



# Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

10 MAY 2024

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Key information</b>	<b>5</b>
Year 13 only	5
Examinations Begin	5
Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 only	5
Belonging Weeks	5
Current Vacancies	5
<b>School Community News</b>	<b>6</b>
A fond farewell	6
2024 TSL International Student Essay Competition	8
Reading Climate Festival 2024	8
Echoes of Culture Art Exhibition	9
Poet Laureate - Poem for May	10
<b>RSPA</b>	<b>11</b>
Pre-loved Uniform shop	11
Fund raising event for school's sport equipment	11
Good Luck to all Year 11 and Year 13 students	11
<b>Summer Term – Week 5</b>	<b>12</b>
The Reading School Community Water Sports Programme Launch 2024	12
Year 13 Leavers Lunch	20
#PartnershipProsperity	25

# Introduction

Belonging Week activities and internal exams commence for all Year 7 - 10 and Year 12 students on Monday. We wish all of these students the very best in their adventures, opportunities and challenges that they will enjoy during this coming fortnight.

This week I have been away from school, as I am meeting Alumni in seven cities in the USA and Canada. I am pleased to share a few brief reflections from these members of our extended community.

Our alumni all remember educational visits, academic discourse around and outside the classroom, and character-forming challenges more than they remember their exams and their lessons. This is true for FTSE 100 business leaders and for professors. It's worth our current students noting this, and understanding that the experiences they will have in coaching, travelling, debating, building and exploring, are likely to be some of the most significant elements of their education. Education, after all, is about shaping ourselves so that we can shape society. End of year examinations can help us test our knowledge and improve our understanding, but are not intrinsically more important than work experience, or gorge walking, or coaching cricket to Year 5 children.

In New York on Monday I met two students from the class of 1985, and three more recent leavers from the class of 2011, 2013 and 2017. This group included a world leading game designer, a highly successful lawyer, the Talent Development lead at Morgan Stanley, a Yale Economist and a Cambridge Natural Scientist. Discussing consciousness, art, creativity, metaphysics, character and the place of AI in education, an observer might have imagined this group had known each other all their lives. They were entirely united in their ongoing love of learning and their conviction that academic curiosity was a defining and uniting feature of their time of Reading School.

In Chicago on Wednesday I met an Economics PhD student from the class of 2015, a trainee Doctor from the class of 2018 and a physicist from the class of 1962. This re-union was remarkable for the skills and career paths represented, and for the academic balance which so strongly resembles that of our current A Level cohort. The oldest alumna at the table was involved in historic computing breakthroughs such as the Singer Sewing Machine company's (ultimately doomed) attempt to build early personal computers and the world's first satellite-linked customer database. Nevertheless, it was building a canoe by hand that had the most lasting impression upon him whilst he was at School. He put so many nails in it that it barely stayed afloat. He was greatly entertained to hear of the co-curricular experiences of Ed and Adi (from 2015 and 2018), and to know that the school now involves so many junior students in paddleboarding and canoeing adventures.

Yesterday in Atlanta, I met four alumni from the classes of 1985, 1990 and 1992. A defining feature of our conversations was the sense of debt we each owed to the teachers who truly cared. On one occasion when one of our party had managed to score zero in a Geography Test, his Geography teacher gently asked him, "Is it possible that Geography is not for you?" This precipitated a switch to Art, and the student concerned has spent his life since as a creative director, product designer and artist. He traces his phenomenal success as the owner of a world-leading clothes brand right back to that honest Geography conversation. The same teacher was equally significant in the life of another Alumni, not because he nudged him into art, but because he fuelled curiosity that led to a Geology degree and an exceptionally successful career.

Today and tomorrow I am meeting more former students in Denver and Vancouver. In addition to exploring opportunities for career advice and philanthropic support for the school, I will be inviting them all to the 900th anniversary alumni gathering which will be on July 12th 2025, which will be one of our major celebrations of this momentous anniversary. I expect each, in their own way, to

reflect on the importance of the relationships they enjoyed at school, the curiosity that was nurtured and the teachers that inspired them.

