



# Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

15th November 2024

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# Introduction

Dear Students, Parents, Staff and Carers,

On Monday this week we took time to remember those from this school who lost their lives in war. Across the school we interrupted lessons and, after two minutes of silence, remembered the words of the Kohima Epitaph:

'When You Go Home, Tell Them of Us and Say,

For Your Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today.'

Our community today enjoys incredible freedom. Our liberty though, was “bought at a price.” This is a week when we have stopped to ask if we use our choices in a manner worthy of the cost spent on us. Or, to put it another way:

Is our freedom to play the Xbox or PlayStation all night, to eat nothing but junk food, to doom scroll indefinitely on devices, a sufficient benefit to justify the lives of those dutiful men and women who saved us from fascism and political enslavement?

Is the way we live, learn and work together really the best that our freedom and democracy has to offer?

It has been a joy this week to see Year 11 student’s engagement in decision making conversations about their A Level options, to hear of exciting careers conversations and to read the latest University applications completed by them. All these choices come from freedom...

It’s been a privilege to see rugby fixtures, football training, snail racing and Squash taking place – but what a relief that we don’t all have to play the same sports.

It’s been lovely to have more than 450 former students (and counting) of the school sign up for our 900th Anniversary Alumni Reunion event being held in July 2025 – but also what a relief that every student who has signed up hasn’t been compelled to return...

What a joy to have so many choices, and so many opportunities.

As we come to the end of this week, let us not only be grateful for the freedom we enjoy but also mindful of how we use it. The sacrifices of those who came before us call us to live lives of purpose, gratitude, and community.

Have a restful and thoughtful weekend.

**Dr Chris Evans**  
**Headmaster**

# Key information

## All years

### Staff Wellbeing & Retention – a reminder of a shortened school day

With teacher recruitment increasingly challenging, the wellbeing and retention of our staff is paramount to the high-quality education of your child. That is why we are trialling a slightly shortened day on **Thursday 28th November only**, ahead of Year 13 Parents' Evening, where our staff will be spending their evening giving rich feedback to parents ahead of A Level exams.

The School Day will therefore finish at the end of Period 7 at 14.35, on this day only. Apart from Year 12 students (who are engaged on a Philosophy Day) and Year 10 students (who have Games afternoon) remaining on site, students of all other year groups are then welcome to return home. The LRC (library) will be open until 15.45 for any students needing to stay later.

We thank you for your support in this wellbeing trial and will share the outcome with parents and carers in a future edition of the Headmaster's Bulletin. If you would like to share any comments or feedback, please email [communityrelations@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:communityrelations@reading-school.co.uk).

### Cycle Safety

Figures from [Cycling UK](#) tell us that only 2.2% of UK schoolchildren currently cycle to school despite the majority owning a bike. Encouraging young people to get into this hobby can be a great way to keep them active and cut down on their screen time – while potentially providing them with a healthy and convenient way of travelling to and from school or getting around in general.

Of course, it's imperative that children and young people know how to keep themselves safe while riding from A to B, if we want to avoid the risk of injury or other unpleasant experiences that could discourage them from continuing with the hobby. For free advice and guidance for parents and carers on teaching cycle safety to children and young people, [please click here](#).

## Year 11 only

### Year 11 Parents Sixth Form Application Presentation

Head of Sixth Form, Mr A Lloyd delivered a Year 11 information evening for parents of students making applications to Sixth Form on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November.

[Please click here for a link to the online meeting.](#)

[Please click here for the presentation slides.](#)

[Please click here to access the Sixth Form Application Form.](#)

[Please click here to access the Sixth Form Information Booklet.](#)

The Sixth Form Open Day for external Year 11 students who are considering Reading School as an option, will be held on Wednesday 20th November.

### Parents Revision Webinar

A reminder for all Year 11 parents to attend a revision related webinar this coming Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November, details of which were included in your Parents Evening invitation letter. The webinar will help parents of Year 11 students feel able to support their children with revision and preparation ahead of the mock exams, and will outline evidence based top tips, and is aimed at creating healthy and 'smart' revision habits rather than suggesting that 'more' is always the answer.

