



Headmaster's Weekly Bulletin

1 MARCH 2024

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Introduction

Dear Students, Colleagues, Parents and Carers,

Last week the Department for Education announced [guidance to ban mobile phones in schools](#), and next week is Reading School's annual Book Week.

Perhaps this week, in which we hosted three other schools for a foreign language journalism competition, is an ideal time to think about reading and technology?

Book Week is one of the most exciting weeks in our school calendar. It includes the nationally recognised Book Day on Thursday 7 March when we 'drop everything and read', and a range of incredible author talks organised by our librarian, Mrs Kesteven and her team. The week is really important and valuable to us as a school community. It invites us all to consider putting down our digital devices, stepping back from the algorithmically recommended TV shows we watch, and press pause on the AI revolution happening all around us.

This is a significant pursuit, because books, and the stories they contain, are among the most important vectors of culture. They are unparalleled in their capacity to shape our imagination. They do more inside of us than we sometimes imagine.

Perhaps we can illustrate with quotes from three classic and wonderful children's books:

'Stories are wild creatures,' the monster said. "When you let them loose, who knows what havoc they might wreak?" A Monster Calls

'I is reading it hundreds of times,' the BFG said. "And I is still reading it and teaching new words to myself. It is the most scrumdiddlyumptious story.' The BFG

'Mrs. May looked back at her. "Kate," she said after a moment, "Stories never really end. They go on and on and on. It's just that sometimes, at a certain point, one stops telling them.' The Borrowers

Since Johannes Gutenberg's 1440's invention of the printing press, human creatures have enjoyed access to texts, which are wild creatures that bring us new words and invite new ways of seeing the world. If you can, therefore, I would urge you to look again at your bookshelves, visit your library or find a new book for the week ahead. Nevertheless, I also invite you to consider whether the 2020s will prove to be of similar significance to the 1440s. Since May 2023, the number of websites hosting fake and false articles created with artificial intelligence (AI) has increased by more than 1,000 percent. Type 'AI' into Google and you'll find 11.6 billion possible results. Type literature, and you'll find 2.9 billion. Yesterday, the Deputy Prime Minister, Oliver Dowden, eulogised new technology, suggesting that:

"I believe we can take the worst things about public services, whether that's the time-wasting, form-filling, pencil-pushing, computer-says-no, the mind-numbing-ness of it and the kinds of things that make us want to tear our hair out. We can take those things and we can turn them around with the help of AI."

In 'The Gutenberg Parenthesis' (to be published in November 2024), author Jeff Jarvis suggests that the dominance of the printed word may be coming to an end. He asks whether society is ready for a world dominated by AI. I can't fathom my own response to this question, but know that at Reading School: (1) We would value the help of all parents in managing their children's use of devices carefully as this continues to be an ever-growing concern (2) We want to prepare students for the digital age ahead of them (3) We believe love of reading, immersion in stories and growing vocabulary are fundamental components of learning.

To put it a different way, nearly every student I talked with in detention on Tuesday was being sanctioned for repeated instances of being late, and nearly all of them were late because they shared they were habitually staying up to late 'doom-scrolling' on TikTok.

Would you join us then, in celebrating Book Week next week and in talking more earnestly about the risks, threats and opportunities that technology brings?

Best wishes,

Dr Evans.

Chris Evans
Headmaster



Key information

All years

Safeguarding

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

- Managing screen time – advice and guidance for parents about talking to your child about the time they spend online based on their age and ways to tackle too much screen time.
- Video calls – advice, guidance and managing risks around the use of Facetime, WhatsApp calls and livestreaming.
- Instagram – supervision, safety features, quiet mode and a parent's guide.

We would encourage parents and carers of students (especially those in Years 7, 8 and 9) to scan the monthly online safety newsletters to remain aware of the advice and guidance. There is an increasing number of worries being raised in relation to children not using their mobile phones/social media apps responsibly, and we thank you for your support in monitoring your child's mobile phone use while at home.

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 English - deadline for applications 9am, Monday 11 March 2024 - [click here](#) for further details.

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

Associate Staff Vacancies

Cover Supervisor - deadline for applications: 9am, Monday 4 March 2024 - [click here](#) for further details.

