# @oakwood

December - 2024


# Arkwright Engineering Scholarship Winner

Welcome to the second edition of @Oakwood of the academic year.

My thanks as always go to the students and staff that write these articles and support in ensuring that parents and carers are kept up to date with the busy goings on in the school. Trips, guest speakers, debating sessions and such all take time to plan and deliver and I am very grateful to all those who make these amazing things happen in our school. I was lucky enough to get myself a spot on the DT trip to the F1 Exhibition in London and had a great time!

It has been a very busy term and although this edition doesn't cover it, we have also had 3 open events for 6th form in the last few weeks, as well as a music and drama showcase, an Enrichment Day, Year 11 PPEs, celebration assemblies and the usual consultation evenings. As I always say, it is an honour to be the Headteacher of this school and this brilliant edition of @Oakwood helps to reflect why.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to wish every student, parent, carer, governor and member of staff a merry Christmas. Have a restful and joyful break with family and friends. I am looking forward to seeing you all in 2025!

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of @ Oakwood
With thanks to the Media Team,

S L Craig
Headteacher

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# Arkwright Scholarship Award

Congratulations to Morgan Taylor who was awarded an Arkwright Engineering Scholarship, which recognises, inspires and supports students to pursue their dreams and change the world as an outstanding engineer of the future.


The Scholarships are awarded to high-calibre 16 year old students through a rigorous selection process and support students through the two years of their A levels, Scottish Advanced Highers or equivalent qualifications.

Every Scholarship is sponsored by a commercial company, trade association, university, professional institution, armed service, government organisation, worshipful company, charitable trust or personal donor. This means that support is offered in various different ways, for example, valuable hands-on work experience, support for your curriculum project and a personal mentor who can help you with aspects of your studies and career planning.

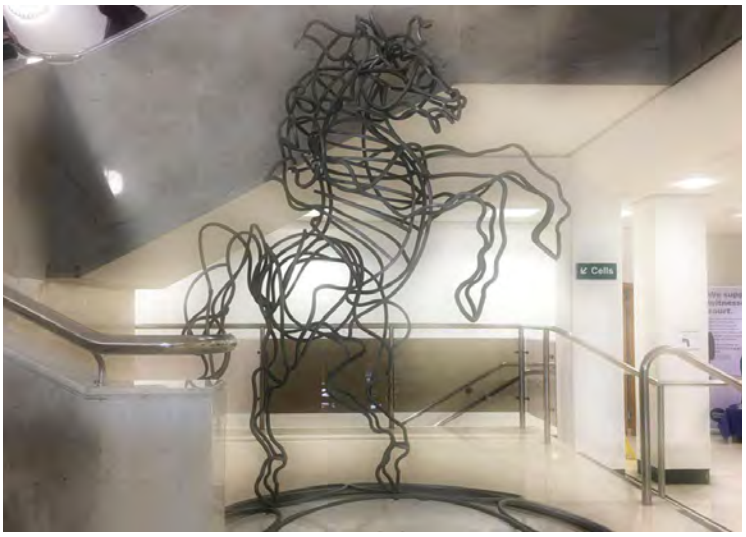
Morgan is now continuing to study Design and Technology at A-level and hopes to study this further at university.

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# Law & Politics Debate Club Trip to Maidstone Crown Court

Shortly after arriving, and going through rigorous security, we attended a sentencing hearing for a man charged with illegal entry of the United Kingdom. The processes of the court gave great insight into our justice system.

We heard details of sentencing guidelines and case law, while also seeing effects of Brexit in the legal system. This was apparent when the judge asked the CPS barrister about visa schemes after leaving the European Union, and whether they had any bearing on the case. Ultimately, the defendant, with aid from an interpreter, was told he would be serving 12 months in prison, minus the time he had already served in custody, and would then be deported for a fourth time. The case linked closely to the Politics course, especially around the problem of illegal immigration which is a highlighted topic in today's political climate. It also linked to sociology; the defendant had been previously convicted in multiple countries of serious offences. We then attended an ongoing trial in which the defendant was



being questioned by a barrister about relationships relating to the offence he was accused of. The line of questioning was detailed and bore some similarity to the rhetoric used in our debates. We were all fascinated by the complex and orderly processes of the court and the highly contentious nature of the cases, we developed opinions on the cases and ultimately the trip provoked unique and interesting debates about our justice system.

