

Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

26 MAY 2023

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Introduction

'Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got a hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.'

George Bernard Shaw

'Winning is important, but belonging is everything.'

Sean Fitzpatrick, All Blacks Captain

We foster both the pursuit of excellence by our people of character and the sense of belonging to and engagement with Reading School, through the inspirational Belonging weeks. Belonging week enables our students to flourish so that we can help them to become, and keep becoming, the best version of themselves.

Belonging week is concerned with enabling a life of purpose.



Filling young people up with knowledge might help them pass examinations, and that is important as it provides a gateway to opportunities, including places at prestigious Universities. However, that is not necessarily going to help them to adapt and be resilient in tomorrow's world, so that they are equipped to deal with the things that come at them. They need to get the basics right in terms of their personal organisation. They need to be able to show up and communicate in person. They need to be sure of themselves, authentic in terms of who they are. They need to be able to look after themselves and then be able to look after other people. Certainly, we need to help them to become the best versions of themselves.

The groups we belong to have a big influence on our behaviour. In the recently published analysis of 'A journey into the psychology of belonging' by Michael Bond, the author emphasises that *'the feeling that we belong bestows its own psychological gifts: companionship, increased self-esteem, a sense of purpose, a feeling of control and a moral compass.'* Furthermore, belonging allows us to extend our spheres of concern beyond our own, individual wellbeing, to reach to a grander narrative for our lives, which includes sharing meaning with others.

How do we explicitly develop a culture in which all members of the Reading School community experience a sense of belonging through nurturing and trusting relationships? Through the House system, through our Floreat programme, Personal Development programmes and Belonging week.

How do we foster a culture of hope, through explicitly and intentionally ensuring students feel valued, safe, affirmed and autonomous? Through our strong safeguarding culture, House system, Boarding and approaches to pastoral care.

How do we create positive relationships built on psychological safety that provide opportunities for collaboration and flourishing? Through Belonging week and an ethos that emphasises opportunity, character and teamwork.

How do we strengthen an empowering environment that values and encourages educational growth, achievement and excellence for all? Through our focus on academic excellence, an ambitious curriculum, excellent governance, support from parents and the Reading Foundation and developing staff who are committed to Reading School.

Significantly, Belonging is not a comfortable but inessential luxury. It has potent, wide-ranging effects. If feeling excluded can be termed 'a social pain', we want to emphasise the far-reaching benefits of experiences of belonging. For instance, the raising of a sense of well-being and self-worth, improvements in performance and the lessening of defensiveness and hostility. A sense of belonging is arguably a condition of success, part of a 'secret sauce' in school, the workplace and home.

Being disconnected from our community and society can invite a discourse of despair rather than hope and ambition. This is why we have prioritised Academic Excellence, Belonging and Community during 2022-2023 and Culture, Character and Collaboration in the 2023-2024 draft Annual Operational Plan, currently being considered by the Governing Body.



We focus on the provision of 'wise interventions' that nurture belonging and self-worth. We prioritise situations that foster belonging that is a feeling that we are part of a larger group that values, respects and cares for us – and to which we feel we have something to contribute.

Belong literally means 'to go with', and a feeling of connection can decrease vulnerability. While at times our sense of belonging can be fragile, it can also be fostered. One of the most effective ways of fostering understanding and uniting people is to rally them around the pursuit of a common purpose. The process begins with the equipping of a "secret sauce" of aspiration, collaboration and a climate of inspiration, support and challenge. This climate empowers both the pursuit of excellence by young people of character and their sense of belonging to and engagement in a school that enables them to flourish.

Our emphasis on providing opportunities to flourish is evidenced by our Team of intrepid Year 12 philosophers, led by Mr B Miller and Mr T Casemore. They emerged victorious in the [Ethics Cup](#), held at St Andrews University, Fife, Scotland on Thursday, 25 May. In addition, we are also proud to report of the success of Team Biohazard in being placed second nationally in the Our Echo Challenge, resulting in a prize of £2500, which they will use to address the issue of food waste in school. Character, teamwork, excellence and leadership are certainly to the fore this week, locally and nationally.

In 2022-2023 we have focused on the ABC – Academic Excellence, Belonging and Community. Undoubtedly, this week, perhaps more than any other, has exemplified our holistic approach to education, emphasising academic excellence through the internal and external examination process and character excellence through Belonging week.

