



Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

12 JANUARY 2024

Contents

Introduction	3
Key information	5
Important Dates	5
All years	5
Online Safety Newsletter	5
Welcome to new staff	6
Current Vacancies	6
Teacher Vacancies	6
Associate Staff Vacancies	6
Excellence, Belonging & Community	7
Excellence in Chemistry	7
Belonging & Community	8
Character Education at Reading School	8
Future Stories – an update	8
Christmas Jumper Day - a thank you to Parents and Students	10
Appeal from The Cowshed	10
RSPA	11
Happy New Year 2024	11
New Year School Lottery	11
Lent Term – Week 1	12

Introduction

Dear parents, students and staff,

I feel privileged indeed to write to you as Headmaster for the first time, and to wish you all a Happy New Year. I am grateful for the chance to introduce myself formally as I commence this new role, update you on some of this week's highlights, and comment briefly on what lies ahead.

Firstly, whilst I know many of our parents and older students, I write to introduce myself to those I know less well.

I was a student at Reading School from 1990 -1997, studying A Levels in Biology, Classics and History and I loved my time here, particularly enjoying Hockey, Rugby, Music and Drama. The school gave me a great deal. International educational visits, exceptional A-Level teachers, the CCF and student leadership opportunities were particularly formative. I chose to study in North Wales for no better reason than that I loved the mountains, reading Theology, Criminology and Agriculture at University, at a time when there were no tuition fees. I never intended returning to school, and spent eight years running youthwork projects in Caversham, founding a charity and establishing a gardening business rehabilitating some of Reading's most prolific burglars.

I went onto teach at Highdown and Waingels Schools before becoming a prison chaplain. I returned to Reading School in 2008 as Head of Religious Studies, becoming Housemaster of South House in 2010, and Deputy Head in 2016. Since returning to the school I have also been blessed with four children, have been ordained as a minister in the Methodist Church and have gained a PhD from Kings College London.

I have been hugely privileged to work as Mr Robson's deputy for seven and a half years. In that time, I have witnessed the school change a great deal. We've grown from having over 800 students, to having just under 1200. We've benefited from the building of the Refectory in 2012 and the Philip Mitchell Science Centre in 2017. We've added new qualifications to the curriculum, such as GCSE electronics and A Levels in PE and Philosophy. We've developed new local and international partnerships, and we have become much clearer in our own thinking about the importance of nurturing character, as well as sustaining academic excellence. Nevertheless, our work is not yet finished. Despite 900 years of history, the day is still young. There is much to do as we strive together to make the most positive impact possible in and through the lives of all of those who are a part of the school.

Over the coming term, I am setting aside as much time as possible for staff, students, parents and carers, setting aside my own experiences to understand more clearly what our school community most loves about the school. I hope to build on Mr Robson's vision, and ensure that in all we do we nurture curiosity, inspire service and build character. I hope that we will always put people first, that we'll never lose sight of the social impact that outstanding education can achieve, and that our efforts will always be rooted in relationships. I hope you'll join me in shaping the next steps of our journey as parents, carers, students, colleagues, alumni and Governors.

Having said all of the above, I am delighted to report that this first week of 2024 has been a particularly positive one. We are welcoming two outstanding teachers to the school community. Both come from Australia and have begun their work in earnest. We have no doubt of their capacity to contribute exceptionally to the life of the school and I hope that we will all make them as welcome as possible.

Dr S. Hu, is an experienced Science teacher, with a background in photonics and nanotechnology, a PhD in Chemistry, and seven years teaching experience. His most recent UK role was at The Skinners' School. He is a published author with expertise in memory techniques and has taught Martial Arts as well as Maths, Chemistry and Physics. Dr Hu is 9E's new form tutor, a boarding tutor and is taking on a range of Maths, Chemistry, Biology, Physics and PSHE classes this year, before focusing his efforts in Physics from September 2024.

Mr J. Travis is a Maths and Further Maths teacher with 12 years of teaching experience in Australia and Korea. Before completing Graduate Diplomas in Education and Data Science, his Degree was in Mathematical and Computer Sciences. Mr Travis has joined our Maths department, is running our Year 9 'Launchpad' Elective and will be joining Mr Miller as a tutor for 11E.

We also welcome Biology and Chemistry Science Technician, Ms M Ivanova and Catering Assistant Mr P Pun.

We are also sad to say goodbye to Miss Record, who is taking up new opportunities outside teaching, and also wish Mrs Avedisian all the very best as she commences maternity leave.

