

Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

13 November 2026

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Introduction

Dear Parents, Carers, Students and Colleagues,

On Thursday and Friday, Microsoft Outlook and Microsoft's file-sharing services went down for organisations around the world.

Most of the news coverage has been about the suppliers and how businesses and organisations were affected. What interests me more is a different question – what did people do when the systems went down? Schools rely on email in order to function and communicate across a range of areas. Safeguarding concerns, messages to parents, absence reporting, cover for absent staff and a good deal of day-to-day administration all travel by the same route. When it fails, the work still has to happen, so it finds another way.

Reading School has been teaching boys since 1125, before the printing press reached England and before there was a postal service. It has outlived most of the technology it has ever depended on. That is no reason for complacency, and we will review what the last two days taught us. But it is a reminder that the school's real infrastructure is its people.

What has held it together is not a system. People here know who to find and what to do. They will walk across the site or pick up the phone when technology lets them down. If there is a concern about a student, it needs to reach a person, and that person needs to reach back. That is a habit of this community rather than a feature of any software, and an outage is a fair test of our resilience.

This school has adapted to changed circumstances many times in its history. Systems fail from time to time. We adjust, and the school keeps going.

Lizzie Ayres
Acting Head

Key Information

Parents only

Parent Governor Vacancy

Reading School's Governing Body has had three nominations for the upcoming parent governor vacancy. They are from:

- Roopinder Brar
- Michael Reed
- Claire Heffernan

Their statements in support of their candidacy can be found by clicking here.

An election will now be necessary. This will be by electronic vote, and details of how to vote will be sent to all parents via e-mail on Monday 23 November 2026.

Vaccinations

Your NHS wants to learn more about what parents think about vaccines in secondary school. All parents of children aged 11-16 are invited to have their say and your feedback will help change how the NHS promotes vaccines across Reading. Simply click this link to complete a 5 min questionnaire.

Year 11 and Year 13 Only

Mock Exams

The Mock Exam timetables have been shared with Year 11 and Year 13 students, as well as being published to MCAS. The Year 11 Mock exams will take place from Friday 4 December to Tuesday 15 December, with the Year 13 Mock exams running from Monday 4 January to Friday 8 January.

Students are only expected to attend school when they have an exam scheduled and will be registered at the beginning of each exam.

Students are welcome to study on site in the LRC or Refectory but will need to ensure they sign in at student reception.

Year 11 Internal Exams Timetable

Year 13 Internal Exams Timetable

Year 7 and Year 12 only

Ordering photographs in time for Christmas – a message from Gillman & Soame

Gillman & Soame took portrait photographs earlier in the autumn term of Year 7s and Year 12s. If you haven't already, please order these photographs as soon as possible (especially if you would like them for Christmas). If details have been mislaid, please contact Gillman & Soame directly at action@gillmanandsoame.co.uk or on 01869 328200 with your child's name and quoting the security password which can be gained by sending a blank email with 'Password request' in the subject line to communityrelations@reading-school.co.uk.

School Community News

800 down, 365 to go - the family planting daffodils for the 365 Fund



Next spring, the first thing students, staff, Governors and visitors to Reading School will notice is a sea of yellow. On Sunday 8 November, parent Ben Bryant, his son Lewis (8W), daughter Annabel and Ben's mum planted 800 daffodil bulbs around the school site, ready to flower in March 2027.

It was a trial run for something bigger. Ben, a Reading School Parents' Association volunteer, wants to bring families together, and on Sunday 22 November he is inviting parents and students to help plant 365 more. We asked him where the idea came from, how the first planting went, and how you can get involved:

Q: Tell us about yourself and your connection to Reading School.

I'm just a regular dad of Lewis, a very happy pupil now in Year 8. I volunteer with the Parents' Association and wanted to help raise awareness of the 365 Fund.

Q: Where did the idea come from, and why bulbs?

I was brainstorming ways to raise money for the school and to create opportunities for parents to connect...something mums, dads and our students might enjoy. I didn't much like the idea of running or cycling 365 miles (although we could do that as part of a larger group), so I thought about my own hobbies. One thing I like to do is plant bulbs and flowers in open spaces or on walks, such as in Snowdonia or along Wainwright's Coast to Coast.