In 2023-2024 we will prioritise Culture, Character and Collaboration. High performance behaviours are driven by culture. A values-based, purpose-driven culture is the foundation of our approach and sustained success. The emotional glue of our culture is our purpose of providing opportunities for our people to flourish. We know that our people seek a purpose, a cause that is greater and more enduring than themselves. We are adding to our cultural legacy through the provision of Belonging weeks that provide a myriad of opportunities for our students to be the best that they can possibly be.

We believe that sustained organisational success is the result of a long-term commitment to improving excellence. We know that the culture of an organisation is like an organism, continuously growing and changing. A positive culture is built on nurturing trust, developing people and driving high-performance behaviour. The word character comes from the Ancient Greek, *Kharakter*, meaning the mark that is left on a coin during its manufacture. Character is also the mark left on you by life, and the mark we leave on life. It is the impact we make, when we are here, the trace we leave once we have moved on. Indeed, character rises from our values, our purpose, our behaviours, standards and commitment.

Our people have ensured that the organisation of the internal examinations and external GCSE and A Level examinations have been effective this week. Thank you to the Examinations Team led by Mrs E Turner, the superb team of Invigilators and all staff involved in the complex, important processes. It is crucial that our students are afforded the opportunity to show what they know and can do.

In closing, the plethora of inspiring activities and evidence of 'Learn, Lead, Serve' could not have been possible without the leadership of Mr T Evans, Assistant Head and his superb team. Gratitude is about noticing and appreciating the positives in life. I would like to show my gratitude to all staff, students and parents who have supported Belonging week. Your contributions do not go unnoticed or unrecognised and we could not have arrived at where we are and what we have achieved without your active support.

Mr A M Robson
Headmaster



Key information

Year 7 only

Belonging Week 2

Year 7 students will take part in a diverse array of engaging and exciting activities each day, camping out on the front field on Thursday 8 June.

Year 7 – Monday 5 June to Friday 9 June

- **Operation Encounter on Monday 5 June** (Group 1 register outside the chapel at 08:00 for departure to Marlow)
- **History on Monday 5 June** (Group 2 register outside the chapel at 08:20)
- **Operation Encounter on Tuesday 6 June** (Group 2 register outside the chapel at 08:00 for departure to Marlow)
- **History on Tuesday 6 June** (Group 1 register outside the chapel at 08:20)
- **Language Activities on Wednesday 7 June** (all students register outside the chapel at 08:20)
- **Creative Activities on Thursday 8 June** (all students register outside the chapel at 08:20)
- **House Cricket Tournament on Friday 9 June** (Teams register outside the Pavilion)

Year 9 only

Year 9 – Monday 5 June to Friday 9 June

Residentials are from Monday 5 June to Wednesday 7 June with activities at Reading School Thursday 8 and Friday 9 June.

- **Reach from Monday 5 June to Wednesday 7 June** (register outside the chapel for departure from Reading School at 06:15 on Monday 5 June with 17:30 arrival back to Reading School on Wednesday 7 June)
- **Great Tower from Monday 5 to Wednesday 7 June** (register outside the chapel for departure from Reading School at 06:00 on Monday 5 June with 18:30 arrival back at Reading School on Wednesday 7 June)
- **Canoeing from Monday 5 June to Wednesday 7 June** (register outside the chapel for departure from Reading School at 09:00 on 5 June with 14:30 collection from Thames Valley Business Park on Wednesday 7 June)
- **How Stean Gorge from Monday 5 June to Wednesday 7 June** (register outside the chapel for departure from Reading School 06:45 on 5th and 20:00 arrival back at RS on 7th June at 20:00)

All year 9 students will be at Reading School on Thursday 8 and Friday 9 June.

- **Route planning and careers on Thursday 8 June** (register in the science playground at 08:20, for route planning in the morning and careers talk in the afternoon)
- **Floreat Walk on Friday 9 June** (register outside the chapel for 08:20 for departure by coach, travelling to locations in the Chilterns and walking back to school. Students due to arrive back at Reading School by 15:25)

Year 8 and Year 10 only

Internal Exam Timetable

Please click the following links to access the final version of the timetable for [Year 8](#) and [Year 10](#) internal exams running from Monday 5 June to Friday 9 June.