This week, we were also privileged to welcome two professors from Samford University in Alabama, USA as they spent the day learning about our character education programme. The visit was a consequence of Mr Ben Miller's research with the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, and we also celebrate his recognition last week, as an 'Ambassador of Character' at Magdalen College Oxford.

We have also celebrated student success, with our first football and handball fixtures of the term. Furthermore, triumph was achieved in the Thames Valley 'Top of the Bench' chemistry competition. Thanks go to Ms. Rosser-Evans for coordinating our team, and we extend our warmest congratulations to Abraham S (9C), Ojas M (9E), Parthiv V (11L), and William W (10C), who will proceed to the national final.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your trust, support and partnership. Since stepping into the role of Headmaster, I have been overwhelmed with gratitude for the encouragement I have received from colleagues, parents, students, alumni and members of the Governing Board. Our community is shaped by so many wonderful people, and I find myself inspired, once again, by the collective spirit, the dedication and the sense of purpose that defines our extraordinary school.

Chris Evans
Headmaster



Key information

Important Dates

- **Thursday 18 January** is Year 8 Parents' Evening.
- **Monday 29 January** is an inset day for all students and an opportunity for our teaching staff to pursue training and personal development objectives. The school will be closed to all students across all years and for Year 11 students, we encourage work placements on this day as part of our careers provision. More information will follow in a letter to all Year 11 parents and Year 11 students on Monday.
- **Thursday 1 February** is our Careers Convention event open to all years to attend. Further details to follow regarding student and parent bookings. In addition, thank you to all the parents, ORs and local organisations who have responded to participate. If you still would like to attend, as a delegate, please complete the form here: [2024 Careers Convention Registration Form](#) by no later than Monday 15 January. Please also share with your connections.

All years

Online Safety Newsletter

January'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:

- WhatsApp – what you should be aware of, group chats, location sharing and blocking/reporting.
- New devices – how to set up parental controls on consoles, mobiles and tablets.
- World events online – how parents can support children with content that may cause upset or distress.



Current Vacancies

Do you know a talented individual who would like to join and be part of an exciting and leading educational institution? Below is a selection of teaching and associate staff roles currently available:

Teacher Vacancies

Teacher of Mathematics - deadline for applications: 9am, Monday 22 January 2024 - [click here for further details](#).

All applicants must complete a Teacher Application Form which can be downloaded by [clicking here](#).

Associate Staff Vacancies

Head of Operations and Projects - deadline for applications: 9am, Thursday 1 February 2024 - [click here for further details](#).

Student Support Assistant - deadline for applications: 9am, Friday 26 January 2024 - [click here for further details](#).

All applicants must complete an Associate Staff Application Form which can be downloaded by [clicking here](#).

Excellence, Belonging & Community

Excellence in Chemistry



'Top of the Bench' is an annual chemistry competition run by the Royal Society of Chemistry for students aged between 14 -16 years old in every secondary school in the UK. The exciting competition has been running for over 20 years, allowing students to appreciate chemistry in a new light along with having the valuable opportunity to develop their practical and teamwork skills.

This week, Teacher of Chemistry, Ms K Rosser-Evans led a team of four of our students to the University of Oxford in order to take part in the regional heats and competing against 16 other schools. The challenges included practical tasks, written theory tests and team tasks to demonstrate safety, problem-solving and knowledge of chemistry.

We are delighted to share that our team won their regional heat and were awarded the Phil Smith Trophy, certificates and Amazon gift vouchers. They will be progressing to a national final, and we will be eager to follow, report on and support their journey.



Belonging & Community

Character Education at Reading School



On Thursday 5 January, at Magdalen College, University of Oxford, Mr Ben Miller, Head of Theology and Philosophy and Character Education lead at Reading School received the 'Ambassador of Character' award from The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. The award recognises outstanding contributions to the development and understanding of character education in practice, policy and in public life and has been awarded to leading educators, charity executives and advocates for the development of character since 2020.

The award was presented at the 12th Annual Conference: Virtuous Leadership and Character, where Mr Miller was invited to address leading academics from universities across the world about the role of character development at Reading School and the importance of character formation in a flourishing education. The award was presented by Professor Tom Harrison, director of The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, and Dr Jim Rahn of The Kern Family Foundation.



Networking at the event led to a visit on Wednesday 10 January by two leading academics, Professors Clara Gerhardt and Kristie Chandler from Samford University, Alabama, USA. Both professors are involved in teacher education and human development at Orlean Beeson School of Education and were visiting Reading School to observe character education in action.

They met with staff and students, observed a Floreat lesson, attended chapel and visited the Future Stories program. Many thanks to all the staff and students involved.