Q: What happened last Sunday?

My family and I (Lewis, my daughter Annabel, 15, and my mum) carried out a small feasibility test to see whether we were ready to open this up to more volunteers.

Q: Where will the bulbs be planted?

We will plant 365 bulbs in areas designated by the school, mainly in dedicated beds at the school entrance, around the Chapel, around Student Services and along the edge of Big School.

Q: Where did the bulbs come from?

They are two varieties of large, hardy yellow daffodil, which I was happy to buy myself from Jamieson Brothers, an online supplier with great reviews.

Q: What was the best moment of the day, or the most unexpected one?

One of the great moments of the pilot planting was discovering how easy it was. I'm used to planting in hard, wild ground without power tools, and the soil in the beds was very loose, so it was easy to make a small hole with a trowel or seed drill. But the best, and perhaps most surprising, moment was seeing how much my kids enjoyed getting involved.

Q: Lewis, what was it like planting bulbs at your own school?

It was fun, and a nice way to help the school in an interactive and natural way.

Q: What's the plan for Sunday 22 November?

We'll plant 365 bulbs, or more if time allows, on Sunday 22 November, provisionally from 10:30am to 12:30pm. Parents and their sons can meet me at Music School from 10.30am.

Q: What would a parent volunteer be doing, and do they need to bring anything?

Volunteers might like to bring basic gardening gloves, sensible clothing and footwear, and a hand trowel if they have one. All bulbs will be provided. You can join for just a few minutes to plant a single bulb, or stay longer, up to an hour or two. I can happily plant all 365 myself, but any number of volunteers will be very welcome, and sharing the experience will make it far more joyful.

Q: What's your longer-term vision?

At the school, I would love this to become an annual event. In the wider community, I'd love to take on other projects, and it would be fantastic to build a small community of volunteers and hear their ideas.

Q: Why does giving time to the school matter to you?

One thing I have learned is that giving is just about the best thing anyone can do. When we shine our light to brighten those around us, we are doing what we can, and that is enough. The school gives our boys so much, and the 365 Fund is a way to help it continue to do that.

Double silver for England: Prayrit A (13MKa) at the European School Games



In February, we shared the story of Prayrit A (13MKa) and his journey in table tennis. This month, he has added a new chapter. Prayrit represented England at the European School Games in Poreč, Croatia, and returned with two silver medals, one in the individual event and one in the team event.

Competing against the best young players in Europe, Prayrit reached the individual final and helped England's boys' team to the team final. We caught up with him to hear what the experience was like, what he took from it, and how he balanced it with his studies.

Q: How did it feel to be selected to represent England at the European School Games, and what did you have to do to earn your place?

It means so much to me to represent England at the European School Games. When I started playing table tennis six years ago, my dream was to win a medal for England at an international multi-sport event, and to meet people from all around the world. I never imagined that dream would come true, but I now have two silver medals from a prestigious tournament, which feels incredible.

To earn my place in the squad, I had to perform well at other competitions. These included the English Schools' Nationals, where I won bronze in the singles and silver with my school team, and the Senior Schools' International in Cardiff earlier this year, where I won bronze in the Boys' Team event. Those

results were built on six years of hard work and commitment, which makes the achievement mean even more.

Q: What was the atmosphere like in Poreč, and what stood out most about competing alongside the rest of the England team?

The atmosphere in Poreč was unreal! Being in Croatia, staying at a resort with athletes from different countries and competing in such a big international event made the whole experience memorable. What stood out most was the camaraderie within the England team. Although we were competing individually, everyone supported one another, watched each other's matches and celebrated each other's successes.

We also took part in impromptu team-building activities, such as dancing, mini golf and tennis. Away from the competition, I made great friendships and had experiences I will never forget. It was much more than a table tennis tournament.



Q: You reached the singles final after beating players from Moldova, Turkey, Bulgaria and Serbia. Which match was the toughest on the way there?

Every match presented its own challenges and came with increasing pressure, but my quarter-final against a Bulgarian opponent was my toughest, and most rewarding, win.

It was a rollercoaster. I was 2-0 down in sets and facing two match points, so I was very close to being knocked out. I managed to claw my way back and take it to a deciding set, which I won comfortably. At this level there are no easy matches, and I had to adapt my game throughout the tournament. That match reminded me how important a strong support network is. I was extremely grateful to my friends and coaches, as I couldn't have done it without them.