Please note, Year 10 are to be in school ONLY for their individual exams and they should report to the refectory and sit in their tutor groups for registration before being taken to the exam room.

Year 8 are to wear games kit for the days of activities sessions. They are expected to sign up to an activity and should do this via an email (which will be sent to them). They are permitted to bring in their own equipment for these sessions.

Revision direction and material can be found on the student's teams post. Please contact Ms Ayres if you have any questions by emailing layres@reading-school.co.uk.

Staff gratitude

Many students will have had incredible and memorable experiences this week, made possible through the time, effort and nurture of Reading School staff. Those taking exams may have noticed that some staff go above and beyond to share reassurance and support. If you would like to express your gratitude, please do so by clicking here: [Reading School Staff Gratitude Form](#)

Excellence, Belonging & Community

Future Leaders & Sustainability Excellence



As shared with you on Friday 5 May, three Reading School students came together to share their inspiration, passion and drive to change the world as 'Team Bio Hazard' in the [Our Echo Challenge](#), an International competition designed by educators to engage secondary school students in tackling the decline of biodiversity head-on. Maulik S (8L), Abhiram G (8L) and Naivedya P (8L) worked together on a project which focussed on recycling food waste while reducing CO2 emissions through the design of a waste disposal vehicle that transforms biomass into biogas.

In February 2023, a group of three passionate Reading School students entered the OurEcho International Competition, creating and advocating innovative solutions to tackle the growing dilemma of climate change and to increase the biodiversity within the school

and within their local community. Their proposals included creating a self-sustainable food waste disposal truck that would run on biofuel, recycling the vast quantities of food waste produced by the students using compost bins, aided by methanogen bacterium, and introducing vegetable patches around the school-site to grow its own organic vegetables. Team Bio Hazard came second place in the competition this week and have been awarded a cash grant of £2,500, which they will use to take their project further and make it into a reality.

Maulik S (8L) shared, "we are proud to have represented Reading School and Berkshire in this competition, and with the economic support we have received, we aspire to spread the impact of our project beyond our school and into the wider community."

Well done to all our students who have demonstrated desire and passion in wanting to make a positive difference.

The Ethics Cup



During January 2023, five of our Year 12 Philosophy A level students matched their wits against students from five other schools during The Ethics Cup 2023 at UWE Bristol. The tournament involved teams of students discussing current and diverse ethical issues and our team, Josha G (12C), Branson R (12S), Lucca K (12C), Jonathan H (12C) and Luca Z (12C) won the Ethics Cup regional stage with 2 wins and a draw against the schools they competed against. The team went onto progress to the finals at the University of St Andrews which took place yesterday.

We would like to announce that Reading School won the Ethics Cup 2023. The team competed in two debates of 45 minutes each per match with the day beginning at 7am and finishing well into the evening. The team spent over 3 months preparing for the final after winning the regional finals and we congratulate them on their dedication and hard work.

After speaking with Josha G, on his way to the airport to fly back to Heathrow, he shared on behalf of his team:

"I think I speak for everyone when I say that this was an invaluable experience. Coming from the regionals, we knew we had to up our game, and the standard was definitely much higher, but we had been preparing for months and that paid off in the end. We started with a tough match against a school that had previously won the competition, and that win fuelled our confidence, which allowed us to eventually progress through to the finals. This was the biggest match, tackling heartfelt issues regarding addiction and liver transplants. I don't think anything quite comes close to the suspense felt in the moments before the judges announced the winner, as it really could have gone any way! We are immensely grateful for the opportunity not only to engage in complex moral issues, but also to experience the character of a city which we may not have otherwise had the chance to visit."

We would also like to thank Geraldine Ng from the Department of Philosophy at the University of Reading for her support, Teacher of Philosophy & Theology, Mr T Casemore who led the trip along with Head of Theology & Philosophy, Mr B Miller.

Belonging & Community

Prefect Team Partnership

Wednesday 17 May saw the new prefect teams from Reading School and The Abbey School meet to start making their vision for the partnership a reality. Student leadership on this venture is incredibly important to drive the partnership in the direction that will support students of both schools. We are looking forward to seeing how our collaboration develops with our new prefect teams at the helm and updates will be shared with the school community.

Careers

In partnership with Investin



InvestIn recently shared a synopsis of the World Economic Forum - Future of Jobs Report May 2023.