I should like to finish then, by thanking my colleagues for all they do; not just to encourage the measurable academic excellence we see in the external exam results of our students, but also the less measurable, but no less important, love of discourse and pursuit of lifelong learning. To this end, my deepest thanks go to Ian Sharma who retires next week after first joining the school in 1986. Remembered fondly by many of the students I have met this week, Ian's example of service and continued fascination with the universe has been a source of inspiration to many of us lucky enough to have been taught by him, and privileged to have been his colleague.

Wishing you all a restful weekend ahead.

**Chris Evans**  
**Headmaster**



# Key information

## Year 13 only

### Examinations Begin

We wish all of our Year 13 students the very best of luck with their examinations, which have already begun this week. We know they have all worked towards these final assessments, so we hope they all get the outcomes they deserve.

Can we take this opportunity to remind students and parents that these final few weeks are a great opportunity to work hard to maximise their outcomes, but this should never be to the detriment to their health or to their wellbeing. Balance is vital during this stressful time and all students should be finding an equilibrium between hard work, social time, getting outdoors to exercise, getting fresh air and having good amounts of sleep. Without all of these, they will be unable to be the best versions of themselves over this decisive period.

If parents or students are concerned about any of our Year 13 students, please do get in touch with a member of staff at school. In the first instance this should be their tutor.

Good luck to all in their examinations and we look forward to seeing the fruits of your labour on results day in August.

## Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 only

### Belonging Weeks

The schedule of the upcoming Belonging Weeks from this coming Monday 20 May [can be found by clicking here](#).

Students across Years 7-10 will get to experience a variety of exciting and enriching opportunities, underpinned by Reading School's 'learn, lead, serve' philosophy. Furthermore, the weeks promote and foster the sense of community and inclusion for all students, as well as allowing the development of emotional, social, academic, and long-term personal development, which can enhance and contribute to students thriving and contributing positively to school life and beyond.

Belonging Weeks will be featured across all school communications including our social media platforms, [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [X/Twitter](#).

## Current Vacancies

We do not currently have any vacancies at Reading School. Please [visit our careers page](#) to join our talent pool and where your application will be reviewed.

# School Community News

## A fond farewell



It is with sadness that Reading School says goodbye to Teacher of Physics, Mr Ian Sharma, who has been with us for 29 years. Ian is a well respected and highly regarded colleague who will be retiring in order to spend more time with his family and pursue interests outside of teaching and we wish him the very best.

We spoke with Mr Sharma earlier this week:

### **Q: Please tell us all something about yourself Mr Sharma**

I've been a Physics Teacher for 42 years and started off at St Crispin's School in Wokingham in September 1982 where I also completed my PGCE Teacher Training. I wasn't even aware I'd got the job until after I received a letter from the Education Committee welcoming me to the school! But there we go.

### **Q: What were first memories of coming to Reading School?**

In September 1986, I came to Reading School on a Saturday morning, just to see what it was like as a school. I got to speak with the Head of Physics, John Barraclough who was a real gentleman. I recall meeting the Staff Common Room which felt like an exclusive club. I recall meeting with Brian Turnbull and the then Headmaster, John Bristow and Deputy Headmaster, John Haynes...all sadly now passed on. I thought I was only having an informal chat on the day however it turned into an informal interview and I was offered a role of Teacher of Physics.

### **Q: What do you recall of Reading School as a physical place in 1986?**

I'd seen Reading School from the outside as I'd always driven by the building and thought 'I'd never end up working there'. And yet, here I am. 29 years later in my time at this school. It was pretty exciting and I thought a real privilege to end up here. When I came here, we had West Wing boarding, there was no John Kendrick building, no Page building or Refectory. Junior School was where we all had dinner while looking at the murals of The Miraculous Catch of Fish.

### **Q: It sounds like the physical space of Reading School has changed during your years, what about the people and the practice of teaching?**

I think when I came here it was very male dominated and that there was less diversity. All the boys were called by their surname and teachers would remain in their profession and place of work for longer than they may do now.

