

Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

8 DECEMBER 2023



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Introduction

Pausing to celebrate and be thankful together



The accolade we received on 1 December, of being named the State Secondary School of the Year South East by The Times and The Sunday Times Parent Power Schools Guide 2024, is a testament to the relentless dedication and tireless efforts of every member of our school community.

Crucially, it speaks of our shared commitment to nurturing a purpose-led organisation of academic excellence, of sustained high performance, a culture of character and continued collaboration. The achievement serves not only as a milestone in our journey towards our 900th anniversary, but also a reminder of our collective endeavours, fuelled by an unrelenting sense of moral purpose and building people of character should be viewed as an essential mark of our authenticity.

Our focus on the nurture of character, deeply respectful relationships between staff and students, the value of autonomy and the significance of intellectual curiosity, enables Reading School to achieve remarkable academic success, without ever making this our exclusive focus. When compassion, integrity and authenticity are strands of our golden thread, then excellence follows.

Although the award is a recognition, in part, of the results of our GCSE and A Level public examinations taken in 2023, I would encourage all students to pause and reflect on their place within Reading School. For instance, I would invite all to consider that we collectively have contributions to make by showing up day to day.

- What will your contribution be within your friendship groups, classes, House and wider school community?
- No matter how small the act, what can you do to lift others around you?
- Is your next word or action coming from a place of anger or compassion?

Therefore, I would invite the whole school community to consider that consistent positive results and success do not come about by accident, but rather by design. Your efforts, be it student, staff, parent or Governor led, contribute and result in achievements we can all celebrate. Thus, let us carry on in this positive vein so that we can continue to achieve great things together for the benefit of all.

We are in the top 100 schools in the country for adding value at GCSE in 2023, according to the DfE, with a Progress 8 score of +0.97. But this is only one measure. We also need to focus on attitudes and behaviours, being ambassadors for our school and our community. We are not aiming for perfectionism, but we are committed to a culture of continuous improvement.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to each member of our community for contributing to this national recognition of excellence. Together, we have proven that, when united by a common purpose, we can continue to learn, lead and serve.

Reading School Parents Association Teachers' Amazon Wishlist appeal



It is with immense pleasure and enthusiasm that I reach out to you today regarding the RPSA's ongoing initiative - the Teachers' Amazon Wishlist appeal. For the third consecutive year, we have embarked on this endeavour to support our dedicated educators and enhance the learning experience of our students.

The commitment and passion demonstrated by our teaching staff is commendable. They consistently strive to provide the best education possible despite various challenges. Your generous support through this wish list initiative plays a pivotal role in enabling them to access essential resources that aid in their mission.

The wish list encompasses a diverse array of items, catering to the unique needs of each department, ensuring a comprehensive and enriched learning and enrichment environment for our students.

Your contribution, be it through specific items, gift vouchers, or even cash donations, holds immeasurable value and is immensely appreciated.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to those who have already contributed. Your support lays the foundation for a brighter future for our students, empowering them with the tools necessary to excel academically.

The RSPA has kindly agreed to extend the deadline to Friday 15 December, so if you have been meaning to support but haven't had the chance yet, please see details in the RPSA section of this newsletter or click here: [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk). Every contribution, regardless of its size, significantly impacts the educational journey of our students and their environment.

Thank you,

Mr A M Robson
Headmaster



Key information

All years

End of Michaelmas Term 2023

Please find below structure for the last day of term on Wednesday 20 December:

AM Tutor Time and Period 1 – 3

Lessons as normal, with Junior Period 3 starting at 10:10 rather than 10:25, and period 3 ending for all classes at 10.40.