Q: You came home with silver in both the individual and the team events. Which one means more to you, and why?

The singles silver means slightly more, mainly because reaching the final was so unexpected. The journey to get there, with so many tough matches and tense moments, makes it mean more still.

In the team event, losing the final was more devastating, as we had gone into the competition aiming for gold. Winning both medals in an England shirt means a great deal, but in reaching the singles final I exceeded my own expectations.

Q: Both finals were against Turkey. What did you learn from those matches, and what would you do differently next time?

The easy answer is that I've learnt not to play Turkey in a final! Jokes aside, Turkey were an extremely strong side and thoroughly deserved to be champions. Both finals taught me about the level required to win international competitions, and how the smallest margins make a significant difference. I now have a much clearer idea of what I need to work on to take the next step and win gold.

Q: Silver means finishing one step short of gold. How do you deal with that, given what you said in February about handling setbacks and focusing on performance rather than outcomes?

I dealt with the two losses quite differently. In the singles, I lost to a much stronger Turkish opponent, so there was no shame in it. I could see the brighter side, particularly the experience of reaching and competing in a European final. That helped me enjoy the moment and feel proud of how far I had come.

In the team event, I lost the deciding match of the final, so I was gutted. My teammates helped me see the positives and cheered me up. Once again, I was reminded how important it is to have the right people around you when things don't go your way. I think it's important to acknowledge disappointment but not let it overshadow everything you've achieved.

Q: In February's Headmaster's Bulletin, you described your visualisation and pre-match routine. Did it change for an international event with a team around you?

The fundamentals stayed fairly similar. I still visualise how I want to play, think about my tactics and get into the right mindset before a match. Being part of an international team changed the dynamic slightly. There was more interaction with teammates, and supporting others or watching their matches meant managing my preparation around the team's schedule.

I was also able to observe and learn from how other players prepared for important matches. The biggest lesson was maintaining my mental focus while still enjoying the wider team experience.

Q: You were away from school from 2 to 6 November. How did you manage your academic work around the trip, and how much did your teachers' support help?

My teachers were very supportive and accommodating when it came to catching up. They made sure I understood the content I had missed and were always willing to help.

During the trip, I tried to make the best use of the limited time I had. I brought my iPad and revised for around an hour every day with my roommate. When I returned, I had to hit the ground running to stay up to date. It was challenging, but being organised and having my teachers' support made a huge difference.

Q: Did Kingfisher Table Tennis Club and your coach Ajay do anything specific to prepare you for this event?

Kingfisher has played a massive role in my development as a player, and Ajay has been particularly influential. Preparation involved continuing to work on the technical and tactical aspects of my game, while making sure I was physically and mentally ready.

For this event, I invited one of my England teammates to train with me at Kingfisher, and I travelled to London to train at his club shortly before the tournament. That built a stronger friendship, which helped us both throughout the trip, and gave us high-level practice against each other.

I'm really grateful for the support and guidance of the club and Ajay. Opportunities like this don't happen without the hard work that goes on behind the scenes.

Q: What are your next goals in table tennis this season?

My immediate goal is to build on the experience in Croatia and keep improving. I want to compete at the highest possible level, whether in national competitions or representing England internationally again.

Winning gold is obviously something I'd love to achieve, but I also want to develop the consistency and mentality needed to compete against the best players. I want to keep challenging myself and see how far I can go.

Q: What advice would you give to a Reading School student who wants to compete at this level while keeping up with their studies?

The most important things are discipline, time management and a real love for what you do. It is possible to balance sport and extracurricular activities with academics, especially at Reading School, where we have a great community and so many ambitious students.

It may not always be easy, but if you stay disciplined, make the most of your time and keep working hard, it will be worth it. Sport teaches you so much beyond the competition itself, including resilience, discipline and how to handle pressure. It can also create incredible opportunities and memories that last a lifetime, as table tennis has for me.

You don't have to sacrifice one ambition for another. With the right organisation, determination and support, you can pursue both.

Q: Quickfire question time - best moment of the trip?