### **Q: What were some of the challenges you experienced?**

Covid and the impact that it had on the school...just little things like not having the staff room as a place where all the staff would gather. In saying this, I think students at the school were really resilient and they've actually coped very well with it. It's us as a staff body who I think felt the change more than anybody else. During Covid, a lot of schools really struggled in terms of delivering lessons to the students online but I believe we got Microsoft Teams up and running pretty quickly. And I remember teaching my lessons from Southampton.

**Q: What does Teaching mean to you?**

It's just something in my blood. I can't help it. I just like delivering my subject in a way that enthuses people. I particularly like Physics because I like getting on with practical experiments. I know you can do Chemistry and Biology but I've never been happier than when I've got practical kit in my hands and demonstrating it to different people.

It gives you the chance to get to know your kids and there are some who say so by telling you you've had an impact. You get the satisfaction of knowing that you've got people who remember you. Last week we have a visit from an OR, David Grindle, who I taught through to A level...he was a West House Border. He came to see me because he remembered my teaching and he said to me that he has friends he meets up with and they often talk about me... you sit there and think you've had an impact on the life of a young person. And you have no idea what that impact looks like after they leave and that is just lovely. That's the satisfaction of being a teacher.

**Q: What's been your proudest achievement?**

Probably the fact that OR, Tom Whipple, who was my student, went onto become a Science Correspondent for The Times. If you read his 'Get Ahead in...Physics' science book, which we have in the school library, you'll find my name in the back. I've got my name in print, love it! It would also be all the students who managed to get through to the Astrophysics Olympiad. I've had three students who've all made in onto the international team who I'm very proud of.

**Q: Do you have any words of wisdom for those aspiring or training towards becoming teachers?**

Have a passion for your subject which comes across in what you do. I once got asked at an interview, what is your favourite part of physics? And you fuff around thinking of what to say. I actually said 'I don't have a favourite part of physics because I deliver every topic with the same level of enthusiasm and interest'. Because the whole subject captivates me. And that's what you need as a teacher to do. All you need is an absolute cast iron solid knowledge of your subject, the enthusiasm in the subject and the ability to simply deliver it. And if you've got those three things you will make it as a teacher. If you haven't...you might make it, but it's going to be...what's the phrase I'm looking for? A wooden approach in the classroom where the kids just get an awful experience. You hear people say, 'Oh, I didn't like Physics' and that may be because they had a teacher who didn't really deliver the subject in a way which excites them.

**Q: Any words of wisdom for students?**

Keep out of trouble! But seriously, have a curiosity in the world around you. That's it. To me. My love of physics stems from the fact that I have a curiosity about the world around me. It doesn't matter what it is, you know, from birdsong, insect life, right the way through to my hobbies, planes and trains... the stars in the sky. Just have a deep-seated curiosity about the world around you and don't just go through life blindly as though none of it matters. There's a song I've got by 12 Titans music and a lyric has always resonated with me... "the universe was made just to be seen by my eyes' which I have taken to mean that we are all unique yet have that same opportunity. What a privilege that is.

**Q: Is there anyone you would like to thank?**

All of my team in the Physics Department, Ashley Robson for hiring me in the first place, Harris Hussain who was a real friend and the different heads of department over the years. I've worked with some lovely colleagues. It's been a privilege working with subject colleagues over the years and get to know people who have been here for the duration...people like Mr Cooper.

I did not regret or miss a school I once worked in but I will miss Reading School. Because of the staff and because of the boys...the one thing we do have here are students who are wanting to learn. That's what you want to be. You want to be a student who wants to learn, not just follow the spec, but wants to deeply learn.

## 2024 TSL International Student Essay Competition



According to the [Trust for Sustainable Living](#), “Nature provides us with everything we need to survive and thrive – clean air and water, food, materials for shelter, medicines and so much more. Many people believe that nature can help us tackle major global challenges such as climate change, food and water security, biodiversity loss and disaster risk reduction, as well as improving human health, societal wellbeing and developing sustainable economies.” With this in mind, students were recently invited to contribute an essay with their views on how they feel that nature can support the achievement of the [United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals](#) within their own communities.

We would like to congratulate Adi A (11S) who received an honourable mention for his essay entry and Teacher of Geography, Mr K Luteijn shares, ‘Adi has done really well in receiving an honourable mention from almost 1600 entries from 65 countries’. Adi’s essay, which is titled ‘How can Nature help us achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals in my community?’ can be read by [clicking here](#).