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

External Teacher Vacancies (Kendrick School)

[Head of Geography](#) for September 2024. Deadline for applications 9am Tuesday 12th March 2024

[Business and Economics Teacher](#) for September 2024. Deadline for applications 9am Friday 15th March 2024

School Community News

Excellence in Mathematical Science



The [National Cipher Challenge](#) is a prestigious competition, now in its 22nd year which invites students from across the UK to stretch their skills in codebreaking. We would like to congratulate Luke H (13BSA) for winning the Trinity College, Cambridge prize for being one of the fastest soloists to complete the final challenge.

In speaking with Luke this week, he shared:

"I've tried the challenge every year for three years, and while I have been able to complete every cipher in the first nine weeks within the first point boundary, the last cipher was always a hurdle for me. Two years ago, I solved it in 10 days, and last year it took me 20 days. However, this year, armed with better knowledge regarding ciphers, and more data, I was able to identify the type of cipher, and develop a tool that allowed me to solve it within 2 hours. During the event, I was presented with my gold medal and certificate from Trinity College, Cambridge."

The Cipher Challenge is an annual competition run by the University of Southampton and sponsored by IBM, GCHQ, Trinity College Cambridge, UKRO and The Institute of Mathematics with four grand prizes of £1000.

Head of Digital Learning, Mr A Dimmick shared, "It has been a joy to watch Luke compete and I do hope that he will be able to share some of his strategies, not to mention his passion for such challenges, with younger students before he leaves us at the end of the year."

We congratulate Luke on his outstanding achievement in the National Cipher Competition which not only reflects his individual brilliance but also provides inspiration for his peers and younger students. Luke demonstrates the school's 'learn, lead and serve' values with his wish to write a book in his spare time to encourage others to follow in his footsteps.



Quiz Night



The Boarding Charity Committee will be running the annual charity quiz night on Friday 22 March to raise money for three charities being supported this year. The quiz night will run from 7:00pm to 9:00pm and ticket prices range from £6.00 (choice of chicken nuggets or veggie burger with chips) for under 12s and £12.00 (choice of fried chicken, battered fish or veggie burger with chips) for over 12s and adults. Lots of exciting activities will be taking place throughout the night, with many prizes to be won - so bring as many friends and family members as you can. All years can participate but juniors should be accompanied by their parents.

For details about the event please contact either Srisht C by emailing u00242@reading-school.co.uk or Zyaire L by emailing u00328@reading-school.co.uk

For payment details please contact Mrs Karen Andrews by emailing kandrews@reading-school.co.uk to book tickets. Please note, only cash can be accepted.

The chosen charities include: Sure24 (a school in Kenya providing education for children at risk), the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (a volunteer led organisation that carries out sea rescues) and Berkshire Women's Aid (working against domestic abuse and violence, providing support, advocacy and places of safety in Berkshire).

Chinese Lunar New Year Charity Event

Last Friday, a charity sale was co-hosted by the Languages Department, Hong Kong Cultural Society and Charity Committee as part of Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations. All proceeds went to Mary's Meals, an international NGO serving nutritious school meals to children living in impoverished regions like Zambia and Ethiopia. Parents and students generously contributed traditional delicacies such as coconut split pea pudding and red bean soup, alongside T-shirts and mugs provided by Mary's Meals. These items were sold during junior and senior lunchtimes outside the LRC.

The event proved to be very successful, with all food products sold out. We extend our gratitude to our students and staff who attended to support the event. Together, we raised nearly £300 for Mary's Meals. Every donation, regardless of size, makes a meaningful impact, and we are confident that our collective efforts will bring positive change.

This success was made possible by the enthusiastic support of volunteer students and teachers, including Edward D (12MRC), Joshua H (12LDO), Ryan L (12MK), Henry Lo (12LDO), Charles L (12LDO), and Ryan L (12LDO), under the supervision of Dr Dowle, Mr Cheng, Mr Hung, and Mr Wu. Special thanks also go to Yaman E (13EF) and Miss Fondu for their assistance behind the scenes, as well as Pranav A (13JTC) for creating posters.