08:20	<i>Tutor Time</i>				
08:30	<i>Lesson 1</i>				
09:20	<i>Lesson 2</i>				
10:10	<i>Lesson 3</i>				
10:45	East Chapel	<i>Break</i>	<i>Tutor time</i>	<i>Tutor Time</i>	<i>Break</i>
11:05	<i>Tutor Time</i>	West Chapel	<i>Tutor time</i>	<i>Tutor Time</i>	<i>Break</i>
11:20	<i>Tutor Time</i>	<i>Tutor Time</i>	School Chapel	<i>Break</i>	<i>Tutor Time</i>
11:40	<i>Break</i>	<i>Tutor Time</i>	<i>Break</i>	Laud Chapel	<i>Tutor Time</i>
12:00	<i>Depart</i>	<i>Depart</i>	<i>Depart</i>	<i>Depart</i>	County Chapel
12:20					<i>Depart</i>

Tutors from each House to supervise the refectory and outdoor spaces during their break time.

No students to leave the site before 12:00.

Food will be grab and go only.

Boarding dismissal – 12:15 from each boarding house. Boarding Houses will be closed at 13.00.

Parents who are picking up from boarding are kindly asked to refrain from entering the school site until all students and pedestrians have safely left. Permitted access will be no earlier than 12:15pm.

Online Safety Newsletter

December's edition of our online safety newsletter is available to [download by clicking here](#). This month's edition shares information for students and parents about:

- Toxicity in gameplay – a playbook created by Ubisoft and Safe In Our World.
- Age ratings of social media apps and why they matter
- Artificial Intelligence – an overview for parents

Current Vacancies

Have you got the skills to help us provide a safe, well-maintained and positive space in which our students excel? We're looking for a reliable and enthusiastic Site Controller to contribute to the safety, security and day-to-day maintenance of the school premises and site. For more information, [click here](#). Deadline for applications is 9am on Wednesday 13 December.

Excellence, Belonging & Community

Excellence in Education

Reproduced from The Times and The Sunday Times Parent Power Guide 2024:

10 December 3, 2023 The Sunday Times

Parent Power

Schools in the southeast of England are on a winning streak. The region has 38 schools in the top 100 of our academic rankings and a further dozen in the top 150, while Guildford High School is Parent Power's overall Independent School of the Year 2024.


Reading School, a state grammar with 1,139 pupils, all boys, a minority of whom board, is the Southeast Secondary School of the Year, topping the exam tables for state schools in the region and coming eighth nationally. Year 7 students have been on expeditions to build igloos in the Arctic Circle, and all pupils learn a musical instrument.

Its "secret sauce" isn't secret at all, according to its headmaster, Ashley Robson. He describes academic outcomes as a "necessary, but not sufficient measure of education" and professes a mission to "build people of character". Sixth-formers mentor younger pupils and the school's collaboration with Ukrainian families, and leadership of after-school programmes for refugees, have resulted in "School of Sanctuary" status.

The school promotes "mental softness" rather than resilience. Working with Laurence Halsted, an Olympic fencer, students are encouraged not to block out emotions but rather engage with them. Robson wants students to "embrace vulnerability and self-compassion" to enable a positive approach to masculinity and the development of respectful relationships with girls. The school is involved in the White Ribbon campaign to end gender-based violence.

