

YEAR 5 AND 6 PANTO, ALADDIN

FROM THE HEAD

The Head, Craig Williams, reflects on our busy Autumn term at Abingdon Prep.

It is always lovely to look back at the term just gone and remember so many of the exciting events that the children have been involved in. It has been a memorable term for so many reasons, but especially as we have welcomed girls into our Reception class as we start our exciting journey to being a fully co-educational school.

Music and Drama have taken centre stage this past few weeks with our Year 5 and 6 pantomime, *Aladdin*, being a wonderful start to the festive season. This was quickly followed by a terrific Nativity performance from all of our Pre-Prep children who loved the chance to perform in front of their families. Our Year 3 to 5 pupils performed beautifully in their carol concert, as Years 6 to 8 did in theirs, held at St Helen's Church in Abingdon. It is amazing to see such young children performing so confidently to an audience, even those at the very start of their school careers.

There have been some wonderful trips taking place this term too. Our Year 8s undertook their Geography field trip to Durdle Door and Lulworth Cove, our Year 7s visited the Roman Baths to support their study of Latin and History. Year 5 enjoyed three days at

PGL undertaking adventure activities whilst our Pre-Prep visited Roves Farm, Coombe Mill and Hill End to support their learning journeys. Trips remain a wonderful way to enhance the childrens' learning, helping to bring so much of what is taught in the classroom to life.

On the sports field, all of our pupils in Years 3 to 8 represented the school in matches this term, playing some fantastic rugby, both in contact and touch fixtures against other schools. Our cross country team reached the English Schools' national finals to be held next term and our swimmers took part in a number of galas as well. Sport is alive and well at APS, and our Pre-Prep have also enjoyed their after school club cricket and hockey clubs, alongside swimming, PE and sports lessons every week.

I hope that you enjoy reading this term's APS News and seeing just a snapshot of what our children have been doing this term. They have certainly been living the school aims of 'Being Kind, Getting Involved and Working Hard'.

Best wishes
Craig



Foundation Photograph, take three!
It was finally third time lucky with the weather for staff and pupils from both schools to get together for the photo.



RACHEL WHITMORE

Rachel leaves us after 9 years at APS during which she has been Head of RE, taught History, Core Skills and in Learning Support. She has been a super house leader of Unicorn, and was a memorable Hagrid once on World Book Day. She also led our Big Thinks and Thursday Thinks, encouraging us to empathise more, think deeply and more wisely.



Rachel is moving to take on a full-time role with her church as Families Pastor, something she has already been doing in her spare hours! It's a role where her kind and nurturing nature will find another happy home.

We send Rachel and her family our best wishes and every happiness for the future.

AIMEE WHITEHOUSE



Aimee leaves us to go on maternity leave. We send much happiness and our best wishes to her and husband Alex for their impending arrival in the new year. We can't wait to meet baby Whitehouse too!



KAREN CORNFORD

Our super School Secretary, Karen, hung up her heels at half term and retired! After 7 years at APS she took the tough decision to retire to spend more time with her lovely family and her newest grandson. In true Karen style, she fully intends to embrace retirement with holidays, shopping and lots of family time. She was excited to experience a new pace of life but looks forward to keeping in touch with us and hearing the latest news from the school.

Staff gave her a huge send off and the children all contributed to a special book they made, with lots of thank-yous and happy memories shared by them all.

Karen, we know you will be reading this, so we wanted to say a final thank you - we will miss you!



Demons

Swamped by the Tortille stream.
A place of unfathomable mystery,
The eerie woods...

The cry of gas.

Nameless men,
Weeping men.

Shouting.
Crying.

The cry of gas.

I came blundering
I came stumbling
I came plunging

I had
That icy sensation
That demons were watching
Demons.

They had come.
They had come.

Aubrey, Year 8

A found poem based on an extract from 'Storm of Steel' by Ernst Junger, a German frontline soldier in the First World War.