The professors sent their appreciation to all involved in their visit to share with the school community, *"We are reflecting on the wonderfully enriching day we spent at your school. We were touched by conversations, incredible intellectual and creative generosity, hospitality and so much more. It filled us with hope and gratitude. Thank you to your team and your students who shared so generously of their time and the sources of inspiration. We are deeply grateful. Please convey our appreciation and thanks to the team and your exemplary students!"*

Future Stories – an update

Future Stories



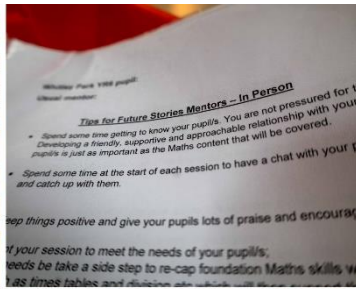
Our Future Stories Prefects, Sam J (13DAW) and Benji F (13MD) have contributed the following update about Reading School's social mobility programme which is now in its 7th year:

[Future Stories](#) has continued in full force this half term, with a huge number of activities taking place for many different schools.

Year 5 pupils from English Martyrs Primary School have started their weekly online Maths sessions on a Monday afternoon with their Year 12 mentor. All the mentors were impressed with the engagement from the students. This year Future Stories has been able to purchase some new drawing pads, these allow real-time annotation during online lessons. This has proved a great success in delivering interactive and engaging online lessons. We spoke to a few of our mentors after their first online mentoring session:

Thomas K 12SRP – "After the first session with my two mentees it already felt like a strong relationship is being formed and was easy to run. I think with the addition of the stylus and digital

ink to online mentoring, it's already benefiting how the students from our partner school can visualize their learning, and it helps us as their mentors to put it down 'on paper' for them."



Max B 12EF – “I have made a good start with my mentee Stephanie, and I can already see the confidence in her ability growing. She started hesitantly openly admitting how she sometimes finds the partitioning topic hard. However, upon doing a few questions, she quickly became confident in completing even the tougher questions. I think the first week has been a great success.”



Jude A 12RC – “Today, for our first session we had a great introduction to the mentees. They had great confidence, even when completing the tougher questions, which is great to see in Year 5s. I look forward to future lessons together!”

Weekly Monday and Tuesday mentor sessions have continued with pupils from Battle, Whitley Park, Katesgrove and Geoffrey Fields Primary schools. With all mentors seeing significant progress in the ability and confidence of their students. During their last session before Christmas, they took a break from traditional sessions to enjoy some festive Maths puzzles! It was great to mix things up a little for the last session of the term, and the pupils and mentors enjoyed working together on the fun activities.

Harry P (12FEH) – “Seeing these kids develop has been amazing, and I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to be involved in this project.”



Future Stories activities do not only take place at Reading School. Several Year 12 mentors make weekly trips on Tuesday afternoon to Moorlands Primary School for Maths mentoring with Year 5 pupils. During a recent session, they covered fractions – a new and tricky topic for the pupils. We were very impressed with how well the mentors remained calm and patient throughout, despite some difficulties!



James G (12EF) - “It's been great to be involved with the Future Stories programme again - this time in the maths contingent. Seeing the students grow in confidence week on week, whilst also making great

progress has been hugely rewarding and enriching. It feels great to be giving back to the local community and demonstrating not only the Community pillar of the school, but also showing leadership as well. I can't wait to continue in the Lent term!”

Ezra S (12BSA) - “Future Stories is a fabulous opportunity to help our local community, and I really feel like we can make a difference. It is both challenging and rewarding – it's one of the highlights of my week!”

Weekly Future Stories Floreat sessions with Year 6 pupils from St Mary and All Saints CofE Primary School supported by Year 11 mentors, have also continued this term on a Wednesday afternoon. The pupils have been spending time on the rowing machines, as well as completing

other teambuilding and problem-solving activities. Afterwards, they continued to participate in Maths sessions, covering some tricky topics supported by their mentors.

James T 11S - "I value my time spent during Future Stories where I get to mentor two Year 6 children, helping them progress in maths. They really enjoy each afternoon they get to spend at Reading School where they can have fun with some exciting Floreat tasks, and then get to learn in an environment that's a bit different to their usual school classroom. Over a whole term I get to build a relationship with my mentees as we enjoy each session together. It's a win-win situation."

Once again, a huge thank you goes out to all the students and teachers who have been involved in Future Stories in any capacity this half term. This important program could not exist without your help.