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# Debating Club – Should we ban smart phones in the classroom?

By Ifan Bambury

## Banning Smartphones in the classroom? Is this one step towards an authoritarian government?

This question is divisive. Naturally, it is stark evidence for a widening generational gap that stems from counter reactionism to modern society. A recent YouGov poll showed that 65% of those aged 65 or above believe that mobile devices should be definitively banned from educational environments, while only 13% of 18–24-year-olds feel this way. And I myself found myself in this slim category when I was invited to debate in favour of these smart devices in the Battle of Ideas Festival 2024. But now, I find myself in quite the different position.


As I was originally posed with the question, I immediately considered the diversionary nature of online activity. This surely could not fuse effectively with learning. But the more my teammate Arthur Pavey and I researched, the more that we constructed our argument, the more we considered how phones could be effectively implemented, I began to be swayed. Isn't it true that we can't hide from technology, that we should learn to embrace it, and that this can first come from schools?

Categorically, a total and outright removal of phones from classrooms would not be beneficial for teachers or students alike. There should be a right to use these devices at the request of the educator. This does not mean they can be used liberally in the classroom or during break times – the punishment would be confiscation – but should a task be more effectively completed digitally, why couldn't this be capitalised on?

I am settled on my newfound position, a stance and policy that I took when running for the Kent Youth County Council. Now, as a member, I will push forward my perspective: phones should not be absolutely banned. To quote the final line of my debate speech: "We have to use [technology's] potential, not run away from it".

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# IWM Duxford Trip

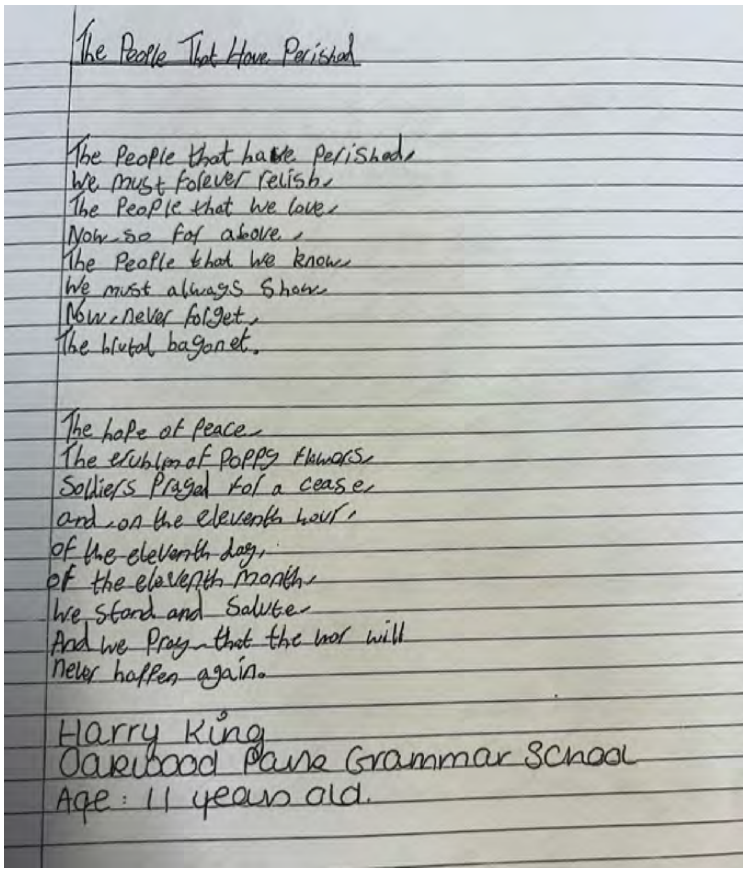
On the 6th December Year 8 students visited IWM Duxford in Cambridgeshire.