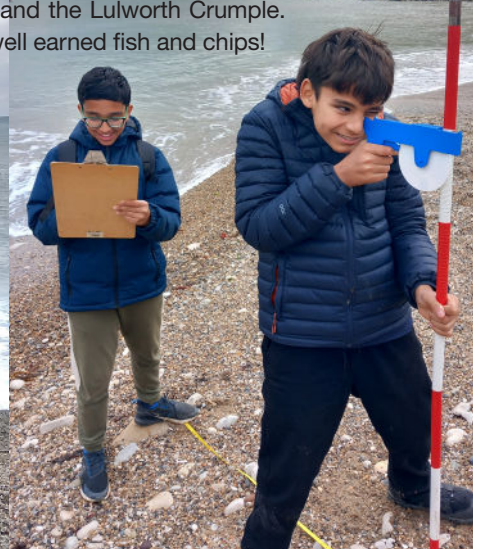
REMEMBRANCE

As always, pupils and staff at Abingdon Prep gathered at 11am on 11 November to mark Remembrance Day. The two-minute silence was perfectly observed. The silence was played in and out by Rohan, in Year 8, and Russell on their trumpets. Many pupils chose to wear poppies enthusiastically sold by volunteers from Year 3.



Y8 GEOGRAPHY FIELD TRIP

Year 8's field trip to the Jurassic Coast, Dorset, started at the magnificent rock arch at Durdle Door examining the coastal geomorphology of St Oswald's Bay before walking over the hillside to Lulworth Cove. We then split in two for a closer look at the unique geology of this UNESCO World Heritage coastline at Stair Hole and the Lulworth Crumple. We finished the day with some well earned fish and chips!



YEAR 5 (AND YEAR 6) DO TRIPS!



Year 5 had not one, not two, but three trips this month, including their two-night residential at PGL (below).

They also visited Milestones Museum in Basingstoke (left) to support their work on the Victorian era, experiencing a strict school lesson and exploring the shops and vehicles.

With Year 6, they also visited the Rutherford Appleton Lab (right) for a space-themed series of workshops, including an escape room and pop-up Planetarium, crafting a universe inside a box and exploring how to protect astronauts from radiation (using UV sensitive beads).



Dressed for the clean room



Locating hot spots



TEAM BUILDING AT PGL

Year 5 had (in their own words) 'the best residential experience EVER' at PGL, Liddington. Their trip was filled with jaw-dropping heights: flying on The Giant Swing, plunging off the abseiling tower and zooming down the zip wire. We were also lucky enough to play competitive games whilst canoeing on the lake and took part in lots of other team-building and problem-solving style activities.

Of course, none of this would happen without being fuelled by PGL's 'heavenly' food, as described by the pupils! It's safe to say it was a brilliant trip on all accounts!



YEAR 8 VISIT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, OXFORD



A lecture on the theory of evolution with a particular emphasis on adaptation formed the core of Year 8's visit to Oxford's Natural History Museum. One of Darwin's particular areas of study was barnacles, and Sarah had us all waving our hands in the air as barnacles being picked off by predators. Pupils also discovered whether they were super tasters or not, a genetic mutation that has benefits both ways. The bravest got to handle Madagascan hissing cockroaches before heading out into the museum to explore its collection.



YEAR 7 BATH TRIP

The Year 7 Latin trip to Aquae Sulis in Bath was a resounding success. The children thoroughly enjoyed exploring the Roman Baths, marveling at the ancient architecture and learning about its historical significance. A highlight of the day was the engaging session taught by the museum staff, who introduced the group to fascinating local artefacts and their stories.



The pupils conducted themselves impeccably as they moved through the city, demonstrating excellent manners and behaviour in the public view. Most of them expressed their gratitude with a "thank you" at the end, rounding off a memorable and enriching experience.



YEAR 8 DT AWARD STUDENTS VISIT



The DT Arts Award students had a fantastic opportunity to visit the Design Museum in London. They explored the inspirational design work in the museum looking at the history of design and many iconic and key designers. The students also took part in a workshop held by the museum and they also loved the chance to visit the fabulous Barbie exhibition!



YEAR 4 VISIT CHRIST CHURCH

The pupils in Year 4 had a wonderful time visiting Christ Church in Abingdon. The children learned about the various functions of the Christian Church and the services that they provide. They learned about baptism and communion and developed a greater understanding of the Christian faith as a whole.



YEAR 5 AND 6 PANTO ALADDIN!