Christmas Jumper Day - a thank you to Parents and Students



We are delighted to share the success of our Christmas Jumper Day event on Wednesday 20 December last year. The festive cheer was elevated by the active participation of our students and the generous contributions from our supportive parents. Through the collective efforts of our community, we raised an impressive **£1,400** for the Reading Refugee Support Group, reinforcing our commitment to making a meaningful impact in the lives of those in need. Special thanks to Yaman E (13EF) for leading on the campaign, and Mr Luteijn for his invaluable support.

Appeal from The Cowshed



Reading School has previously supported local charity, The Cowshed as a chosen charity of the year and they are currently making an appeal for any men's clothing (medium and large) along with trainers and children's age (7+) warm clothing.

If you have suitable pre-loved clothing that you would like to donate, please drop to The Cowshed donation centre at Rubra2, Mulberry Business Park, Fishponds Road, Wokingham, RG41 2GY. Further details can be found here: [How and What to Donate.](#)

Happy New Year 2024



Warm wishes and Happy New Year to all and we hope you had a fabulous time.

The RSPA team welcomes you back and we are looking forward to working with parents on a variety of exciting events during 2024. Our aim is to strengthen and bring the school community closer and we are thankful to all our members, parents and carers for their tremendous support throughout the last year which we hope will continue.

The Amazon Christmas Wishlist was a great success, and could not have been possible without your contributions towards the school and its teachers. We would like to thank our RSPA Team Terri Lorrimore, Jo Wyles and Nishita Moody who organised, arranged, and delivered their Christmas magic just before the Christmas break.

New Year School Lottery



Fancy winning a £1000 Luxury Getaway or £1000 Cash Prize Bonanza? Then look no further as we are thrilled to announce our New Year's Super Prize Draw.

Our new Super Draw gives people new and exciting ways to play a school lottery – instead of committing to weekly tickets, supporters can choose to just buy tickets for the Super Draw week, meaning more flexibility and less commitment, whilst still supporting Reading School. Existing supporters can even choose to TOP-UP their tickets just for this weekend's big draw.

Any ticket holder can invite their friends and family using the new Refer a Friend process. For every person that signs up using their unique referral link, and BOTH of you will get an entry into the exclusive £200 prize draw! There's no limit to the number of entries you can get, either-the more people you refer the more entries into the Draw.

Joining the lottery is very easy and one RSPA participant wins a guaranteed prize every Saturday night. Tickets cost £1 each can be bought as a one - off or on a regular basis.

It's easy to buy a ticket all you have to do is click the following link:

<https://www.yourschoollottery.co.uk/lottery/school/reading-school>

Wishing you all a wonderful weekend,

The RSPA Team

Lent Term – Week 1

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



RSPA Wishlist – a thank you from teaching staff



“Thank you so much for your generous support once again; these wonderful gifts are going to be used directly by our GCSE Photographers, where they will be particularly valuable when pupils start thinking about their major project focus towards the end of Year 10. The books and equipment you have provided will help elevate their work, stretching and supporting Photographers and Artists across Year 9 through to Year 13.

– Ms A Creegan – Head of Art”



Thank you to the RSPA and all the parents. This will really help our students improve their reading and grammar skills. This makes a great impact on their confidence as they can use German in context and practice their grammar knowledge.

– Mrs S Senftlechner, Teacher of German



“

Thanks so much from the English Department. Your generosity is going to help students from Year 7 to Year 13, and (hopefully) make our lessons even more thrilling than they currently are. We're really looking forward to taking these texts and the ideas we learn from them into our classrooms.