## Reading Climate Festival 2024



As part of Reading Climate Festival (8 – 21 June 2024), Reading School will be hosting a Youth Mobilisation Day on Saturday, June 15 from 9:30am – 5:30pm. The event, organised by and for young people in Reading, will be a day of future visioning and where young people can develop their campaign and filmmaking skills along with connect with like-minded people with interests in politics, the climate and sustainability. The day will also allow people to connect with a range of organisations in order to find out more about future careers. [Entry is free](#) and the event is open to all young people aged between 16-25.

## Agenda:

9:45 -10:00: Welcome and introductions

10:00 -12:30: **Creative Horizons for Climate** and **Nature with Dialogue Matters**. This interactive session will help you express your vision for the future of Reading through various creative media. These creative visions will feed into Reading's Year of Climate Engagement, a series of events that will help shape our town's next Climate Emergency Strategy for 2025 - 2030.

12:30 - 1:30: Lunch Break. During the lunch break we will also have a chance to watch **Our Green Stories**, some amazing short films made by young people about climate change and biodiversity loss and the positive actions we can all take. Presented by the **Museums Partnership of Reading Youth Panel**.

1:30 - 2:00: **Young Voices for Nature** with **World Pencil**. Watch a nature film made by over 200 young people for young people and hear how the film came to life.

2:00-3:15: Creative campaigning with **UK Youth for Nature**, **Jelly** and **World Pencil**. Find out what campaigning is and learn how to run your own effective, creative campaigns. Hear about a real-world Poster Campaign Challenge and brainstorm ideas for taking part in it.

3:15 - 4:15: How to use your voice for good with **Reading Youth Council** and **WWF**. Learn how to successfully engage with politics and use your voice to bring positive change.

4:15 - 4:30: Break

4:30 - 5:30: **Careers panel**. Gain insights from five inspiring individuals and have the opportunity to ask your burning questions about careers that positively impact the climate.

To book a free ticket, [please click here](#).

## Echoes of Culture Art Exhibition



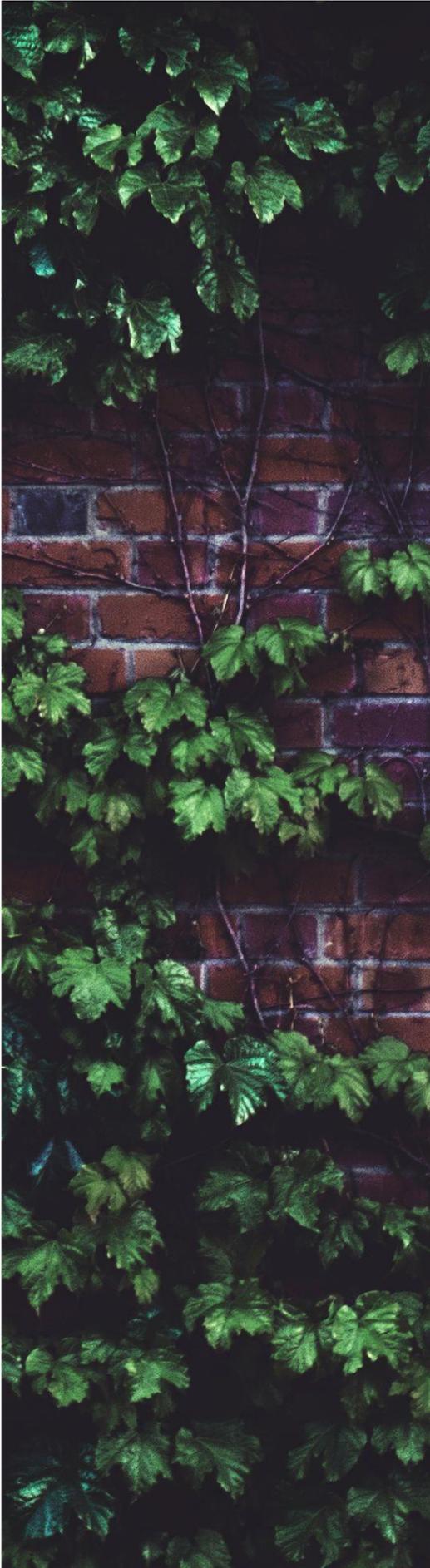
During Refugee Week 2023, Reading School worked in partnership with Refugee Support Group in order to host [a free art exhibition](#) celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary. Led by Mr K Luteijn and a team of student Schools of Sanctuary Ambassadors, the exhibition featured a diverse range of mixed media pieces including sculpture, painting, embroidery and photography.