Standing on the podium with the England squad, holding our trophies. That moment summed up the friendships, memories and achievements of the trip.

Q: The song you played before the final?

Last Friday Night by Katy Perry! It was stuck in my head because everyone was singing it throughout the trip.

Q: Three words to describe the week?

Unforgettable, unreal and proud.

Congratulations, Prayrit, on a superb achievement, and thank you to Kingfisher Table Tennis Club, Table Tennis England, his coach and his family for their continued support.

Half a point in it: Reading School wins five-team chess tournament



Reading School's chess team has won a classical tournament against teams from Aylesbury, Hillingdon, Maidenhead and Oxford, finishing half a point ahead of Oxford.

The result came down to the last game still in play. Ethan L (11C) needed a draw or better to secure first place, and with 40 seconds left on the clock he agreed a draw, which was enough to take the title.

Classical chess gives each player far longer to think than the rapid and online formats most students play, and games can run for hours. Yatharth P (11C) said: "It was an incredible experience to have witnessed our victory come down to our last game, and I really enjoyed playing over-the-board, especially in a classical time control."

Every member of the team contributed points to a winning margin that could not have been narrower.

Shared fifth at the English Chess Championships

Theo K (12PEI) spent the recent half-term at the English Chess Championships, entering all three open sections against adult fields that included grandmasters and international masters.

His strongest result came in the Rapidplay Championship, where he scored 7.5 points from 11 rounds to share fifth place in a field of 69, earning a share of the fifth prize. Among the players level with him on points was Grandmaster Gawain Jones, who won both the Standard and Blitz titles.

In the nine-round Standard Championship, Theo scored 5.5 points to tie for twelfth in a field of 58. He tied for twelfth again in the 15-round Blitz, with 9 points among 66 players.

Theo holds the title of FIDE Master, awarded by the international chess federation to players who have reached a rating of 2300.

Reading School Does It Again at the Hispanic Theatre Festival

Our Year 12 and 13 Spanish students travelled to London in October to compete in the final of the **14th Hispanic Theatre Festival**, joining talented performers from leading schools including Eton, Harrow, Sevenoaks, St Paul's Girls' School, and international schools from around the world, with participants travelling from as far afield as Singapore.

This year's production was a creative theatrical interpretation of songs from Jorge Drexler's album *Taracá*, exploring themes of human connection, empathy and our shared responsibility towards one another. Through powerful acting, movement and music, our students delivered a thought-provoking and memorable performance that captivated both the audience and the judges.

Their hard work, dedication and teamwork paid off in spectacular fashion. The company was awarded a **Prize for the Best Theatre Experience**, earning recognition for the outstanding quality of their

performance and securing Reading School's place once again among the very best young Spanish-speaking theatre groups in England.

Ms J Kiszka, Teacher of Spanish, said: "Congratulations to all the students involved for representing the school with such talent, creativity and passion. ¡Enhorabuena! We are incredibly proud of your achievement."

All the World's Your Stage: A Day of Languages, Creativity and Performance

Year 12 and Year 13 linguists took part in *All the World's Your Stage* on Monday 5 October, an inspiring event designed to develop advanced language skills through the medium of theatre.

The day began with a fascinating keynote talk on international theatre, giving students an insight into the role of drama across different cultures. Throughout a series of interactive workshops, students worked collaboratively to write and rehearse original plays in French, German or Spanish, exploring themes linked to their A Level studies.

The event provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen both speaking and writing skills in a real-world context. Students also had the chance to meet and speak with international business professionals, gaining valuable perspectives on how language skills can open doors to future careers.

The day concluded with a showcase of linguistic talent as each team performed their play to an audience. The standard was exceptionally high, with creativity, teamwork, and language skills on full display. A prize was awarded to the most outstanding performance, but all participants should be proud of their achievements.

It was a memorable and rewarding experience that demonstrated how languages can come alive beyond the classroom, combining communication, creativity, and confidence on stage.

Reading School Events

House Music Competition 2026

Tickets are now on sale for the **House Music Competition 2026**, one of the highlights of the Reading School calendar.