- Mr Robert Baldock,
Head of English

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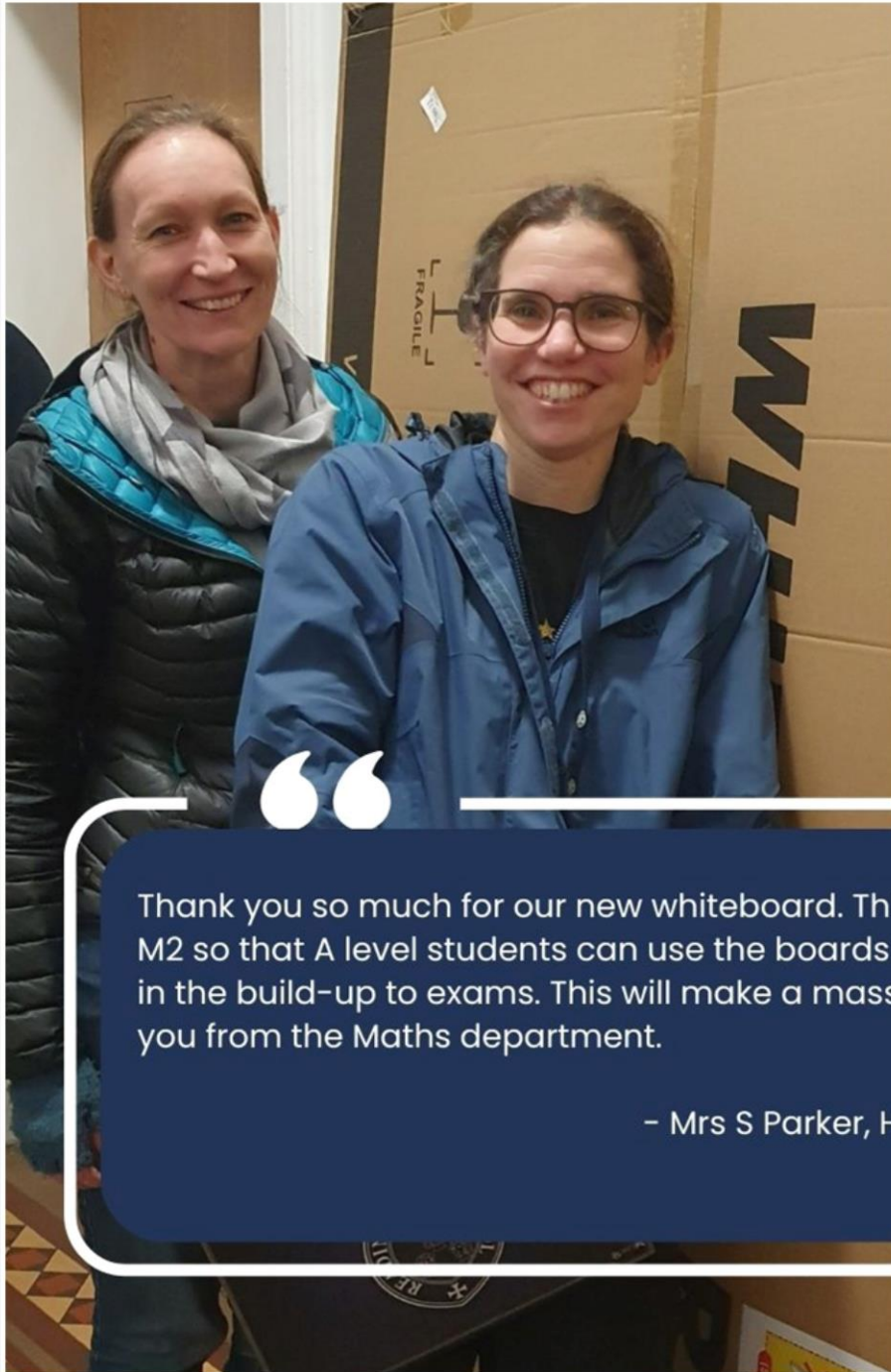
Warm thanks for all the items you have gifted the Geography department this year. The fieldwork equipment means we are now fully equipped to deliver a wide range of fieldwork across all years. The 3D map allows our students to visualise the topography of the UK alongside 2D maps and the renewal of our OS maps means we can continue to develop vital map skills. Thank you so much and I hope you all have a happy Christmas and New Year. Kate, on behalf of all the Geographers.

- Dr K Young, Head of Geography



“ Thank you so much for the generosity of parents in supporting the School's desire to extend its nascent provision of Design & Technology. Although starting small with carpentry, computer aided design and design principles for a handful of year groups, we are committed to providing a broad and balanced education for our students, exposing them to knowledge and skills beyond the core academic curriculum and therefore knowing that we have the support of parents in this endeavour is heartening.

– Mr G Fairchild, Assistant Head (Quality of Education)



Thank you so much for our new whiteboard. This will be going into M2 so that A level students can use the boards to work on questions in the build-up to exams. This will make a massive difference. Thank you from the Maths department.

- Mrs S Parker, Head of Mathematics-



Santa came early with a box of literary winners (and some pens for book club). Thanks to the generosity of the Reading School community and many thanks to the RSPA for arranging these gifts. Wishing you all a very Happy New Year.

- Mrs L Kesteven, School Librarian

House Music Competition 2023

The full video is available via Vimeo (Video on Demand) and costs £10. All proceeds will go towards the development of music at Reading School and the video can be downloaded by clicking the image below or by clicking this link:

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/housemusic2023>

We thank students in advance for not downloading and distributing the video privately as this deprives the Music School of much needed funds that contribute to providing opportunities for our students.



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