TOP 100 SECONDARY SCHOOLS				
S= Selective PS= Partially selective C= Comprehensive				
2024 rank	Town	Admissions	A-Level A-B (%)	GCSEA*/A/9/8/7 (%)
1	Wilson's School	Wallington	S 98.0	95.0
2	Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet	Barnet	S 96.9	93.3
3	The Henrietta Barnett School	London	S 91.1	97.6
4	Pate's Grammar School	Cheltenham	S 91.5	90.7
5	St Olave's Grammar School	Orpington	S 90.7	91.4
6	Colchester Royal Grammar School	Colchester	S 93.7	85.0
7	The Tiffin Girls' School	Kingston upon Thames	S 88.5	94.4
8	Reading School	Reading	S 90.1	88.3
9	King Edward VI School, Stratford	Stratford-upon-Avon	S 89.9	84.4
10	Altrincham Grammar School for Girls	Altrincham	S 85.3	91.2
11	King Edward VI Grammar School	Chelmsford	S 86.4	87.3
12	Chelmsford County High School for Girls	Chelmsford	S 85.0	88.3
13=	King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys	Birmingham	S 83.9	89.3
13=	Colyton Grammar School	Colyton	S 86.9	83.3
15	Kendrick School	Reading	S 82.8	91.2
16	Tonbridge Grammar School	Tonbridge	S 89.0	78.7
17=	Tiffin School	Kingston upon Thames	S 86.7	81.5
17=	Lumen Christi College	Londonderry	S 87.8	79.4
19	Dartford Grammar School	Dartford	S 88.9	76.3
20	King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls	Birmingham	S 83.6	85.9
21=	Friends' School Lisburn	Lisburn	S 87.7	77.0
21=	The Latymer School	London	S 83.0	86.5
21=	Altrincham Grammar School for Boys	Altrincham	S 85.0	82.5
24	Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock	Belfast	S 90.0	72.1
25	The Liverpool Blue Coat School	Liverpool	S 86.7	78.3
26	St Mary's Grammar School	Magherafelt	S 88.5	73.3
27	St Dominic's Grammar School for Girls	Belfast	S 88.8	72.2
28	Colchester County High School for Girls	Colchester	S 81.2	86.9

TOP 10 SECONDARY SCHOOLS	
1 Reading School (8)	
Regional rank	National rank
2 Kendrick School, Reading	15
3 Tonbridge Grammar School	16
4 Dartford Grammar School	19
5 Nonsuch High School for Girls, Cheam	33
6 Dr Challoner's Grammar School, Amersham	35=
7 Beaconsfield High School	37
8 Dr Challoner's High School, Little Chalfont	38
9 Chesham Grammar School	41
10 Sir William Borlase's Grammar School, Marlow	44
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS	
1 Guildford High School (2)	
Regional rank	National rank
2 Tonbridge School	6
3 Magdalen College School, Oxford	7=
4 Brighton College	11
5 Sevenoaks School	20
6 Royal Grammar School, Guildford	22
7 Reigate Grammar School	25
8 Wellington College, Crowthorne	26
9 Winchester College	29
10 Wycombe Abbey	30



THE SUNDAY TIMES

SCHOOLS GUIDE

2024

STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL OF THE YEAR SOUTH EAST

Belonging & Community

People will always need people

Benjamin Zephaniah was a British poet, writer, and performer who sadly passed away this week. He was known for his works in the fields of poetry, literature, and activism. Born on April 15, 1958, in Birmingham, England, he was of Jamaican descent and emerged as a prominent figure in the British poetry scene during the late 1970s and 1980s.

His poetry often addressed social issues, including racism, inequality, and injustice. Zephaniah was recognised for his powerful and passionate performances, both in written and spoken form and, apart from his literary pursuits, Zephaniah was also involved in activism and was an advocate for various causes. His influence extended beyond the literary world, and he was known for his efforts in promoting social awareness and positive change.

People will always need people

People need people,

To walk to

To talk to

To cry and rely on,

People will always need people.

To love and to miss

To hug and to kiss,

It's useful to have other people.

To whom to moan

If you're all alone,

It's so hard to share

When no one is there.

There's not much to do

When there's no one but you.

People will always need people.

To please

To tease

To put you at ease,

People will always need people.

To make life appealing

And give life some meaning,
It's useful to have other people.
It you need a change
To whom will you turn.
If you need a lesson
From whom will you learn.
If you need to play
You'll know why I say
People will always need people.

As girlfriends
As boyfriends
From Bombay
To Ostend,
People will always need people-
To have friendly fights with
And share tasty bites with,
It's useful to have other people.
People live in families
Gangs, posses and packs,
Its seems we need company
Before we relax,
So stop making enemies
And let's face the facts,
People will always need people,
Yes
People will always need people.