Years 5 and 6 gave a Genie-us pantomime of Aladdin. With excellent performances, rousing songs and all the usual antics you would expect from a panto – oh yes they did! The audience really enjoyed booing and hissing Abanazer (Rory), loved our dame Widow Twanky (James C-S), cheered on Aladdin (Eden) and the Genie (Patrick) and aah'd when Jasmine (Isaac) and Aladdin were united. Put together in a few short weeks, all the children gave their very best for a memorable evening.



FIRST AID IN YEAR 6

As part of their PSHCE lessons, Year 6 pupils learned how to administer first aid for cuts and burns in a practical session with our school nurse, Debbie. They particularly enjoyed bandaging imaginary wounds and fathoming how to put a sling on. Certainly some future medics in the making!



MEET YOUR SCHOOL COUNCIL 2024-25

HOUSE CHARITIES

The first House event of the new school year was to choose House charities. The pupils were asked to pitch for a local charity with an environmental theme for their House to support over the year. Following a letter to parents and lots of encouragement in assemblies and form times, many pupils put forward their chosen charities. Some great speeches were made and a lot of fun was had in the voting. Four brilliant charities were chosen following some convincing propositions. The first fundraising event

was Unicorn's Tuck Shop in aid of the Marine Conservation society raising £366.30!



Congratulations to our new School Council form reps, who we are sure will do a very good job this year. After receiving their badges from Richard, they were given their first task by Rachel, to look at choosing new Other Half clubs for the coming year. In their second meeting they started to look at themes for House Meetings.

HOUSE SHOE STACKING



The shoe stacking challenge is one of the most loved events of the House meeting calendar. All were committed to building the biggest tower possible with their own footwear before it collapsed. The Buddy Groups split up to build their own edifices, with staff passing on tips as to how to build a strong base to avoid collapse. Unicorn were the winners on this occasion, as they managed to build a tower that reached the giddy height of one metre!



DT COMPETITION WINNER

ECO GROUP

were keen to start litter picks this term, and enthusiastically explored the school grounds equipped with grabbers and bin bags. They were pleased to report that between the first and second pick, they noticed a reduction in the amount of litter found. Meanwhile, Katy launched a fantastic DT competition, which involved designing and creating a sustainable item, and Eco were delighted to be asked to help judge it. They were in awe at the entrants' efforts and it was clear pupils had put a lot of time, effort and thought into each item.

In the second half of term, Eco Group worked to organise a Festive Jump Swap Shop and asked for families to donate any old or unwanted festive jumpers. Though we received around twenty jumpers, the group thought long and hard, eventually deciding to keep hold of the jumpers and look for more donations to go bigger and better next year, with a larger array of stock on display. In the meantime, the donated jumpers were able to be borrowed by any pupils who may not have had a jumper to wear on festive jumper day. Finally, the pupils got creative with Sherrey, who hosted a sustainable Christmas craft event for Eco Club.

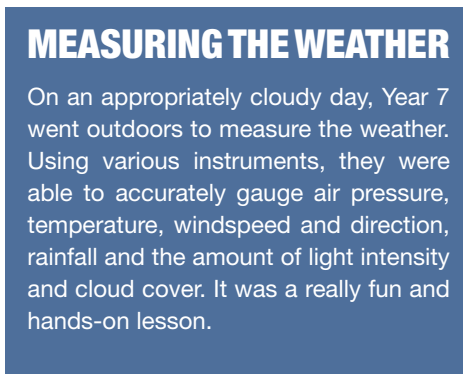
IN SCHOOL



NASIO TRUST

A huge thank you to all the APS families who contributed toothbrushes, children's underwear and pairs of Crocs to our collection for the Nasio Trust, with whom we sponsor four children in Kenya.

The donations were collected last week by staff of the Abingdon-based charity, who gave a short talk to Pre-Prep during their assembly. The collected items will be taken out to Kenya soon and distributed to families in need through the Nasio Trust's medical and education centres.





FIREWORKS NIGHT!

Our APS families all enjoyed the annual firework display on a wonderfully still evening. After Nick's fireworks assembly, and flame tests in Science for Year 7, many could identify some of the metal salts used in the colours we saw in the sky. With street food and glow products before the display, it was another super event. Thank you to everyone who helped, both staff and JPA volunteers.