# School Community News

## Student Excellence

### Army Scholarship Award

We recently featured positive news of Rohan O'C (13RW) who achieved an Army Officer Scholarship Award and we would like to also share our congratulations with Harry P (13FH) who was also recently awarded the coveted Scholarship Award. We spoke more with Harry this week about the award, what his journey will look like, along with his time at Reading School:



#### **Q: Can you please tell us a little about your scholarship award?**

So, it's a scholarship which gives you financial support as you learn and develop after Year 13, in exchange for a return of service after University. This means that I'll get to attend the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst after studying Biochemistry at University which is a great opportunity. I decided to apply for the award and being a member of Reading School's CCF was one of my motivations and it very much felt like the right thing to do for me personally.

#### **Q: Do you know what your journey will look like while attending Sandhurst?**

Basically, training at Sandhurst is split into phases. In phase one, you either do your basic rifleman training or you do your officer training. You also get to do the basics, like how you wear your uniform and how to use a rifle. Phase's two and three tend to be trade specific, so if you decide to go into the Royal Engineers or the Royal Artillery, that's where you learn those related skills.

#### **Q: Do you know what you'd want to specialise in?**

To be honest, I'm planning to sort of just see how it goes really and keep an open mind. I've had a look at a few regiments, but I'm not set on anything yet and all the regiments tend to come in and they'll sort of say, 'this is why you should join us', and they try and recruit. I'll try and not have any preconceptions and like I said, keep an open mind.

#### **Q: When did you join Reading's CCF and what has it given you?**

I joined back in Year 9 and I'm now in Year 13 so that's nearly 5 years. Joining was an independent choice even through my dad was a Cadet at Radley College. I remember him saying, 'you know, one of my best school experiences was joining the Cadets' and the fact that there were Kendrick girls did sway my decision my original decision to join!

#### **Q: What's it like being part of a mixed CCF?**

You don't treat anyone differently and being a boarding student and in a single-sex school means it's a good way of socialising with others. It's also a good way to broaden your friendship group and I think that was definitely a good thing for me. There're also the life skills you learn every Thursday during the sessions, like working in a group, trying to solve problems, teaching lessons...all skills that I'll take into University.



I also think a lot of the values that the CCF upholds and a lot of the things it teaches you are obviously great if you want to join the Army but you can also take so much more away from the CCF into the civilian world,

like leadership skills as they teach a lot of theory which is practiced and modelled. It's all great stuff that's going to help you no matter what walk of life you choose to go down.

**Q: You've been at Reading School since Year 7 as a Boarder and you're now coming to the end of your journey in Year 13. Can you share a little about you and your time at the school?**

I think if you speak to any member of staff, they'll tell you that I was a pretty difficult student in the early days! But over time and after being part of a community where people hold you accountable for stuff, and where your parents are not around to tell you off, you grow up and become independent. You're part of a community with other boys, and they'll tell you how they feel about certain things and you learn how to be a lot more open, and you're speaking with your peers, rather than an authoritative figure. I've personally found that really good as you learn about yourself and others while getting to live independently. You also learn how to sort out conflicts and how to have difficult discussions about stuff. The soft skills that it also gives you, like doing your laundry and cooking is also obviously going to be useful.

The School in general is good at, at the risk of sounding like a typical Reading School boy, at the academics, as the School expects you to be up to speed with the academic side. And there is so much outside of lesson time that focuses on your development as a person, and I think that's valuable, because a lot of schools are more about 'we need this kid to pass his exams', rather than 'we need this kid to pass his exams and we need him to also be a good person when he leaves'. I think that's a massive thing.



**Q: Do you think students now understand the school's character education journey a little better now? Do you think they get it?**

I think so. I think quite often it's quite easy to hear about Floreat and about 'flourishing' and laugh, I know I certainly used to. But I do actually think that once you're in those sessions doing, you know, whatever activity it is, from making fires to learning about theories of leadership or teamwork, I think it's a really valuable kind of thing that the school gives you in order to be a more complete person.

**Q: How would you want teachers to remember you?**

Funny but respectful! I'd want them to think that I went from a poorly behaved Year 7 to a much less poorly behaved Sixth Former, and I'd want them to think that they had some part in that. Because there's so many staff who've played a part and I guess I'd want them to see that I've changed.