Benjamin Zephaniah
(1958 – 2023)

Ruth Perry – a message of support

As many of our community may be aware, the official inquest into the death of Headteacher, Mrs Ruth Perry concluded yesterday on 7 December 2023. As a school, we marked and acknowledged her passing in January 2023, especially as many of our own students formerly attended Caversham Primary School. Our community will also be aware that we have ourselves, recently been inspected by Ofsted, and we feel it important to share that we support the statement shared by the family of Ruth Perry, in that what happened to Ruth must never be allowed to happen again. In Ruth's words, "*There is nothing more important in life than kindness. Be kind always.*"

Should any of our students need support or simply want to talk, please email studentsupport@reading-school.co.uk or visit the Auxilium to speak with one of our Student Support Team.

Student fundraiser – an update

Last Friday 1 December, the Sixth Form Charity Prefect Team held a Krispy Kreme Sale to fundraise for Action for Humanity's Gaza Appeal. Doughnuts were sold outside the LRC during Junior and Senior lunchtimes and by way of an update, an incredible £1,475 was raised (the target was £500). The Charity Prefect Team would like to thank all its supporters, and thank them for contributing to supporting those in dire need. Your support has shown once again that the Reading School community is a compassionate one.

German Christmas Market – an update

Teacher of German, Mrs S Senfblechner and Head Librarian, Mrs L Kesteven would like to thank all students who made last week's *Weihnachtsmarkt* a festive and unforgettable experience. The event was not just about celebrating German culture, it was an opportunity for our students to come together to volunteer their skills, contribute home-made treats and engage in the festive spirit.



Medical Interviews – an update



In collaboration with the Royal Berkshire Hospital's (RBH) widening participation initiative, we conducted a series of virtual Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs) over three evenings last month for a total of 39 Reading School students and 12 external students from various schools, including Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School, Kendrick School, Langley Grammar School, Maiden Erlegh School, and Slough and Eton Church of England Business & Enterprise College.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our Old Redingensians, current and former parents, local academics, professionals, and friends of the Redingensian community for their active

participation and support. Special thanks to our current parent volunteers, namely Dr A Awoseyila, Dr A Balaji, Dr A Chatterjee, Dr O Flossmann, Mrs. R Gill, Dr S Shaffer and Mrs. N Spillane, who, whilst working in the medical field with very busy schedules, generously devoted their time to support our event. Their contributions ensure our students are well-prepared for success beyond Reading School.

Here's what some of the students had to say about their experience:

"The mock interview was incredibly beneficial to my university application and has left me feeling very prepared for my real interviews. I could practice my communication in a realistic setting and gained an understanding of what a successful interview required since I was interviewed by doctors and medical students."

Yaman E (13F)

"I valued the experience as it simulated the real-life interview scenarios. I greatly appreciated the professionalism shown by the interviewers as well as their feedback which I am keen to implement in my real interview. It was a great learning opportunity. Many thanks for organising."

Adhithya R (13DAW)

A special thank you to Mrs E Chong (Development and Alumni Assistant) for arranging and coordinating the MMIs, alongside Ms J Pickering (Teacher of Biology and Head of Medics) and Mrs J Chhokar (Society Manager).

If you are interested in helping with MMI practice sessions or traditional mock interviews in the future, please email events@reading-school.co.uk or sign up on the alumni portal at <https://alumni.reading-school.co.uk/>. Your support in various areas, such as careers mentoring, the forthcoming Careers Convention in February 2023, mock interviews, and providing work experience, is highly appreciated.

We wish all our students undertaking interviews over the next few months the best of luck.

RSPA

Teachers' Amazon Wishlist 2023 – deadline Friday 15 December



We are extending the deadline for our Teachers Amazon Wishlist appeal, as there are still lots of much needed and personally requested resources that we can gift to our Teachers to support them. The full list can be viewed [by clicking here](#).