Duxford was an airbase used by the Royal Air Force and then the American Air Force during the course of the Second World War. Students were able to see many aircraft from the time including Spitfires, Hurricanes and a Lancaster bomber. For many the highlight was the Battle of Britain section with the Operations Room telling the story of a major raid on 15th September 1940 which even mentioned Maidstone. Churchill spoke of 'The Few': airmen who fought the Luftwaffe and made Hitler reconsider his invasion plans. Seeing the 'Ops Room' restored and preserved as it was during that pivotal summer gave students a sense of the peril Britain faced then and the role of groundcrews and pilots in defending Britain. Students also saw memorials to the pilots from Czechoslovakia, Poland and the USA who flew against the Nazis. In the American Air museum students reflected on the Cold War and saw some of the most complex aircraft ever made; a reflection of the changing world since 1945 with the rise of the superpowers.


# Year 7 English Enrichment Day

All Y7 students were asked to write a poem about war and have been given the opportunity to submit their poem into the Young Writer's Competition. If they are successful in their submission, their work will be published in a book of poems written by students across the UK.

Poems by:
Ruben Ansell (7P)
Milo Martin (7P)
Harry King (7P)

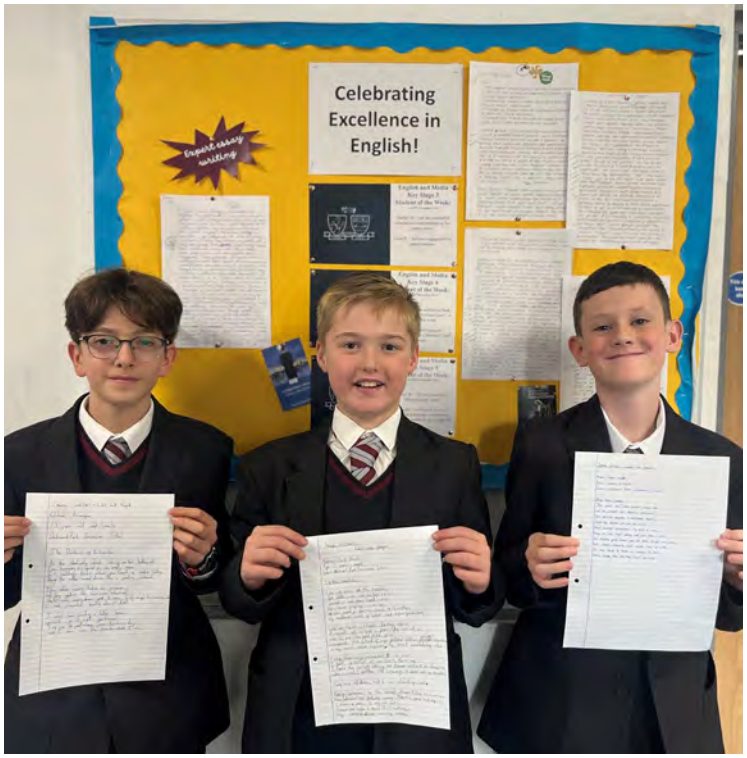


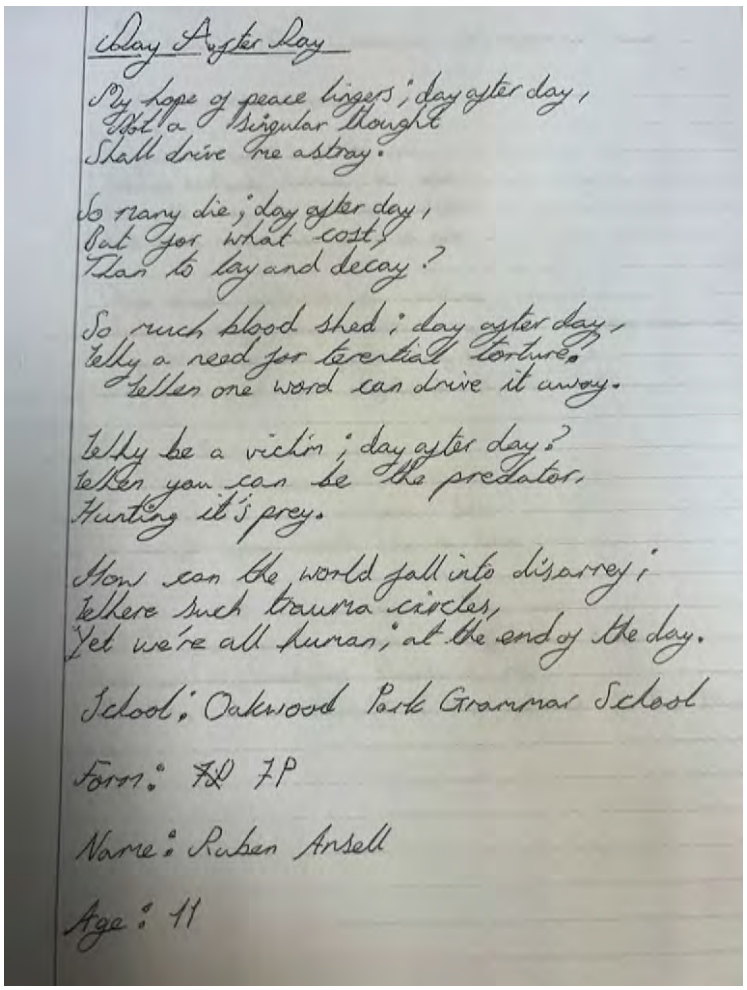
The People That Have Perished

The People that have perished
We must forever relish
The People that we love
Now so far above
The People that we know
We must always show
Now never forget
The brutal bayonet

The hope of peace
The erubion of Poppy flowers
Soldiers Prayed for a cease
and on the eleventh hour
of the eleventh day
of the eleventh month
We stand and Salute
And we Pray that the war will
Never happen again

Harry King
Oakwood Park Grammar School
Age: 11 years old.



Day After Day

By hope of peace lingers; day after day,
Till a singular thought
Shall drive me astray.

So many die; day after day,
But for what cost?
Than to lay and decay?

So much blood shed; day after day,
Telly a need for torential torture.
Tellen one word can drive it away.

Telly be a victim; day after day?
Tellen you can be the predator.
Hunting it's prey.

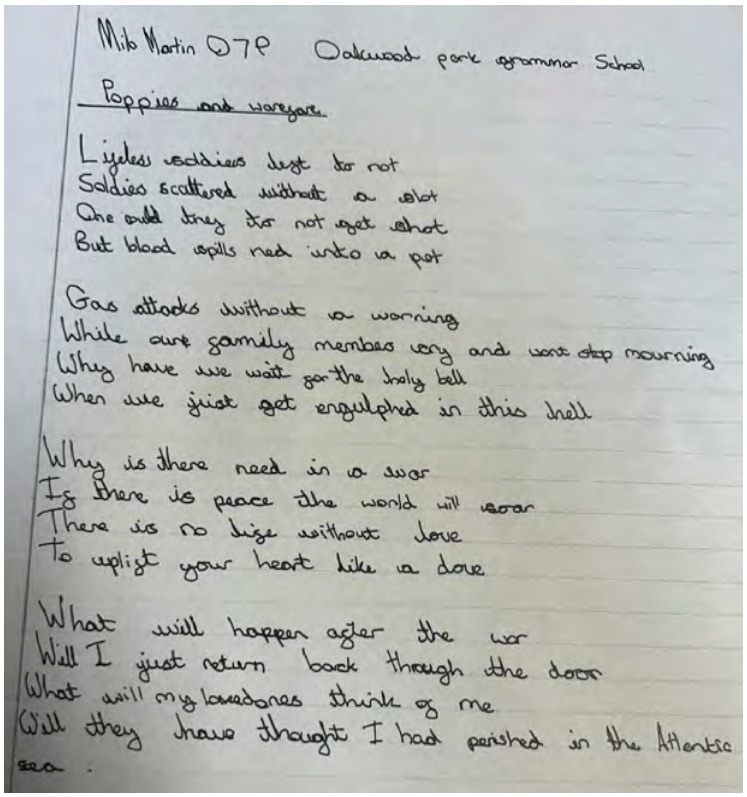
How can the world fall into disarrey;
Where such trauma circles,
Yet we're all human; at the end of the day.