It is no secret that the rapid growth and development in technology is to shape the job market for years to come. Young people today are going to be faced with roles and processes that previously didn't exist, making for future prospects

that may feel overwhelming and exciting in equal measure. The 2023 Future of Jobs report from the World Economic Forum outlines the predicted trends and changes for the next five years, as well as the skills that are looking to be the most desirable to employers.

What are the predictions for the next five years?

It is looking like technology adoption will be the key driver of business transformation over the next five years. Over 85% of the organisations surveyed highlighted this increased adoption of new technologies. The three biggest factors in creating and destroying jobs are environmental, technological and economic trends. Big data, AI and cloud computing are looking more likely to be adopted by companies across all sectors; these, along with many other technological developments, are expected to be job creators.

What does this mean for the skills that employers are looking for?

Analytical thinking and creative thinking remain the most important skills for workers in 2023. Analytical thinking comes up repeatedly throughout the report as the core skill. The other 10 are as follows:

- Creative thinking
- Resilience, flexibility and agility
- Motivation and self-awareness
- Curiosity and lifelong learning
- Dependability and attention to detail
- Technological literacy
- Empathy and active listening
- Leadership and social influence
- Quality control

It is the cognitive skills that seem to be growing in importance most rapidly, alongside technology literacy and self-efficacy. On the other hand, it seems to be reading, writing and mathematics that are declining in importance. Companies predict that 6/10 workers will require skills training before 2027, with analytical and creative thinking being the priority for this training. Click [here to read](#) more.

InvestIn recently hosted the free student and parent 'Get Career Ready this Summer' webinar. Click the [link here](#) if you missed it.

Additional resources:

- Career blogs can be found [here](#).
- The Unstoppable Teen Podcast [Listen here](#)
- Squiggly Careers [Listen here](#)
- 48 Days to the Work You Love [Listen here](#)
- The Careers Podcast [Listen here](#)

FREE University Admissions Webinars in June

Please note that **Reading School does not endorse** the Oxford Tutors/Cambridge Tutors, but share these details so parents and students can sign up for free webinars for information purposes:

Perfect your Personal Statement

- Make your Statement stand out
- Tips on compiling and what to include
- Examples of successful Statements
- Live Q&A with recent Oxbridge graduates

Thurs 15 June at 6 pm (GMT +1)

Admissions Tests and Interviews

- Expert insights for the Oxbridge, Medicine and Law application process
- How to prepare for Admissions Tests
- Insider tips for excelling at Interviews
- Live Q&A with recent Oxbridge graduates

Thurs 22 June at 6 pm (GMT +1)

[Click to register](#)

Community events open to students – a reminder

The following events are open to students under 16 if accompanied by a parent/guardian or on their own if older than 16 years. All enquiries can be directed to Ms Brunskill brunskillan@theabbey.co.uk.

Wednesday 7 June - ARCH Psychology & Memory Event, 17:00 – 19:30

This intriguing event introduces the science behind how our memories work, and why it matters. The evening will include a demonstration of memory techniques by students from The Abbey and Bulmershe School, led by James Paterson, a UK Memory Champion. There will then be two short talks by Professors from the University of Reading's Psychology department (on short-term and working memory, and nutrition and brain function) followed by breakout sessions for those interested in a career in Psychology. The event will conclude with light refreshments and an opportunity to mingle and chat. This event is ideal for students who are studying Psychology for GCSE, A-Level or IB, and for those interested in studying Psychology at university.

Students, parents and carers can book [via this link](#).

Friday 23 June - Night of Rock at The Abbey, 19:00 – 22:00

Come and dance the night away to rock classics from Foo Fighters, The Killers, Muse, Fleetwood Mac, Arctic Monkeys, Guns N Roses and many more! Live entertainment will be provided by The Abbey Rock Bands, Highdown School & Sixth Form Centre, Berkshire Maestros and 'Side Hustle', our guest adult rock band.

Tickets are £15.00 for adults, £10.00 for students and include BBQ food and a drink on arrival. Students, parents and carers can book [via this link](#).

Student travelling on Reading Buses

Boost tickets offer cheaper travel for anyone aged 18 or under and from Wednesday 1 June 2023, Reading Buses will be introducing a verification process to ensure only those entitled can use Boost tickets. The process is a way to prove a child or young person is under 18 or studying at school or college. For more information from Reading Buses, [please click here](#).