THE BIG THINK

In our Big Think Day this term, each class came to explore the journey to Bethlehem taken by Mary and Joseph in an age appropriate way. Through discussion, writing, artwork and creative modelling, pupils thought about how exhausted they must have been to travel 80 miles by foot; what were the challenges of having a baby in a barn. Our older pupils related the story to more modern stories of homelessness and the life of refugees.



MOTTES AND BAILEYS



Year 7 has been investigating the changes and continuity for life in England following the Battle of Hastings. They were given the challenge of making a motte and bailey castle and they definitely rose to the challenge. A wonderful range of castles appeared in the Library in recent weeks, fashioned from Lego to cardboard and earthworks to cake. What a very talented year group they are!

During Year 8's topic on Microbes and Disease, pupils grew microbes on agar plates from all sorts of different sources. Many were able to show the growth of microbes from dirty finger prints and we also had a range of examples of microbial growth from around the school. It was a good reminder to always wash our hands! Many thanks to Abingdon School for organising the agar plates.

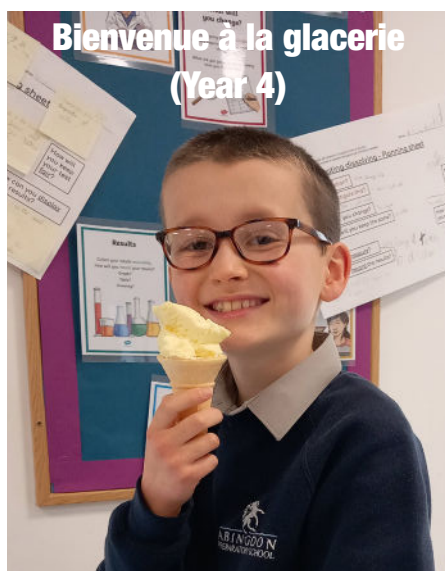


GROWING MICROBES



DARWIN'S FINCHES

As part of our work on Natural Selection, Year 8 became Darwin's finches. Using a range of implements such as chopsticks as their beaks, they battled to 'eat' selected food sources. Those with the best adaptations were able to select their favoured food while others were left hungry. A fun way to demonstrate one of the most important scientific concepts of all time.



Bienvenue à la glacerie (Year 4)



ARCHERY CLUB



The Senior Carol Concert provided a lovely way for Year 6, 7 and 8 children and parents to come together to start celebrating the Christmas countdown.

In the atmospheric setting of St Helen's Church, the service began with a stunningly sung *Once in Royal David's City* solo by Aaron, and continued with accomplished instrumental solos from Daniel, Horace, Zephaniah and Ben as well as readings, ensemble performances and congregational carols.

The previous Friday, our Junior Section Carol Concert was held in the School hall, with Christmas songs and carols, readings by the children from Years 3 to 5 and solos by Wilson, Rishi and Timothy.



MEET THE INSTRUMENTS Pupils loved the opportunity to try out a variety of instruments, guided by our visiting music teachers and senior school musicians.



REGULAR CONCERT PLATFORMS give our young musicians a confidence-boost performing in front of an audience.

JOINT ORCHESTRA - In November, the APS orchestra welcomed some Abingdon School musicians for a side-by-side orchestral session. This was a fantastic opportunity for the younger students to benefit from performing with older and more experienced musicians in our ongoing collaborations.

After a rehearsal together in the Music Room, an informal concert to parents was held in the hall, with the programme including *It Don't Mean a Thing if you Ain't got that Swing*, excerpts from *The Lion King* and an early festive rendition of *We Wish you a Merry Christmas*.





COLOURFUL CAPES



Year 4 explored the art and fashion of Sonia Delaunay using geometric patterns and contrasting sets of colour. Using media from watercolours to markers we created a set of fabulous, wearable capes. Very stylish Year 4!