Date: Sunday 22nd November 2026
Time: 15:00–19:30
Venue: The Hexagon, Queens Walk, Reading, RG1 7QF



Join us for a spectacular celebration of music and creativity as our five Houses compete across a range of ensemble performances. The afternoon will also showcase exceptional solo performances from our talented Junior (Years 7–10) and Senior (Years 11–13) musicians.

Please refer to the letter sent on Monday 2 November for more information about rehearsals, drop-off and pick-up arrangements, backstage access, catering and parking.

Book your tickets here: [Reading School House Music Competition 2026 | What's On Reading]

Please note: Students taking part in the competition do not need to purchase tickets.

Pupil Premium Support

Families in receipt of Pupil Premium may request up to two discounted tickets for seats in the Arena Centre, Arena Left or Arena Right. Please email events@reading-school.co.uk for further details.

Frank Terry Memorial Lecture 2026



The annual Frank Terry Memorial Lecture will take place on **Thursday 19th November 2026, in Big School, during Period 7 (13:50–14:35).**

This year, the Rt Hon Mark Field (OR 1976–1983), former MP for the Cities of London and Westminster (2001–2019) and Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office under Prime Minister Theresa May, will be posing and answering the question, 'Where Now for the Rules-Based International System?'

Prior to entering politics, Mark worked as a solicitor and entrepreneur. Drawing on his extensive political and diplomatic experience, Mark will explore why global turbulence has become the new normal. His lecture will consider how the rise of China and Middle Eastern powers, alongside the evolving role of the United States, is challenging the post-war rules-based international order, and why reform of the United Nations is becoming increasingly urgent.

This is a valuable opportunity for our students to hear from an Old Redingensian with first-hand experience of international affairs and government.

The event is open to students and Alumni only.

Year 13 attendance

Attendance is expected of all Year 13 students. If there is a genuine reason why a student cannot attend, please email Mr Whitehorn at dwhitehorn@reading-school.co.uk in advance.

Refreshments will be served in the Refectory following the lecture during Period 8. Please note that the **timetabled PSHE lesson will therefore not take place**.

Book signing

Mark will also be bringing copies of his book, *The End of an Era: The Decline and Fall of the Tory Party*, which includes a detailed section in the opening chapter reflecting on his time at Reading School (1976–1983).

He is kindly offering signed copies at a discounted price of £20 (usual published price £25). **If you would like to purchase a copy**, please complete the form in advance. Payment will be by cash only, so please bring the correct amount on the day: Book Sales - the Rt Hon Mark Field (OR 1976–1983) – Fill out form

RSPA

Uniform Shop

The shop will be next open on:

- Saturday 14 November from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

Please email us via contactus@readingschoolparents.co.uk if you wish to volunteer!

Please also take any donations of reusable uniform, equipment and books to Student Services as we continue to restock our supplies.

Hoodies – we would also like to remind parents to purchase a school approved Hoodie as the colder weather draws in. Please click on this link to order and we can arrange to deliver it to school.

School Lottery update - Win the Ultimate PS5 Pro gaming bundle!

There's an exciting chance to win a PS5 Pro 2TB console, disc drive, extra controller, PULSE headset and a 50" smart 4K TV. Bringing Lego Batman, Astro Bot and other games to life, this could be the dream gift for the gamer in your family! Or take the £1,000 cash alternative and spend it your way! Get your tickets before Saturday 28th November for your chance to win by clicking here! Refer a friend for a chance to also win £200.

Teachers' Wishlist 2026



We're delighted to announce that the Teachers' Wishlist will launch next Friday 20 November for its sixth year running!

As in previous years, the teachers choose gifts for you to donate, to enhance the students' experience in their departments. If you can't decide what to buy from the list, you can simply donate an Amazon Gift Voucher or cash to contribute to one of the much-needed larger items.

Please take this opportunity to show your appreciation by purchasing an item. There is a wide range of requests and prices.

We especially love the personal notes that accompany the gifts, thanking a particular teacher or department, from a student or family. All of these are forwarded on.

From microscopes to NASA archives, books, games and fun resources, the teachers are hugely appreciative of your gifts, and we hope that you will support them again this year.

Many thanks everyone!