**Q: Staff like who?**

I'd thank the former Site Controller, Mr Higgins. I'd have some of the best conversations I've had about life in general with him and he was a great guy. Mr Ginger as well, actually, yeah, it would be tied between Mr Ginger and Mr Higgins, both who were Boarding Tutors of East Wing.

## Learning Resource Centre

### Berkshire Book Award Longlist 2025 Announced

Pupils in schools across Berkshire have been busy nominating recent fiction books for the Berkshire Book Award 2025 Longlist. The top twenty books have been selected for the Longlist and students are now encouraged to participate by reading them and voting for their top six for the official shortlist. The deadline for votes is 10th of January. All of Year 7 and Year 8 will visit the LRC in December to take a look at the books. To find out more, visit <https://www.berkshirebookaward.org.uk/>

### New books

New books have arrived in the LRC and which include the next instalments in the Percy Jackson, Diary of a Wimpy Kid and Skandar series of books. Please [click this link to view](#).

## Upcoming Events

We publicise a variety of events throughout the school year that may be of interest to students and the wider school community. Events can be ones organised by Reading School or through a school partner or third-party.

### Exploring Healthcare



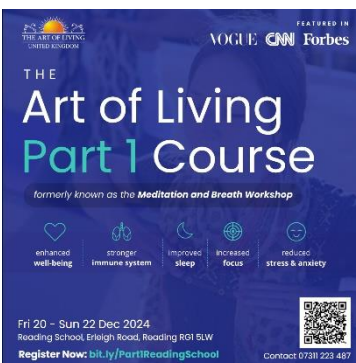
If you're interested in a career in healthcare, have you thought about which area you would want to specialise in? Abbey School Alumna, Dr Shonelley Novintan will share her career story of becoming a plastic surgeon, why specialisms are so important, and how, when they work together, they can truly change lives.

Dr Novintan will be joined by dentists, a speech and language practitioner, a clinical psychologist and a trainee Maxillo-facial surgeon.

This is an amazing opportunity to learn about the pathway into their roles, how they're all giving back through the charity and take part in some hands-on activities. How good would you be with a suture kit? Come and find out!

Join the Abbey School team for an evening of inspiration and insight on **Thursday 28 November, from 19.00 to 20.35**. Please register your place via the following link on [The Abbey's Eventbrite page](#). The event would be suitable for all those from Years 9 upwards.

### Wellbeing Event



The Art of Living Foundation is a non-profit, humanitarian and educational organisation that promotes individual well-being through yoga and meditation. Benefits shared by participants of the programme include a calmer nervous system, deeper and more restorative sleep, better mental well-being, less stress and anxiety and improved energy levels.

A three-day beginner's course will be taking place at Reading School and is open to the general public.

**Dates:** Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December, 6:30pm – 9:30pm, Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> December, 9:30am – 12:30pm and Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 9:30am – 12:30pm

**Venue:** Reading School (Big School), Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LW (parking available on site)

**Registration and fee details:** <http://bit.ly/Part1ReadingSchool>

All enquiries: Ms Priyanka Phene Thombre / [priyankathombre@uk.artofliving.org](mailto:priyankathombre@uk.artofliving.org)

*"You'll adopt a daily practice seamlessly blending into your life and join a community of like-minded people. Join us for this beautiful course that goes beyond three evenings, offering profound inner rest and a toolkit for long-term well-being."* Priyanka Thombre

*The course is a third-party event and not one organised by Reading School.*

## Service of Nine Lessons & Carols



We warmly invite the Reading School community to join us for our cherished annual Service of Nine Lessons and Carols event - an evening brimming with Christmas spirit, beautiful music from Reading School's talented musicians, and moments of reflection.

Following the service, join us for a delightful reception in the Refectory, where you can enjoy mince pies and non-alcoholic mulled wine.

Please RSVP to confirm attendance by clicking this link: [Service of Nine Lessons & Carols 2024 | Events | Reading School Alumni Society](#)

## House Music Competition 2024



Now entering its 89th year, the Reading School House Music Competition will take place on Sunday 24th November from 15:00 to 19:30 at The Hexagon, Queens Walk, RG1 7QF.

Anticipation is always high for this eagerly awaited annual event which promises stellar performances from all five houses. Ensembles, both large and small, will captivate the audience with music from films, while solo acts will showcase the talents of Senior soloists (Year 11-13) and Junior soloists (Year 7-10).