ART HISTORY LECTURE

The wonderful historian Lizzie Rowe visited to give an Art History lecture to Year 8 on 'Disasters, when are they art?' Pupils created their own reconstructive pieces allowing torn paper to fall on to a white space, discussing the amount of input required, or not, of an artist when creating art. Exploring artists such as Lucio Fontana, Ai Weiwei, Banksy and Cai Guo-Qiang. They certainly had lots of opinions on which pieces they liked, and those they did not. An analytical and creative experience had by all.



PIGMENT PAINTING



YEAR 5/6 ART CLUB - ASTRONAUTS



YEAR 3 ART CLUB - JAMES RIZZI STYLE

CHARITIES NEWS

The APS whole school charity this year is Down's Syndrome Oxford. A wonderful local charity organised and funded by volunteer parents and supporters to provide information, support and activities for children and adults with Down's Syndrome and their families living in Oxfordshire.



Events this term so far have included a 'Wear Blue & Yellow' day, retiring collections from wonderful events: the Year 5 & 6 panto of Aladdin; Junior and Senior Section Carol Concerts; festive jumper day and Year 7 Tycoon Minimarket. These have so far raised in excess of £700! A huge thank you goes out to all of the participants, for their time and very generous donations!



THE TERM IN DT

Students have worked incredibly hard this term showcasing their fantastic DT skills!

Year 3 have had a go at many different projects from pneumatic moving monsters to Christmas light boxes. Year 4 put their electronic skills to the test designing and making their own working lighthouses. Year 5 have made moving cam toys and jigsaw puzzles using sublimation printing and the laser cutter - very high tech! Year 6 have made some brilliant balsa wood planes and also creative steady hand 'buzzer' games. Year 7 this term have designed and made their own working clocks using their CAD skills and Year 8 have used the laser cutter and new-found soldering skills, to create a mood light. We have also been very busy in Design, Create and Innovate Club making so many different mini makes!

Thank you to all who entered the two DT competitions, the plastic bottle challenge saw some very innovative ideas and the Christmas decorations were beautiful!



Year 3



Year 4



Year 5



Year 6



Year 7



Year 8



An irreversible change of state! Making popcorn in Science



The new JEDI noticeboard

AUTUMN TERM MERIT CUP WINNER: PHOENIX!



RECEPTION'S FIRST DAYS AT SCHOOL



Our newest and youngest members of Abingdon Prep, joining Reception, got stuck straight into school life from the moment they arrived.

In their second week they were baking, making delicious blackberry and apple crumble with Claire and Paula from Sodexo.



PRE-PREP AUTUMN TRIPS



YEAR 2 AT COMBE MILL

Year 2 pupils were fascinated by seeing all the old machinery and the forge at Combe Mill near Blenheim. After lunch, they tried traditional crafts to make willow baskets.



YEAR 1 WENT TO YOULBURY

Year 1 undertook outdoor activities at the Scout Camp at Youlbury. They carried logs to build a shelter, and cooked their lunch of pizza and bananas on the griddle.



Reception made the first of two visits to Cogges Farm, where they followed the story of the 'Little Red Hen', collecting eggs, planting corn and baking bread.



RECEPTION AT COGGES FARM



PRE-PREP



DENTIST VISIT

Reception children were visited by our dentist friend Rupal. They learned about how to look after their teeth and eat the right foods for snack times. They were certainly not keen on the false teeth!



RECEPTION RETURN TO COGGES FARM

Reception explored Christmas through the ages at Cogges Farm in December, making crackers and wreaths, baking mince pies and seeing how Christmas has changed through the decades!

PRE-PREP HARVEST AND SCARECROW FESTIVAL

Pre-Prep celebrated the season of Autumn and harvest time with a scarecrow festival and generous donations of non-perishable food which were taken to Oxford Food Hub. Families worked together to make some amazingly imaginative scarecrows which were arranged around the Quad and certainly kept the crows away!



Enjoying the Library



Workshare



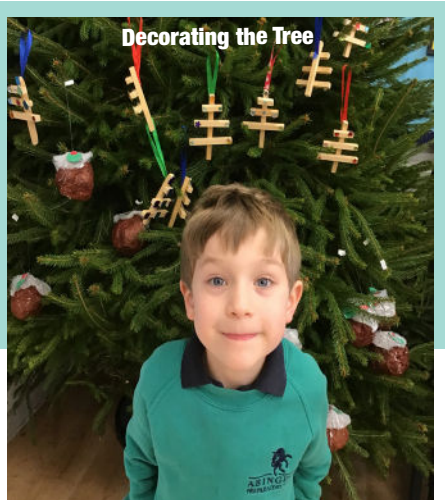
WE TOOK PRE-PREP'S HARVEST DONATIONS TO...