From the RSPA Team

Highlights: Michaelmas Term - Week 8

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

Facebook: ReadingSchoolOfficial **Instagram:** @reading_sch **LinkedIn:** school/reading-school

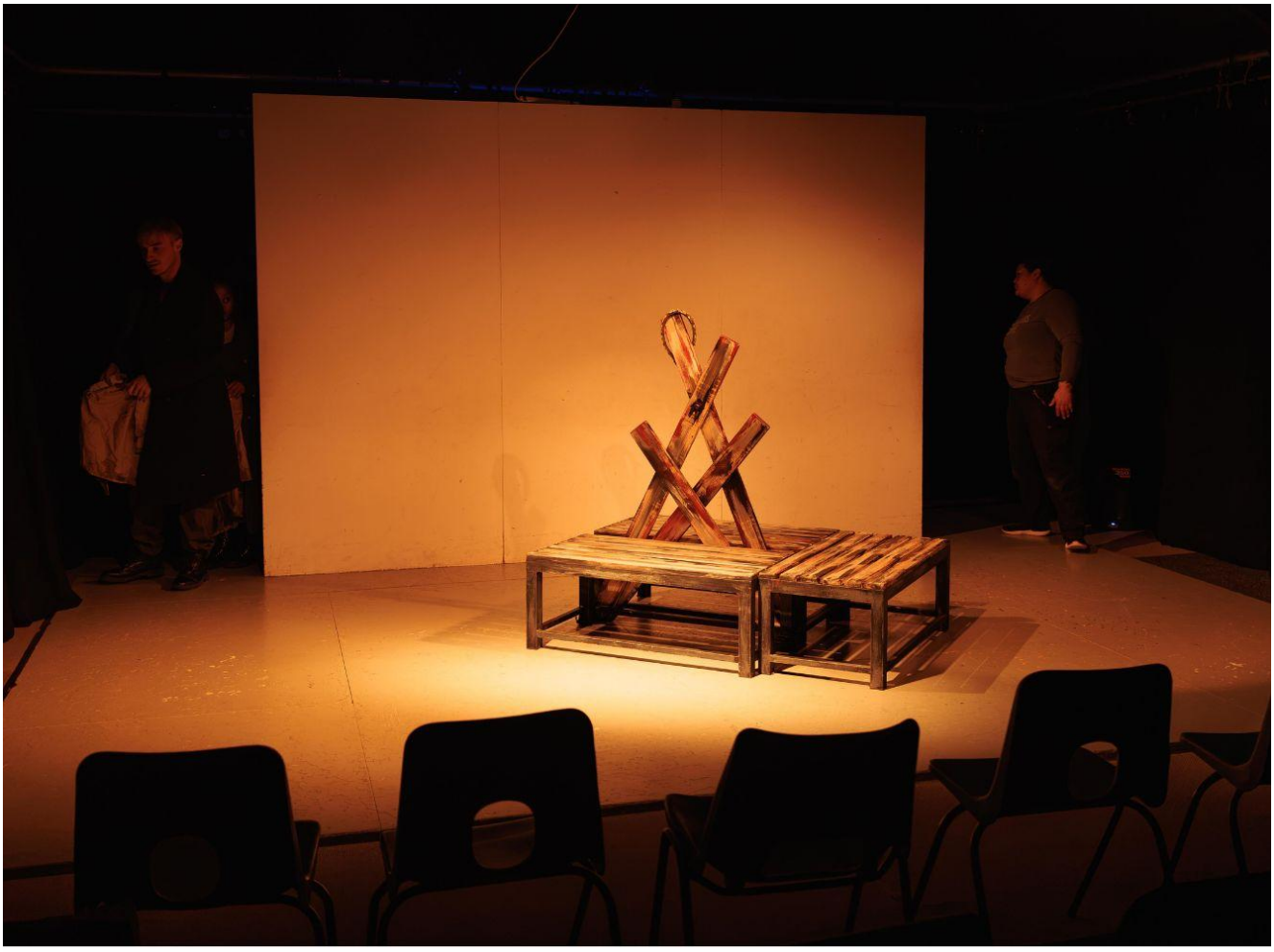
Fair is foul, and foul is fair

"*It really opens up your eyes to what you can do as an actor.*" Year 13 Student

This week Guildford Shakespeare Company and Reading Rep Theatre brought Macbeth to our drama studio. The production was staged with the cast performing within touching distance of the audience.

























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