We value and celebrate the rich diversity within our school community. It fills us with pride to see students taking the initiative to organise charity events that not only mark festive occasions but also contribute to meaningful causes.



Careers and additional opportunities

Reading School is committed to providing comprehensive and accurate career information to support our students in making informed decisions about their future endeavours. It is essential to note that the information shared by the school is for informational purposes only, and the inclusion of any company, organization, or external resource does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation of their products or services. Parents and students should undertake their own research and due diligence.

All Years

RSM feedback

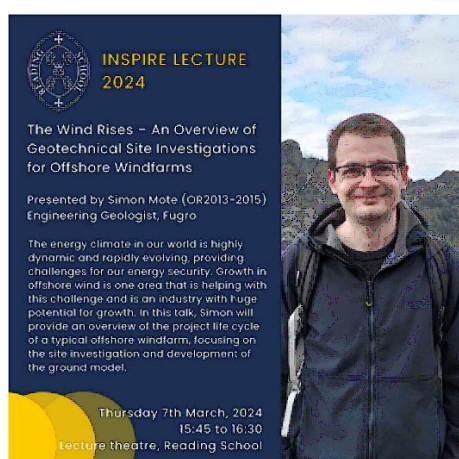
This week 25 students from Years 11 and 12 attended an early years workshop at RSM UK Corporate Finance LLP on Thursday evening (after school), a leading audit, tax and consulting adviser to mid-market business leaders, globally.

We were delighted to receive positive feedback:

"It was a pleasure to have students from your school attend our early year's careers programme who really did you proud. They were all so engaged and asked some really fantastic questions, we would happily have them back should they like to visit us again at any point."

Thank you to those students who attended the early year's workshop and showcased the high calibre of our student body. Their active participation and insightful questions not only demonstrated their commitment to learning but also left a lasting impression on the professionals at RSM. This positive interaction exemplifies the values of our school, emphasising curiosity, enthusiasm, and a genuine interest in the learning experiences provided by local organizations. We are proud to be represented by students who contribute meaningfully to external opportunities, and we look forward to fostering more collaborations in the future.

Inspire Lecture - Thursday 7 March 2024 15.45 to 16.30



Join us for an enlightening session with Simon Mote (OR2013-2015), who will provide an overview of geotechnical site investigations for offshore windfarms.

- Date: Thursday 7th March 2024
- Time: 15.45 – 16.30
- Venue: Lecture Theatre, Reading School

About the Speaker:

Simon Mote (OR2013-2015) works as an Engineering Geologist at Fugro, based in Oxfordshire. Simon completed his studies in Physical Geography and Geology at Plymouth University in 2020, aspiring to apply his knowledge sustainably in his career.

Presentation Overview:

Our world's energy landscape is constantly evolving, presenting challenges to our energy security. The growth of offshore wind is contributing to addressing this challenge, and it holds immense

potential for growth within the energy landscape. In this talk, Simon will outline the project life cycle of a typical offshore windfarm, with a focus on site investigation and ground model development.

We strongly encourage year 11, 12 and 13 students studying Geography and Chemistry to attend.

This event is open to **all year groups**, especially those interested in exploring the realms of renewable energy. Students can visit the below link and **RSVP** for attendance as "**Guests**" without the need to create an online profile:

To register >> [Inspire Lecture by Simon Mote \(OR 2013-2015\) - Engineering Geologist working for Fugro | Events | Reading School Alumni Society \(reading-school.co.uk\)](#)

For more information, please email Mrs J Chhokar or Mrs E Chong in the Society Office at events@reading-school.co.uk

Years 11 to 13

Meet the Russell Group – Webinars 30 April to 2 May

Students can explore all 24 Russell Group universities.

Students in Years 11 to 13 can learn from staff and student ambassadors as they cover a range of topics.

Click to register: [UK University Search Fair Russell Group Webinars | UK University Search](#)

2024 Choosing Oxford Student Conference

This online conference offers you an opportunity to find out more about applying to Oxford, course information and the support available for students whilst studying there. Join the live sessions running in the evenings from Monday 18 March to Thursday 21 March 2024 to hear talks about the courses they teach and from current student ambassadors who share their experiences of studying and living in Oxford.