One of the local artists featured during the exhibition was Ahmad Alazami, who will be unveiling his latest collection of oil paintings on Saturday 18 May for a week-long exhibition (18 – 26 May) titled, 'Echoes of Culture'. The exhibition will feature a curated selection of oil paintings exploring scenes from around the world in order to weave together a rich tapestry that transcends borders. The paintings, *'elicit a sense of longing and reflection, inviting viewers to reconnect with their own memories and experiences.'*

**Entry:** Free

**Venue:** Riverside Museum at Blake's Lock, Kenavon Drive, Reading, RG1 3DH

**Dates:** Opening from Saturday 18 May (10am – 6pm) until Sunday 26 May



## *Vines That Bear No Fruit*

*by Edward Yan (9W)*

Do you see the choking vines -  
Twisting, creeping, pale and sickly -  
Search for life to leech?

What does it take? It takes it all.  
Spurred on by selfish growth and greed,  
The fronds constrict,  
the stalks bring on,  
No gift to give in turn.

Slowly, tendrils snaking forth,  
They slither up a host and climb,  
In search of light, but does it fear  
Of strangling him to death?

# RSPA

## Pre-loved Uniform shop

The opening dates of the Pre-Loved Uniform Shop for this term are:

Friday 17 May, 3:30pm - 5:00pm

Saturday 18 May 10:30am - 12:30pm

Friday 5 July, 3:30pm - 17:00pm

Saturday 6 July, 10:30am - 12:30pm

No parking on site on the Friday openings.

Location: The Pre-loved Uniform Shop can be found at the back of the Walled Carpark, opposite the chapel.

## Fund raising event for school's sport equipment

Thank you to all of the parent volunteers who have confirmed their attendance at [The Goring Gap Run](#) on Saturday 18 and/or Sunday 19 May. So far, we have 17 volunteers offering to direct the runners and cheer them on, in return for which we should raise *just over £1,000* which will be used towards some specialist performance sports camera equipment and software requested by Reading School's PE Department. The equipment and software allows sports fixtures to be recorded, streamed and analysed as a team post-match and we look forward to keeping you updated.

Again, we would like to express our sincere thanks to all the volunteers that have come forward, and we wish you a sunny pleasant day cheering on all the walkers and runners this weekend!

## Good Luck to all Year 11 and Year 13 students

Our best wishes and good luck to all our Year 11 and Year 13 students during your exams.

We know you have worked hard, are very proud of you and regardless of the outcome, your effort and resilience are commendable and will serve you well in your futures. We believe in your ability to succeed.

Many thanks and have a lovely weekend.

RSPA Team

## Summer Term – Week 5

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.



