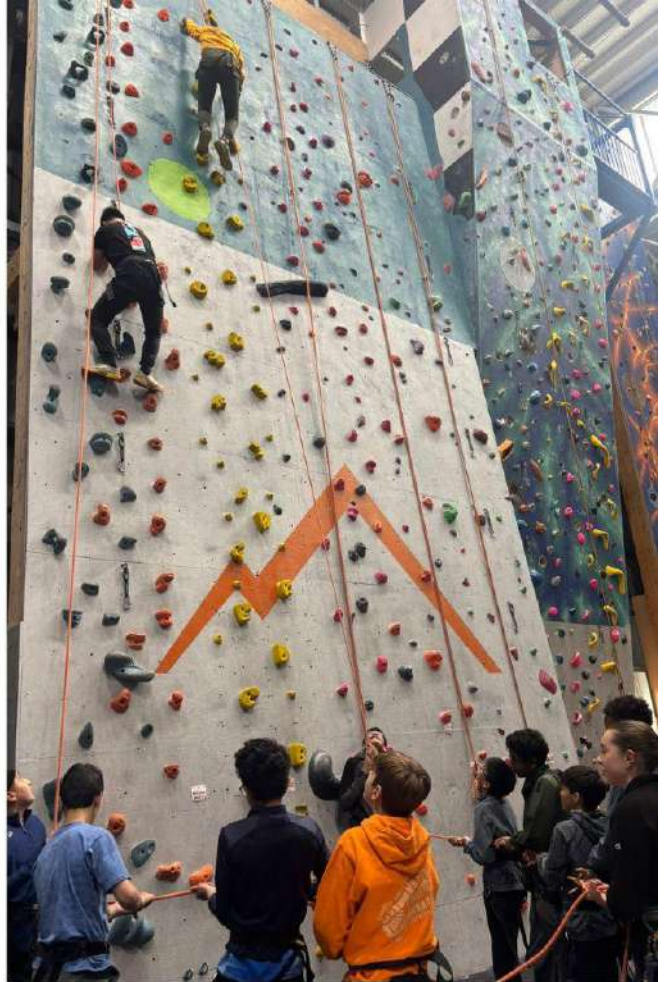


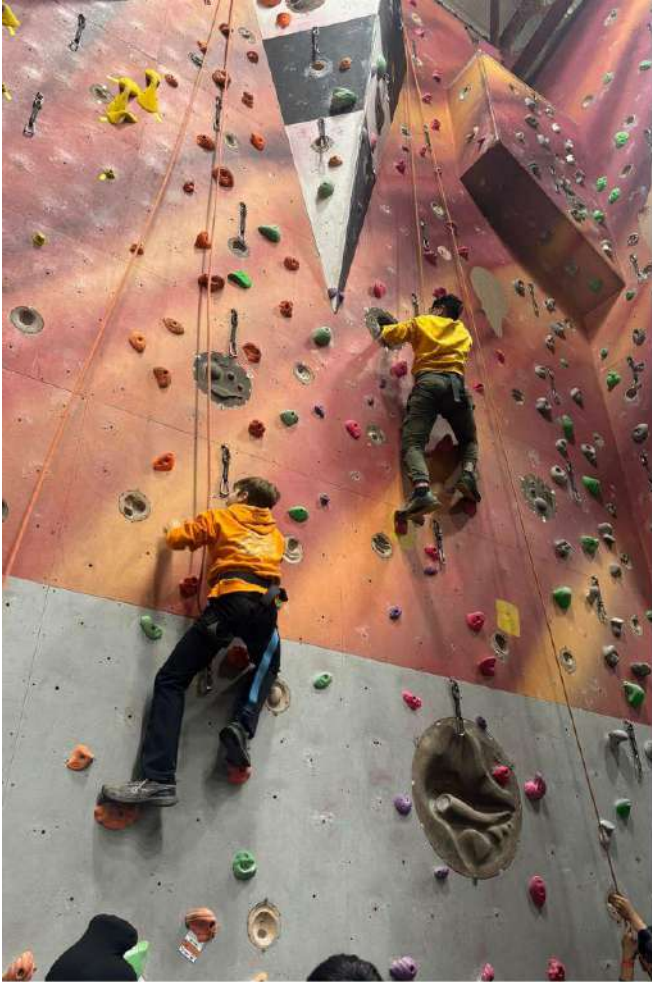








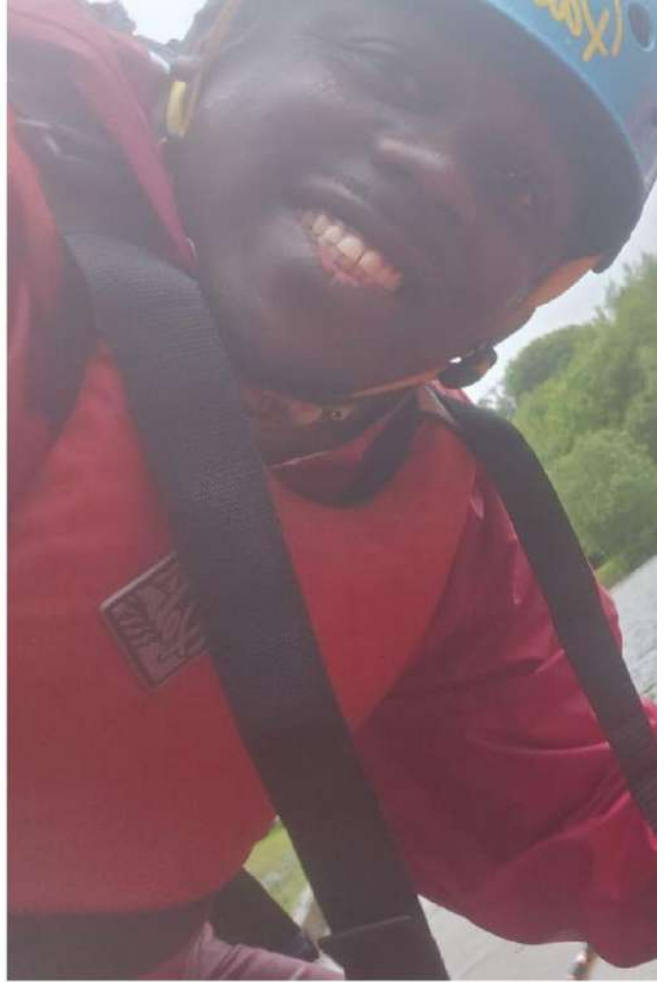












## Team Cumulus



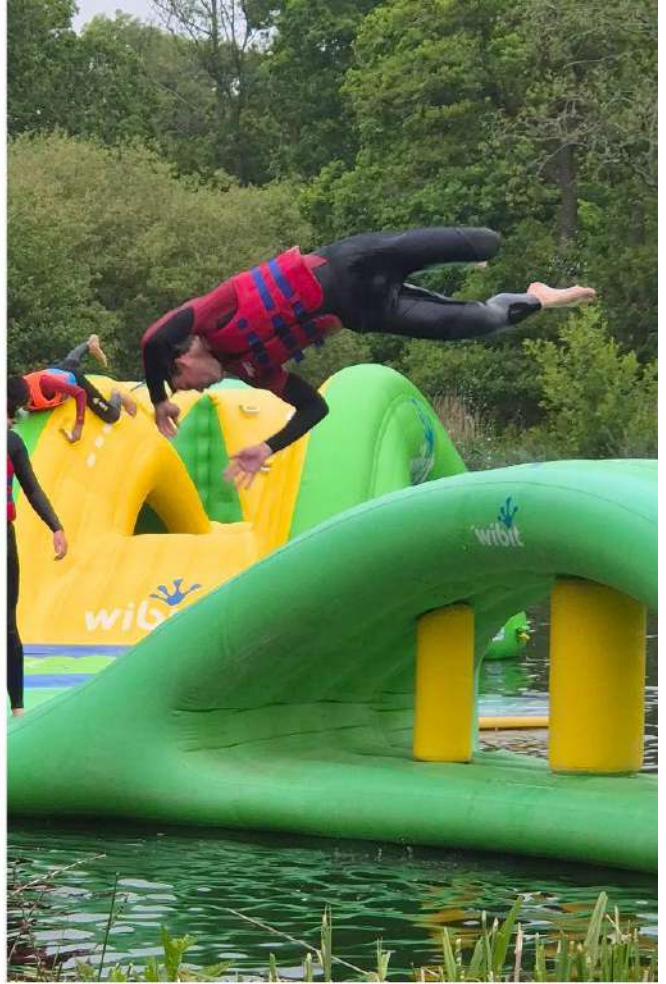




















## Belonging Week: Year 10s leading Canoeing sessions for Primary Schools



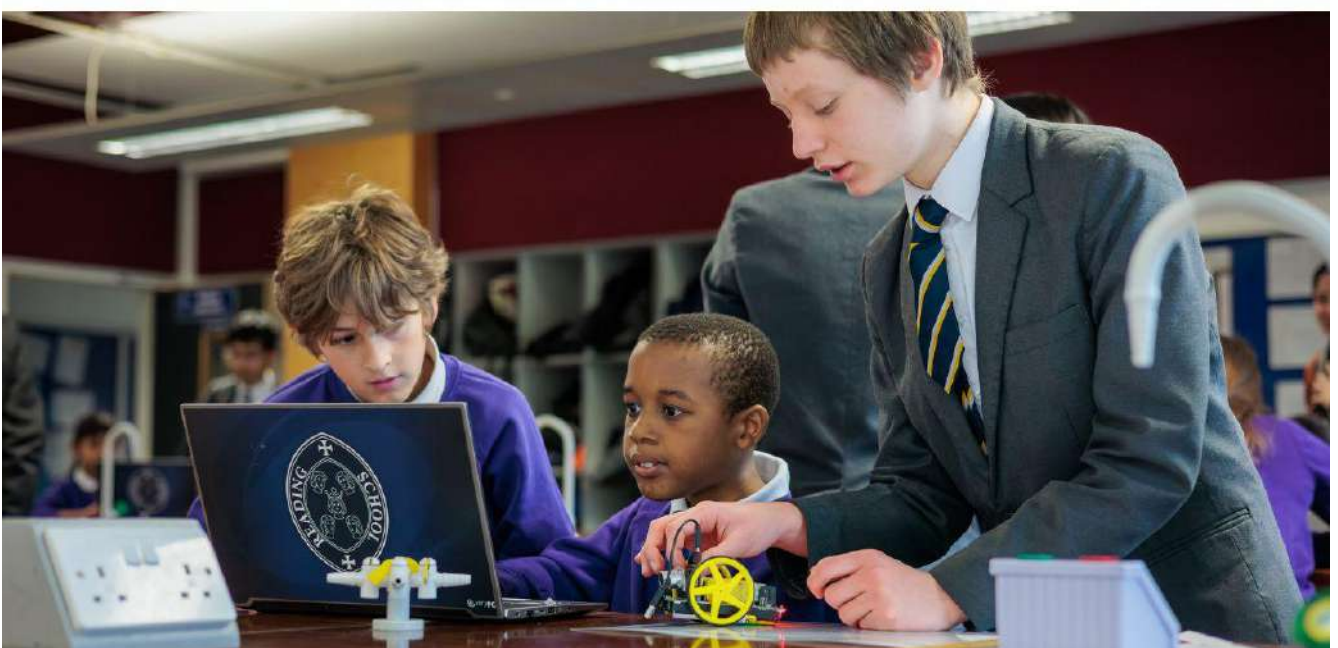






## Belonging Week: Year 10s leading Science sessions for Primary Schools







## Belonging Week: Year 10s leading Music sessions for Primary Schools









## CCF Banners

The relocation of the Combined Cadet Force banners to the school chapel, which will be their permanent display location within the school.



The Headmaster spoke to the Cadets about the history of banners in military organisations and the commitments that they make as members of the school CCF. The Contingent Commander thanked the Banner Party who with minimal preparation were ably led by Cadet Sgt Conal C and displayed exceptional drill at all times. Pranab D (10E) provided musical support and is warmly thanked by the CCF for his contribution to the service.











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)