Each session will last 50 minutes and will include a presentation and a live Q&A with a panel of University Staff, academics or current students.

Click the link below to book sessions: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/increasing-access/2024-choosing-oxford-student-conferences-booking-form>

Oxford outreach event calendar

Full of useful subject-specific days and online courses:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/increasing-access/events-calendar>

NOTE: **no time off school** should be taken for these and you should only sign up for those events that take place outside of the normal school day.

The Big Think Competition - Oxford

Teddy Hall's Big Think Competition is back for 2024!

Our tutors' 'big' tutorial-style questions have been specially designed to challenge you beyond your normal school curriculum and get you thinking big about your subject and what it might be like to study it at university. It's also a great super-curricular activity to include in a personal statement!

To enter, simply record a video of 5 minutes or less answering one of our 'big' questions. We don't judge on presentation – film the video on your phone, if you'd like! – but on the quality of your arguments and research.

Winners will receive:

- £100 First Prize
- £50 Second Prize
- £35 Subject Commendations

Winners will also be invited to Oxford for the day, where they will get to discuss their entries with subject tutors, have a tour of the College with current students, and enjoy lunch in our Hall.

Open to UK state school students in Years 11-13. You can find more information on how to enter, as well as the list of questions on the St Edmund Hall website. Click here to enter: [Big Think Competition | Access and Outreach | St Edmund Hall \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

Year 12 only

Changes for applicants to Cambridge 2024

The team at UniAdmissions have written a detailed article to help Reading School understand the changes, which you [can read here](#).

The key information:

- **Natural Science & Veterinary Medicine:** Admissions Test moving from the NSAA > ESAT
- Engineering: Admissions Test moving from the ENGAA > ESAT
- Medicine: Admissions Test moving from the BMAT > UCAT

There were anticipated changes for Computer Science & Economics applicants, but Cambridge looks to have kept the Admissions Test for these exams the same.

Please check universities for specific changes to the above and guidance on how to prepare.

Subject masterclasses

Please click the link below to view subject masterclasses designed for students in Year 12 looking to apply in October 2024 and are a great way to experience typical undergraduate teaching at the University of Cambridge. Please note that some of these are in person and some are online. For those in person please consider the value of attending in person especially if this means missing a day from school. This would count towards one of your University visit days.

- English - 9 March, in person
- Physics - 9 March, in person
- Politics and International Studies - 9 March, in person
- Economics - 21 March, online
- Land Economy - 22 March, online

- Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic - 25 March, online
- Plant Sciences/Zoology - 28 March, online

Masterclasses will be added throughout the year, so students are reminded to use the link below for the most up to date listings:

https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/events/masterclasses?utm_source=SRM_team&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=GenSRM_Information_Newsletters

Trinity College, Cambridge - Languages, Power and Cultures Programme book by 3rd March

[Trinity College](#) are hosting a free and open for all webinar-based programme. This is an opportunity to learn about how languages and themes of power and culture are taught at university and to find out about what makes a successful application to Cambridge.

Amongst those who register for these webinars, they will invite a number of students to access online mentoring groups guided by our undergraduates, and a taster 1-night residential visit to Trinity College.

To access this programme, you must [register here](#), by **Midnight 3 March**.

University conference

The Universities of Exeter, Bath, Cardiff, Keele, Lancaster and Warwick are hosting a series of online conferences. **Join us on Saturday 2nd March 2024** for sessions on the UCAS process and personal statements, choosing a course and university and applying to competitive universities. There will also be panel sessions with admissions experts and current students from each of the host universities.

[Next Steps for Y12 Conferences 2024 | University of Exeter \(geckoform.com\)](#)

The Sutton Trust UK Summer Schools

Deadline midday Friday 10 March 2023

Students who are interested in studying at university? The Sutton Trust is again offering its UK Summer School programme which aims to provide extra support to those high achieving students who are looking for expert-led support in gaining access to the top universities in the UK. However, you **must meet the specific criteria** as these opportunities are to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

On the programme, you can take tester classes in over 40 different courses at 13 of the UK's top universities, such as: Arts and humanities 🧠

- Engineering ⚙️
- Medicine & health sciences 🩺
- Science 🔬
- Social sciences 📖

All students accepted onto a summer school, along with any students who meet our grade threshold and one other criteria, will be offered a place on the Sutton Trust Online Core

programme delivered on Sutton Trust Online. This 18-month structured programme will provide support and exclusive content over your last two years of school and help you explore, apply, prepare and succeed at leading universities. This is a great opportunity for you to explore your options during your summer break.