### The Reading School Community Water Sports Programme Launch 2024



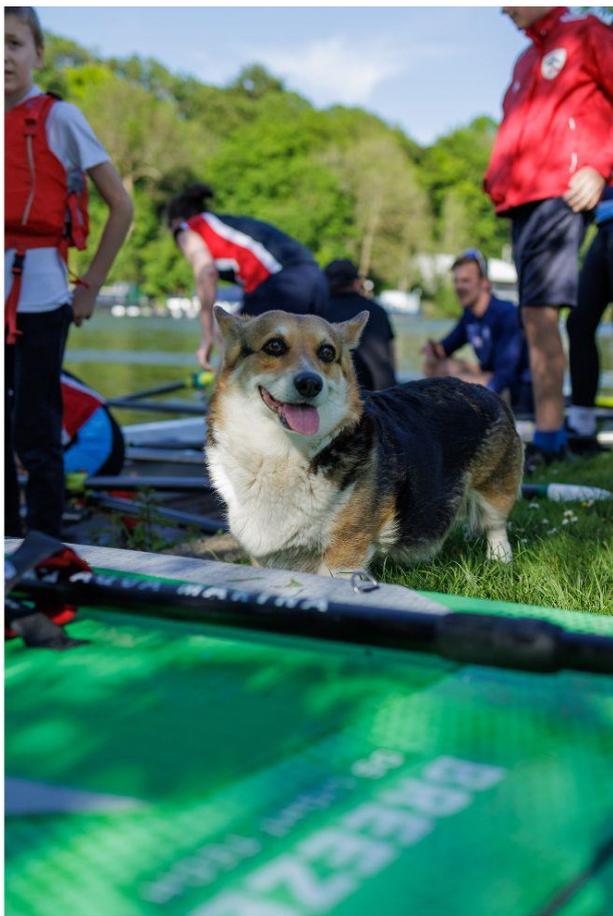
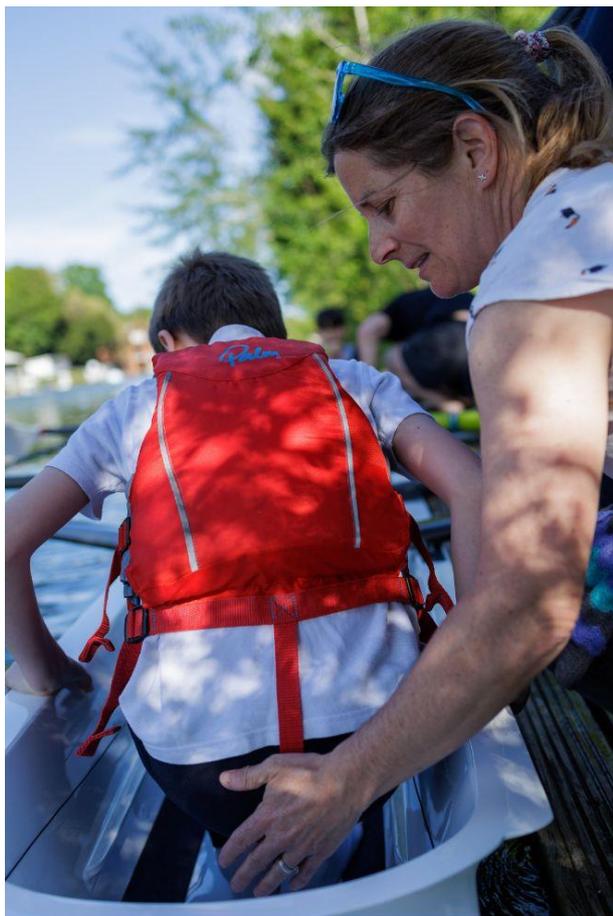
Rebuilt from the ground up, the Boathouse, which burned down in 2019, is now on a secure site and equipped with canoes, quad boats, single boats and paddleboards, which will allow Reading School students to take part in water sport activities that will develop and increase physical fitness, teamwork and social skills, discipline, self-confidence, mental wellbeing, life skills and an appreciation for being outdoors in nature.



We strongly believe that rowing should be accessible to all and are keen to reduce the barriers in taking part as it can be seen as an 'elite' sport. Under the guidance of ex GB rower and Olympic coach, Rev James Stephenson, local Ukrainian families and Reading School's Ukrainian students were invited to a launch where they got to take to the water with members of the current TeamGB Rowing Team who kindly volunteered their time for an afternoon.



Families worked with the rowers in order to learn the technical and physical skills needed to develop their stroke techniques, bladework and timing.











## Year 13 Leavers Lunch

We bid farewell to our Year 13s last Friday 10 May as they leave to prepare for their final exams at Reading School. We would like to congratulate you all and wish you all the very best in your upcoming exams.











## #PartnershipProsperity

Led by Deputy Housemistress, Sixth Form Pastoral Lead and Teacher of History, Miss Stratford, the partnership between Reading School and The Abbey School continues to deliver opportunities for Year groups to collaborate together during exciting events like this month's Bake Off.





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).