Sharing surplus, reducing waste



Christmas Lunch



Decorating the Tree



PRE-PREP NATIVITY - IT'S A BABY!

The Pre-Prep put on a wonderful Nativity this year with *It's A Baby!* Over the past weeks, the children worked hard to bring this story to life, and their efforts shone on stage. They learned and sang eleven catchy songs, which stuck in everyone's heads!

A special well done to the animals in Reception, who had their own song, "Tonight." In Year 1, the angels, camels, and cows supported with enthusiasm and joyful singing. We're proud of our Year 2 pupils, who confidently took on the roles of narrators, innkeeper, the innkeeper's wife and son, Mary and Joseph, travellers, wise men, and shepherds.

Thank you to everyone who supported the children. Their hard work made *It's A Baby!* a joyful celebration for all!!



PRE-PREP VISIT ROVES FARM

Pre-Prep enjoyed a magical visit to Roves Farm, a well-earned treat after all of their hard work on the Nativity! The children were delighted to meet so many wonderful animals up close including adorable piglets. And of course, no festive trip would be complete without a very special meeting with Father Christmas. The children had an incredible time. A big thank you too to the JPA for their generosity in paying for the entrance fees.



Christmas at Roves Farm 2024



On a gloriously wet but wonderful weekend at the end of November, a squad of twelve Year 8s went to the St. George's Park football centre in Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, acknowledged to be the home of English football development, and a facility used by all the England professionals as they prepare for their matches and tournaments. The pupils were all very excited by the prospect of visiting

such an amazing complex and retracing the footsteps of their footballing heroes.

Arriving there at lunchtime on the Saturday, the team were immediately in action in the group stages of the tournament. They played great football on the most amazing of all-weather pitches in the "Dome" and qualified for the Championship tournament on the Sunday. On the Saturday evening after supper, they had a Futsal tournament, played in the Games room, and finished the evening in the Hydrotherapy pool.

They played brilliantly in the Quarter Final on Sunday morning, but suffered the heartache of losing to ASC Cobham with the last kick of the game. The standard was extremely high, and they finished off with a Golden Goal win in their last game and should be very proud of their achievement.

A great time was had by all, and we even managed to safely return to APS in the middle of a storm! We have already booked for next year.



INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS!

SQUASH Congratulations to Toby, who has worked tremendously hard this term and had a string of excellent results at recent tournaments. He is now ranked 9th in the country.

FENCING Congratulations to Horace, who won a Bronze medal at the "British National U14 Fencing Championship 2024" in Nottingham, after 6 hours of bouts.



RUGBY

As the rugby term ends, it's time to reflect on a season full of growth and development for our young players. This year, pupils not only showcased tremendous growth in their skills but also within the spirit of rugby; working hard for one another and showing grit and determination. Whether mastering the perfect tackle, improving passing accuracy, or developing game awareness, we saw players rise to the challenge from Year 3 to Year 8. In Year 3 we have watched players go from beginners to confident competitors, and witnessed pupils represent APS for the first time, which is always a highlight of any season.



This season, teams have faced a range of tough opponents and difficult situations. Whether it was a hard-fought match or a challenging opponent, each player rose to the challenge, improving their resilience and showcasing their determination.

Beyond the matches, there have been a number of memorable moments. From time spent with friends, coach journeys and traffic jams on the A34! To after match tea and the camaraderie built through wins and tough losses. This season will be remembered not only for the rugby but also the moments in between.

Pupils have grown as individuals and as a team, and it is clear that the growth, effort, and memories made will set the foundation for future success. Well done, everyone!

CROSS COUNTRY

What a brilliant term it has been for our cross country teams.

Our U8 – U11 teams have got their seasons off to a great start, racing at The Manor and St Hugh's, with some impressive performances coming from both old and new competitors.