If you meet the criteria you are encouraged to apply ASAP. For the full list of courses, visit our website at <https://buff.ly/49A8h4R>

Donations to School Uniform Shop

Preloved uniforms can be donated to School Uniform Shop and we would welcome your donations. Parents, carers and students can simply come to the Uniform Shop when open (within the walled carpark) or drop to School Reception in a bag clearly marked 'Uniform Shop'. We thank you in advance for removing any names, labels, named buttons etc.

The Uniform Shop will be open on:

Friday 22 March 3:30 – 5:00pm

Saturday 23 March 10:30am – 12:30pm

Please email shop@readingschoolparents.co.uk with any queries.

School Lottery



Win a £1,000 Sainsbury's eGift Card!

You will receive one entry into this draw for each weekly ticket that you have. Buy more tickets for more entries.

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

Thank you and have a lovely weekend.

The RSPA Team

Lent Term – Week 8

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.



On Monday 26 February, Reading School hosted a Modern Foreign Languages inter-school event led by Second in Classics & MFL, Mme Fondu. Year 12 and Year 13 language students from Kendrick School, St Jospeh's and Kingston Grammar and Reading School worked together in mixed teams in order to work on a journalism challenge.



Reacting quickly to a changing scene, students were tasked with stepping into the role of journalists for the day, work to deadline and produce a sample front page for a foreign language newspaper. During the challenge, all students benefited from the opportunity to improve their skills in working as a team under pressure, demonstrating their flexibility, and practicing their language skills in a modern day work content by speaking, writing and reading.



"I really enjoyed taking part in the journalism challenge because there was so much more to do than I had expected. Having to negotiate for advertising space in French was quite difficult because it was a style of French that I do not use but it was a fun challenge and quite satisfying to complete the deal. It was also nice that everyone on the team had specific tasks to do so that everyone was involved and contributing to the team either in finding articles, conducting interviews, or creating the poster."

Stephen P, Year 13 French

"I found this event very interesting as it taught me many things about the real world and why modern foreign languages are so useful. It showed how valuable it was for journalists (and similar jobs) to be able to navigate language barriers to include more narratives within their work. Also, the event was very engaging and made us think dynamically, incorporating challenges that made us rewrite articles which would entertain a larger audience. Overall, I thought the whole experience was unique and I'm glad I got to take part!"

Rohit Reddipalli, Year 13 French



"I really enjoyed the opportunity to take part in the journalism challenge, and it was great to be able to work with different people who I've never worked with before. As well as being lots of fun, it was probably the most immersive experience possible of being able to practise my Spanish skills, short of going to Spain. All the challenges were both difficult but enjoyable, and my favourite was our afternoon challenge to create a poster and two social media posts. Thank you very much for organising this journalism challenge!"

James Titmas, Year 11 Spanish



"This event was a fantastic opportunity to apply our language knowledge to a real-world scenario, with an interesting insight into journalism and all the complications related in choosing the target audience, style of reporting, and other factors to consider. The competitive team environment allowed our cooperative and creative skills to shine, especially as I hadn't met anybody in my group before the event. The clear emphasis on applying theoretical language knowledge to specific, unforeseen situations through our personal skills is something that will be extremely useful in the future of our changing world, and the ability to interact and communicate effectively with a diverse range of people will likely prove necessary."

James Chen, Year 11 German

Last Friday, the Debating Society hosted the annual Mock Election event where the UK's political parties are represented and who get the chance to present their 5-year plan for the country in front of an audience of voters.



In 1943, Reading School's Debating Society elected the Conservative Party with a supermajority in their mock election. Last Friday's event sought to test how the political landscape of the school has transformed over 80 years.