Please choose *RPSA PARENT GIFTING WISHLIST TERRI LORRIMORE* as the delivery address. Gift Vouchers are also most welcome so that we can purchase some of the larger items that school have requested.

If you have time, please first join EASYFUNDRAISING before gifting and choose AMAZON as your retailer, when purchasing. This will raise further money for the pupils with no extra cost to you.

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/rspareadingpa>

If you would like to Gift Aid a cash donation please email: treasurer@readingschoolparents.co.uk and send your gift to:

Name: RSPA No. 2 Account, Sort Code: 60-17-21, Account No: 15309096

If you have any queries, please email Jo Wyles by emailing jwyles@readingschoolparents.co.uk

Thank you all so much again, the gifts received so far have been amazing and if in a position to do so, offer your support. With many thanks from all school departments and the RSPA.

The Uniform Shop

The Uniform Shop will be open and selling pre-loved uniform this Friday and Saturday. Please come along to purchase Blazers, Trousers, shirts, base layers, rugby boots, trainers, outdoor coats and more.

Unnamed coats from this term's lost property will be there to be claimed.

Days and times:

Friday 8 December, 3.30 - 5pm and Saturday 9 December 10.30am - 12.30pm

Location: The shop is located at the back of the walled carpark (opposite the Chapel).

Please note:

On Fridays, buyers are not allowed to drive onto site, access is via the pedestrian gates only.

On Saturday, Reading School hoodies will be available to buy.

Please email us on shop@readingschoolparents.co.uk for further information.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you and have a lovely weekend!!

The RSPA Team

Michaelmas Term – Week 13

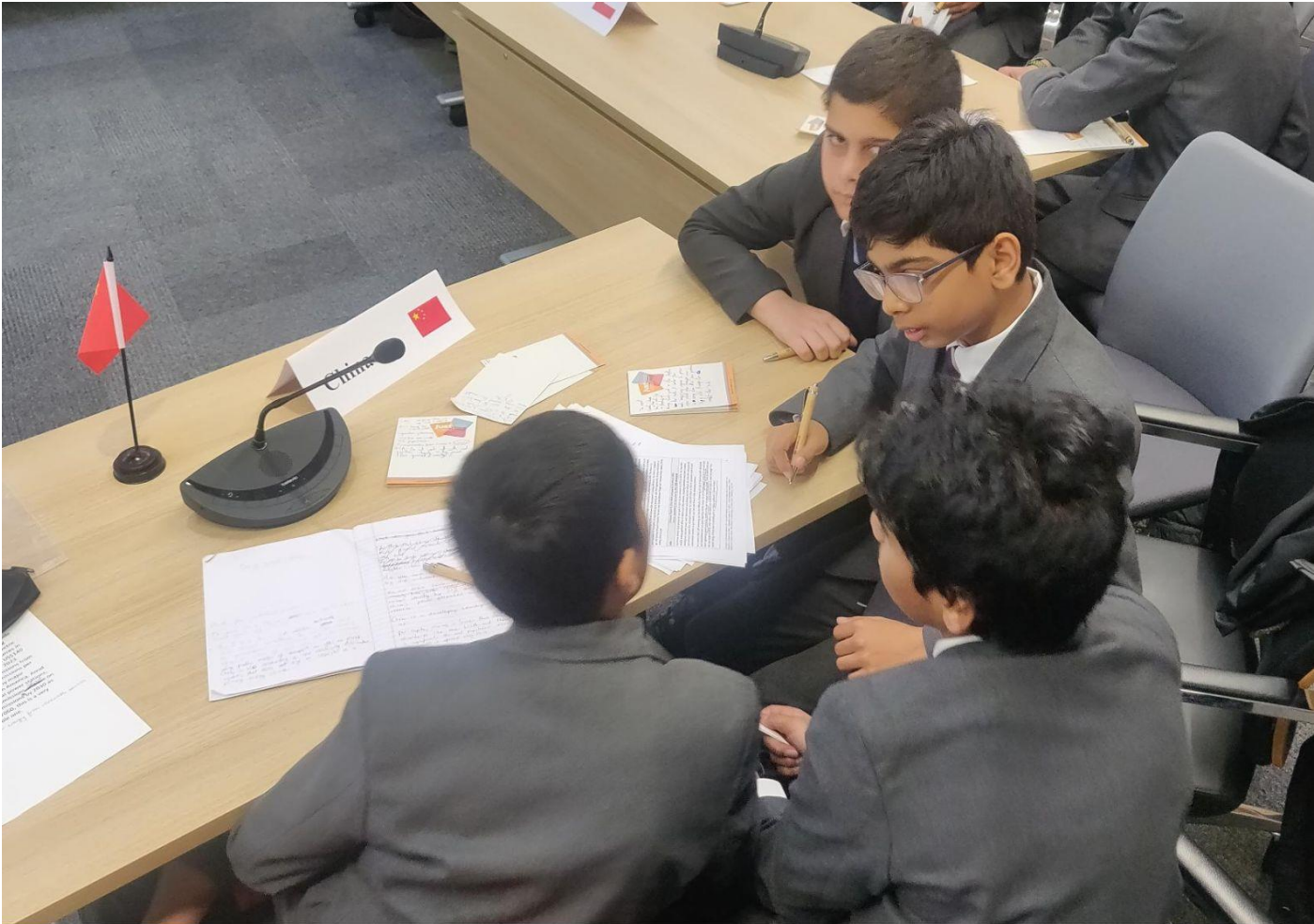
To keep up to date with student life at Reading School, click the icons below to follow and stay connected