The exciting event stands as one of the year's highlights and is anticipated to sell-out. Ticket prices start from £18 and availability is limited. *Parents are asked to please ensure your child's participation is confirmed before securing non-refundable tickets.*

To secure your seats, please click here: [Reading School Inter-House Music Competition 2024 | What's On Reading](#)

We understand the financial challenges faced by some families. Families in receipt of Pupil Premium are eligible for two discounted tickets in the Arena Left or Arena Right. For details, please contact [events@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:events@reading-school.co.uk).

# RSPA

## Who we are



'The Reading School Parents Association' is a charity managed by the parents and carers of Reading School students and we work alongside the School to provide a community for all the parents and carers. We raise funds using several methods, like the Preloved Uniform Shop, School Lottery, events and donations.

Over recent years, we have funded much needed outdoor seating, cricket nets, refurbished toilets, minibuses and, most recently, AV equipment. We are always looking for

new members to support the RSPA in order to continue supporting the school for the benefit of its students. For all enquiries, please email [contactus@readingschoolparents.co.uk](mailto:contactus@readingschoolparents.co.uk).

## Nominate the RSPA for a chance for us to win £1,000!

We're asking for two minutes of your time! Please visit [movementforgood.com](http://movementforgood.com) and enter "Reading School Parents' Association" (Charity Number 1101822). There is no purchase necessary and by nominating the RSPA, we have a chance to win money that will help raise funds for extra resources to benefit all our students. It's quick, easy and nominations close on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

## The Pre-Loved Uniform Shop

### Opening dates and times:

- Friday 6th December 3.30pm to 4.30pm
- Saturday 7th December - 10.30am to 12.30pm

No parking is allowed on site on Friday openings.

There is parking available in the Walled Carpark on Saturday openings and the Uniform shop can be found in the back of the Walled Carpark. Please note shop opening is weather dependent, in the event of a poor weather forecast the opening may be cancelled. Please email [shop@readingschoolparents.co.uk](mailto:shop@readingschoolparents.co.uk) with any queries.

## A winter warmer for all the family



A welcome addition when taking part in any PE or games activity and may be worn to school on games day only.

Available online or try before you buy at the pre-loved uniform shop events.

Should you wish to order this can be done via the RSPA website or by [clicking this link](#).

Please bear in mind that XL - XXL hoodies are currently on special order and will take 2-3 weeks.

Have a lovely weekend.

The RSPA Team

# Michaelmas Term – Week 11

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.



## Model Climate Change Conference 2024

Eight lucky students got to attend an [annual climate change conference](#) this week at Reading's Civic Offices. Mirroring COP29, which is currently taking place in Baku, Azerbaijan, the annual event has more than 60 students from different schools across Reading coming together to represent countries affected by climate change.



*“It was a pleasure to watch the students meet the challenges of debate and negotiations that the Model Climate Change conference offered this week. Being asked to represent two such controversial nations as the Marshall Islands and Azerbaijan proved no barrier as the 8 students from Years 8 and 9 showed. They engaged in negotiations with much older students from other schools, securing climate change agreements targeted towards the issues they had identified as crucial. I hope the political leaders at COP29 this month show the same collaborative spirit and desire to protect our planet from future emissions as these students.”*

Mrs S Thorpe, Teacher of Geography

## An A level Philosophy experiment

Year 12 Philosophy students recently embarked on an engaging exploration of perception by examining an unassuming classroom table. This exercise delved into Bertrand Russell's theory of indirect realism, challenging the notion of direct perception.

As students observed the table from various angles, they noted changes in its apparent shape, size, and shininess - differences that demonstrated the subjective nature of sensory experience. Through this, they encountered Russell's idea that our perceptions are not direct insights into the table's reality, but representations moulded by individual perspectives.

This brief yet thought-provoking exercise not only illuminated Russell's philosophical arguments but also sparked a deeper inquiry into the nature of reality.



(From left to right): Yiannis N (12W), a table, and Adi A (12GT)



## ORA Remembrance Service 2024

*“When you go home, tell them of us and say,  
For your tomorrow, we gave our today.”*

John Maxwell Edmonds



















*\*Front cover image is Year 8 students receiving certificates from a certificate from the Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca and Mester Spanish School following their recent trip to Salamanca, Spain.*

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).