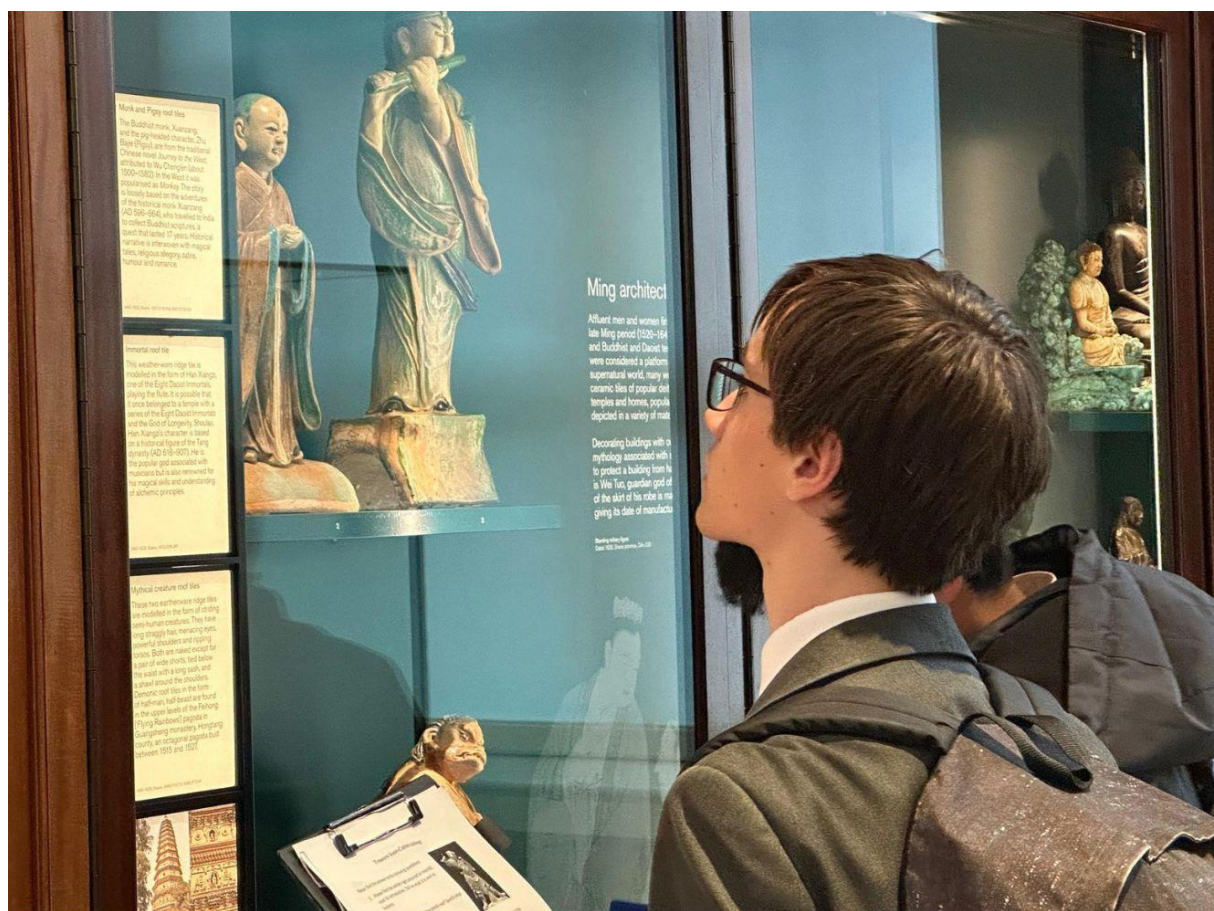




On Thursday this week, a group of GCSE Mandarin students, GCSE Ancient Historians, and A Level Classical Civilisation students had the opportunity to visit the British Museum. The Mandarin students spent time learning about Chinese dynasties chronologically and learned about how the Chinese designs evolved throughout time and what influences they had via the silk road.



The Classics and Ancient History students were able to look at various different aspects of Roman and Greek history, exploring the objects in the collections, and engaging with artefacts they had already studied. Both groups had a great time expanding their learning outside the classroom in a new context.





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