The U13 team has had a brilliant string of results in the ESAA XC Cup Competition, winning the county round on Cox's Field and placing highly at the regional round at Stowe to progress to the national final. Unfortunately, the national final in Leeds was postponed due to Storm Darragh. While disappointed, the postponement has only strengthened the pupils desire to compete and we are looking forward to the rearranged date of Saturday 1st March to compete at the national level.



FOUNDATION AND PARTNERSHIP EVENTS

This term, Rugby has provided a number of opportunities for schools across the foundation and local primary schools to come together to further their sports education and coaching opportunities for both pupils and staff.

The rugby partnership session witnessed 50 pupils from APS and Hagbourne Primary School experience a coaching session delivered by sixth form students from Abingdon School. The session focused on dynamic movement, handling skills and positional awareness.



It was wonderful to see returning APS students, now in their sixth form year at Abingdon, coach and manage teams



during our fixtures with St Hugh's. This allowed the sixth form students the opportunity to develop their skills associated with coaching such as leadership, communication and planning, whilst the APS pupils gained motivation through their energy, enthusiasm and expertise.

Year 7 and 8 pupils from APS and Abingdon joined forces in a Barbarian style fixture against RGS Guildford. It was fantastic to see pupils making new friendships, playing some exciting rugby and making memories on the field together during some challenging weather conditions, thanks to the arrival of Storm Bert.

The continued collaboration between schools provides an invaluable platform for students to access high-quality coaching, develop leadership qualities and foster a sense of unity and mutual support within the local community.

What are the benefits of choosing Co-Ed schools?

by Ronnie Reading, Deputy Head (Educational Development) at Abingdon School

In an era increasingly characterised by the pursuit of equity and equality, education systems worldwide are continuously evolving to better serve diverse student populations. One of the most significant and beneficial changes in this regard is the transition from single gender to co-ed settings. Co-ed, where both males and females learn together in the same environment, fosters respect and collaboration, brings out the best in young people, and prepares students for the complexities of the real world.

The trend away from single sex education towards co-ed has been criticised by some educational commentators, who claim that single-sex education benefits young people, particularly girls. Such claims, however, are not substantiated by robust research. A recent study of educational research by Halpern et al (2011) concluded that “There is no well-designed research showing that single-sex education improves students’ academic performance.” The authors counsel, in particular, against the pseudoscientific claims made about different ways of learning and neuropsychology of ‘male’ and ‘female’ brains, arguing that the few differences that do exist appear to have no impact upon learning.

So, if the gender composition of a school makes no difference to learning outcomes, why choose co-ed? What benefits does it produce?

As research consistently demonstrates, the major benefit of co-ed is that it prepares young people for the world beyond school. For example, studies have found that all students in co-ed schools tend to exhibit higher levels of self-confidence and improved socialisation skills. In an environment where both male and female perspectives are valued, students learn to appreciate and respect diversity in thought and approach. Conversely, as the authors quoted earlier put it, “sex segregation increases gender stereotyping and legitimises institutional sexism.” The presence of diverse peer groups encourages students to challenge stereotypes and develop a more holistic understanding of themselves and others. In an increasingly interconnected world where collaboration and mutual respect are crucial for success, helping students develop this broader perspective should be a fundamental part of the education process.

The findings of such studies are no surprise to me. Thanks to many years leading and teaching in single sex contexts (for girls and for boys) as well as co-ed schools. I have lost count of how often I have observed students spontaneously developing camaraderie and mutual respect, irrespective of gender. During group projects,

for example, students harness different strengths and viewpoints to achieve common goals. They learn from each other’s unique approaches to problem-solving and contribute to a more dynamic learning process. These interactions do not only cater to academic excellence but also lay the groundwork for developing life skills such as empathy, effective communication and appreciation of the value of bringing diverse experiences and viewpoints together.

Some commentators have suggested that gender segregation benefits girls in terms of academic choice and performance. Here the evidence still supports the case for co-ed. Studies which argue that girls in single sex environments are more likely to choose STEM subjects and realise their potential, are based on very small samples from studies conducted in countries very different to the UK, which casts significant doubt on the robustness of their findings. The most rigorous studies demonstrate that girls in co-ed environments are equally as likely to choose STEM subjects and do well in them. The critical difference is school culture, not whether an educational environment is single sex or co-ed.