RSPA

Summer Fayre 2023 – Sunday 9 July 2023, 12pm – 3pm



We are excited to announce the upcoming RSPA Summer Fayre which is raising funds to provide our Reading School students with outdoor seating.

In order for these events to go ahead, we really need people to volunteer their time and any donations, all contributions will be greatly appreciated!

We will be reaching out straight after half-term with more information. In the meantime, if you can volunteer on the day, have a donation or any questions, please write to us on contactus@readingschoolparents.co.uk

2nd Hand Uniform Sale

Thank you to all the volunteers and everyone who supported the Uniform Shop openings last weekend, £443 was raised for the RSPA.

The next 2nd Hand Uniform sale is on Friday, 7th July and at the Summer Fayre on Sunday, 9th July.

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

- Small size blazers (up to 34")
- School ties
- Lab coats
- Safety goggles
- Macron kit
- Reading school hoodies
- Rugby boots and trainers

We are also collecting old style reversible games tops, which will be donated to a charity that sends rugby kit overseas.

Donations can be sent into reception in a bag marked 'Uniform Donations' or handed in at the next opening.

Orders for Hoodies

Please note that the hoodie orders will be suspended for half term. If you would like to place an order for hoodies, please email us at hoodies@readingschoolparents.co.uk

We would like to wish everyone a very happy half term and good luck to all the students who are taking exams.

The RSPA Team

Summer Term – Week 6

To keep up to date with student life at Reading School, click the icons below to follow and stay connected