The Interclimate Reading Schools Conference is a UN-style model conference which aims to inspire and enable students to 'think globally, act locally.' Teams of students from schools in Reading represent various countries, researching, presenting and debating their challenges and achievements while moving onto what actions they can take themselves and in their schools.

Thank you to Teacher of Geography, Mr K Luteijn, for leading today's trip.





Over the last three weeks, Reading School squash club has taken part in the National Schools Squash Championships, led by Dr C Lewis Brown. With three teams across two different age groups, our students have done an exceptional job of representing the school against far more experienced opposition. While the results have generally gone against us, the improvements the team has made in their squash are remarkable.

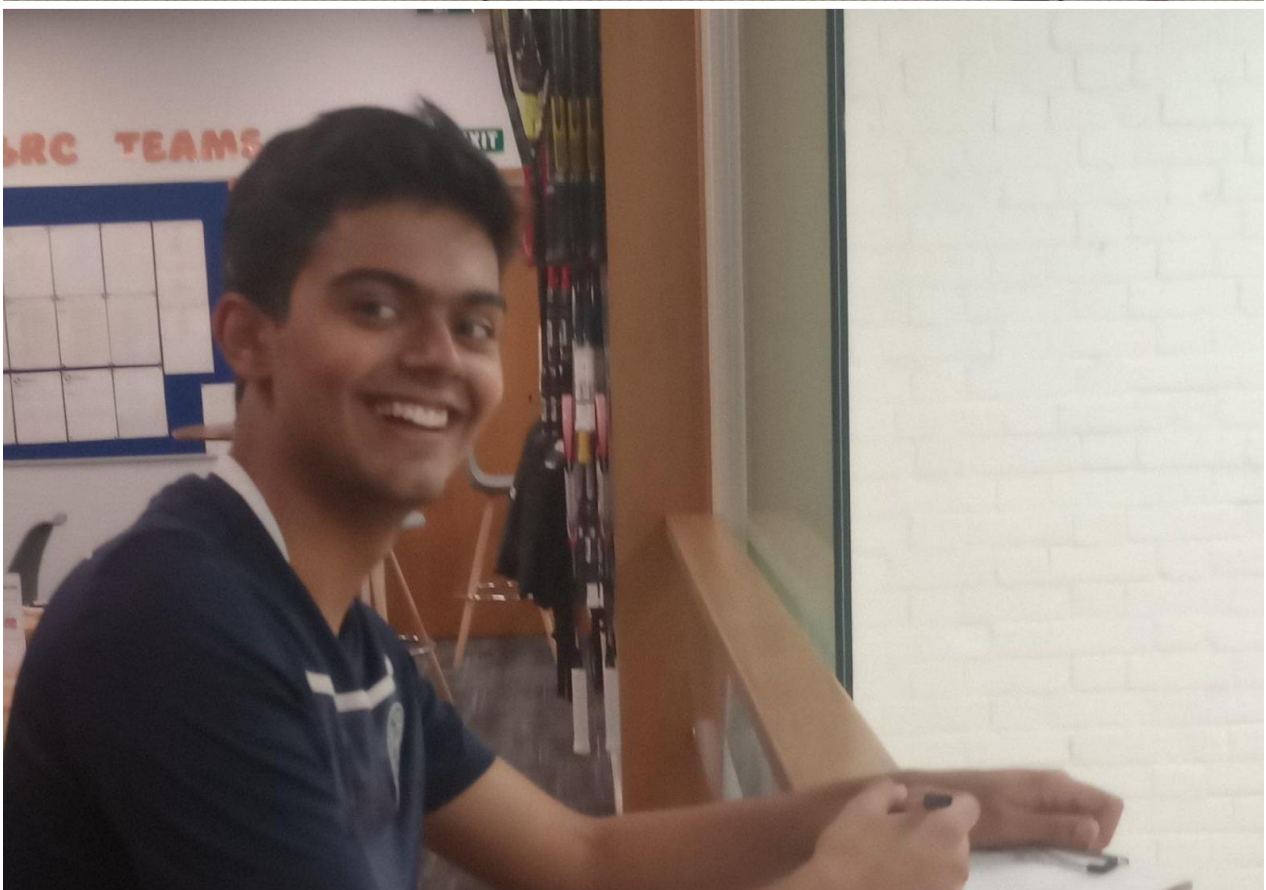
Particular congratulations should go to the KS3 A team, who took a well-deserved second place, beating Berkhamsted School 226 points to 225, and secured a spot in the regional championships next year.



KS3 A team: Henry R, Abraham S, Maxim H, Oscar Z, Varnesh R and Aarav R

KS3 B team: Kaushal N, Ethan L, Joel JS, Aum P and Kingsley H

KS5 team: Teo R, Paarth G, Emek D, Peter P, and Prabhav B



Following preparation last week, this Monday saw students in Years 7 - 9 taking part in our first Indoor Rowing Competition. In attendance was Revd James Stevenson, a former Team GB rower and triathlete who we look forward to collaborating with further.



Students threw themselves into the competition with gusto; supporting one another and encouraging their peers to give their all. A special mention goes to Harjasdeep S (8S) who could not take part but went above and beyond to encourage his peers in their contributions. Thank you also to our Heads of House and staff for supporting the teams on the day.





Congratulations to School House – the first winners of our Indoor Rowing Competition 2023



A peek inside the classroom #1

Our Year 9 STEM elective, led by Assistant Head and Teacher of Biology, Ms L Ayres, explored design and product design which involved collaboration and problem solving. Groups of students have spent the first term exploring their chosen briefs which have included the Ceres Reimagine Science Animation Competition, the best bath bomb recipe and cress seed growing conditions.



A peek inside the classroom #2

Students in Year 10, led by Assistant Head & Teacher of Geography, Mr G Fairchild, all participate in a weekly Life Skills Elective and we have seen the welcome return of woodworking. Having familiarised themselves with the purpose and risks of tools, students in the Woodwork Elective have been learning how to saw safely and effectively along with drill holes and screw safely and effectively.

We thank parents for their contributions to the RSPA Amazon wishlist (and any other expertise, wood or tools) as we look to expand the number of students able to participate in this exciting trial woodwork programme.



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