Gender stereotyping is a challenge - one that schools solve by being truly inclusive, not by keeping boys and girls apart. In this way, co-ed can thus help break down barriers that might otherwise inhibit academic growth.

None of this means that co-ed in itself is evidence of an outstanding school or a school that is necessarily right for your child. Many other factors should be considered, from the powerful but often implicit philosophy of education underpinning teaching and learning to the extent to which the school seeks to either mould young people into a particular shape or helps them identify and realise their distinct strengths and interests. Parents and prospective students must look for the right fit for them; a place where being part of the essential life of the school is key.



During the first half of term, our new CCF recruits went on a training weekend. There was a mix of practical and theoretical work within the lessons including how things are seen or how to manoeuvre in the forest without being spotted. The cadets also had to stay focused on their organisational skills by keeping their accommodation clean and tidy. One cadet said: "My experience at the recruit training weekend was amazing. Getting woken up at 6am by music being blasted in the corridor was a new experience, to say the least. Overall, all the staff and NCOs made the trip extremely fun."

In November, three Lower Sixth students attended the All-Party Parliamentary Engineering Group debate on 'driverless vehicles' at the House of Lords. Chaired by Professor The Lord Mair,



they heard from the Chief Scientific Adviser for the Department for Transport and the founder of Oxa Autonomous Vehicles. Topics including safety and accessibility, public perception and ethics were discussed.

In November, Felix and Anthony launched their children's book *The Magic Tooth*. The project began with a genuine desire to create a story which promotes the ideals of empathy, happiness and diversity. Felix and Anthony researched storytelling, then transferred their knowledge into creating the story line, characters and mood board. They presented this to some very energetic and honest pupils at Carswell School. Taking on board the feedback, Felix and Anthony set to work drafting and re-drafting the text and the storyline

until they were satisfied with the result. The story is about a young crocodile who discovers the loneliness of being unable to communicate, the wonder of speaking many different languages and the benefits of creating a happy and diverse community. On the artistic side, they explored various illustration techniques as well as re-thinking the central character as a crocodile with wobbly teeth, rather than a child! The result is a beautiful little book which they are selling to raise funds for Arch, the charity which supports young children who struggle with reading. Well done Felix and Anthony!



DREAMS OF INDIA

A group of Philosophy and Theology students visited Delhi, Jaipur and Agra over half-term. They had the opportunity to visit and experience the many religions of India, its culture and its history.

Amongst the highlights were visits to the Jama Masjid, the Akshardham Temple, the Bangla Sahib, the Taj Mahal, the Agra Fort, and seeing an Hindu ceremony. They also visited the Qutab Minar, the tallest minaret in the world at 234 feet, the site of Gandhi's assassination and one of the centres of the Hari Krishna movement, as well as his mausoleum. All in all, an unforgettable trip.

CHRISTMAS AT APS

The penultimate day of term is fun time at APS! Colourful festive jumpers replaced uniform, and soon our annual 'Gifts for Grown Ups' mall was open for business for pupils to shop for presents for their families - and pets too this year! A huge thank you to Sarah and the JPA elves for helping run such a successful event.

Year 8 made way for Pre-Prep to eat a delicious and tasty Christmas lunch in the hall, taking their lunch in the Art room. The afternoon was full of parties and was capped off by the Year 7 Business Tycoon Mini Market, masterminded by Alison Thomas, where an array of stalls selling biscuits, flapjacks, popcorn, doughnuts, milkshakes and bubble drinks proved very popular. Thank you to all the Year 7 parents who supported the childrens' activities and making the treats. The profits will go to charity.

What a wonderful way to end the term!



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR JPA

It's been a busy term with Firestorm Fireworks, Christmas Wreath making and Gifts for Grown Ups & Pets. Thank you to all the parents who have helped at events this term - we couldn't do it without you.

Next term we've got Quiz Night on the February 7 for all parents and Year 7 and Year 8 pupils. Our quizmaster Roger will be running the show!

Wishing you a Happy New Year!

Sarah Dempsey, JPA Chair.



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