Prefect Teams from Reading School and The Abbey School

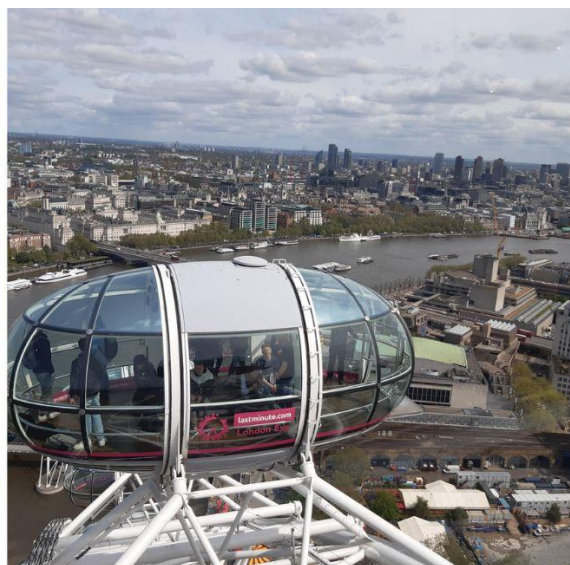
#PartnershipProsperity





German Exchange 2023

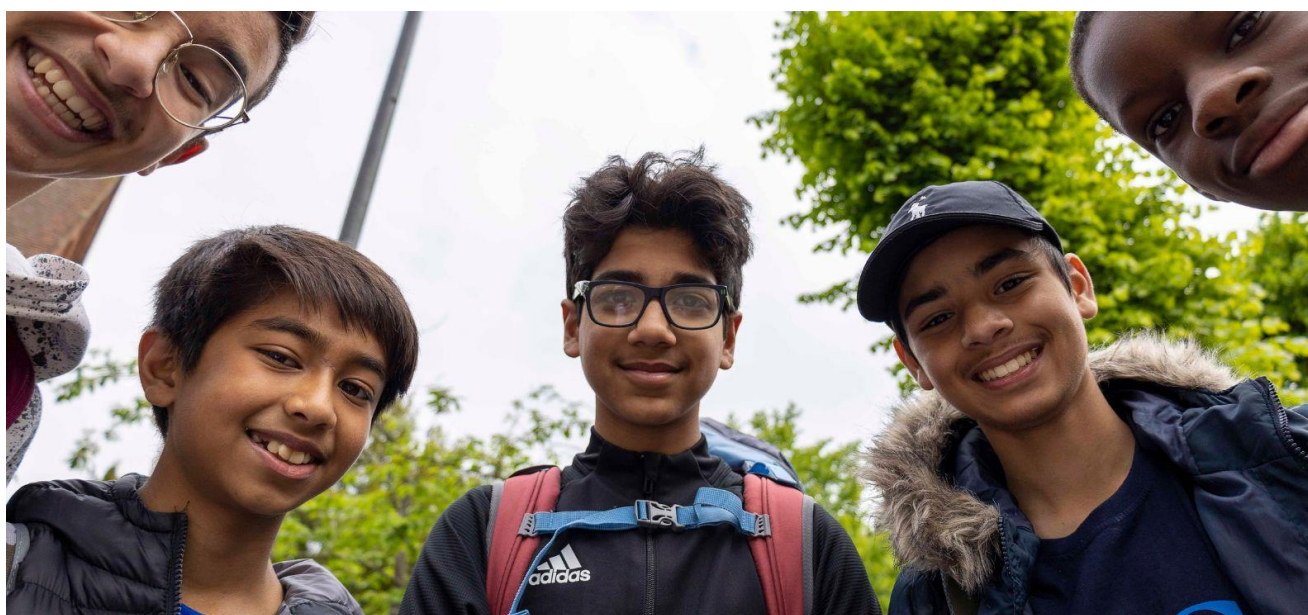
For the first time after Covid, the German Exchange took place again this term. Y10s and Y12s went to Germany in November 2022 to experience German culture, school life and to experience Bonn and Koln, but more importantly to form friendships. During mid-May, our German partners visited us, and we were able to show them school life at Reading School along with experiencing enrichment activities. Thank you to all students and parents who made this trip so special as well as teachers, Mr Flexman and his team and associate staff who helped make our German friends feel so welcome.





Belonging Week 2023

Year 8s leaving to go on their 3 residential trips





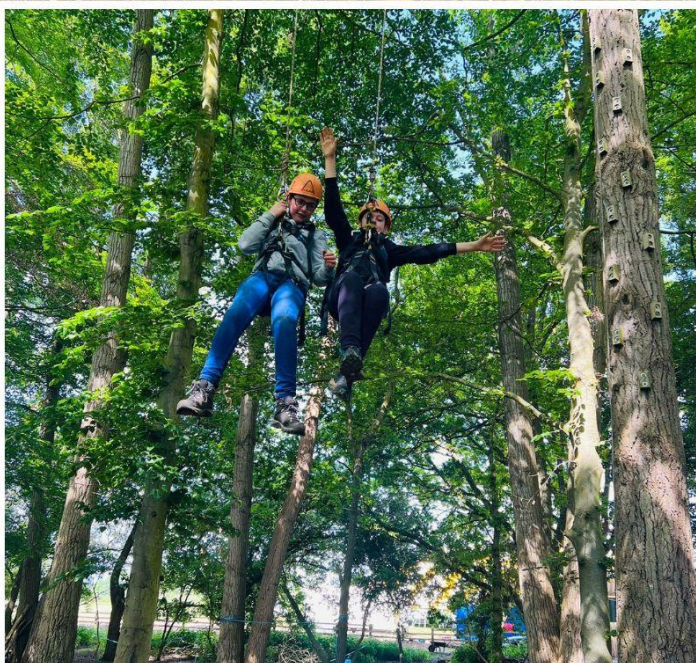




Year 8 Trip to Operation Encounter led by Mr K Luteijn, Ms. A Coates, Mr T Flowerdew, Mr B Miller and Mr J Ginger









Year 8 trip to Rock UK led by Mr C Betteridge, Ms. A Head, Mr Z McAllister, Ms. A Creegan and Ms. H Record











Year 8 Trip to Youlbury led by Mr D McGall, Ms. M Hooker, Dr C Lewis-Brown,
Mr S Ling-Winston and Mrs J Pickering













3-day canoeing expedition from Abingdon to Reading led by Mr T Evans, Mr D Tridgell and Mr J Roberts





Year 9s hard at work revising in preparation of their end of year exams



We would like to thank our budding student photographers, Michael S (10S) and Nik Z (11W) for their photo submissions during this week's Belonging Week.



The winners of The Ethics Cup 2023



From left to right: Josha G (12C), Jonathan H (12C), Branson R (12S), Luca Z (12C) and Lucca K (12C)

Feedback is important to us and if you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the Community Relations Office by emailing communityrelations@reading-school.co.uk