School: Oakwood Park Grammar School

Form: 7D 7P

Name: Ruben Ansell

Age: 11



Milo Martin 07P Oakwood park grammar School

Poppies and warfare

Lifeless soldiers dead or not
Soldiers scattered without a plot
One could they do not get what
But blood spills red into a pot

Gas attacks without a warning
While our family members cry and wont stop mourning
Why have we wait for the holy bell
When we just get engulphed in this hell

Why is there need in a war
If there is peace the world will soar
There is no life without love
To uplift your heart like a dove

What will happen after the war
Will I just return back through the door
What will my loved ones think of me
Will they have thought I had perished in the Atlantic sea.

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# Ethan Sparks
# Mini GP World Finals Aragon

Huge congratulations to Ethan Sparks who recently achieved an incredible 4th place finish at the Mini GP World Finals in Aragon, Spain. After topping free practice Ethan was faced with torrential rain for the qualification event. This levelled the playing field and meant that Ethan had to battle hard to finish in 7th place for the main race.

The rain eventually subsided meaning the Super Finals would be contested in dry conditions, with double points available to the riders. This played into Ethan's hands as he rode a fantastic race to achieve P2, finishing higher than all riders who had previously taken advantage of the wet qualification conditions. Unfortunately this wasn't quite enough to place him in a podium position as he narrowly missed out by just four points.

Despite this Ethan can be incredibly proud of his performance. He has now cemented his position amongst the world's best riders and looks forward to improving upon this performance at the 2025 World Finals. At only 13 years old his future amongst the best riders in the world is looking bright!

A summary of Ethan's brilliant achievements from the 2024 World Mini GP Finals are below:

- Fastest rider in practice
- P2 in the Super Final
- 2nd fastest lap of the Super Final race
- P4 Overall in the world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# F1 Exhibition London

On Wednesday 4th December, students studying Design and Technology visited the F1 exhibition in London to look at how innovation, design and technology have developed the Formula 1 sport.

The exhibition included six principle rooms, offering a unique perspective on the extraordinary story of Formula 1.




A range of displays showing the technology, materials, design and engineering that goes into the different elements of the cars. Safety, testing, speed, performance, manufacturing, advertising and sponsoring where all covered in the exhibition. The evolution of the F1 car with a display of original cars from across the decades. The exhibition offered a glimpse into how F1 teams meticulously develop the different elements for each seasons new car.

This was a very interesting and enjoyable trip – well worth a visit.


OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# History Department Remembrance Day

## The History Department's display about Remembrance Day was visible in November. Students learn about the World Wars at several points in their History curriculum;


Year 7: Representation of the People Act, 1918, in Year 8: Why the First World War was so significant and how was the world again affected and changed by war, 1939-45 and then in Year 9 where students learn about the Russian context of the First World War. Those taking their History studies further then also learn about the total wars and the Afghan War in their GCSE Warfare Through Time Unit and for our A-Level students they explore the Italian and Russian experiences of the World Wars. History GCSE students took part in the main OPGS Remembrance service. Within the Department we used our Noticeboard to remind students of the History of the event and to perhaps give them a prompt to reflect on why it is so important to know and understand about this topic and about the past more generally.

# Year 12 Prefect Games

## Year 12 Subject Prefects brightened up the lunchtimes of Year 7 students this week by manning Christmas games and selling cakes.


The LRC was packed and festive during this dark and wet week. Bingo, pin the nose on the reindeer and Rudolf darts were great successes. Money raised will go to Dementia UK and 21 Together which are our Sixth Form charities.

Thank you to all Year 7s who attended and to those of you who donated cakes.

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# House of Commons Trip

Year 12 Politics students travelled to Westminster to attend parliamentary debates in the House of Commons. They had a tour of the ancient buildings that make up our earliest parliament and impressed the guide with their knowledge of the legislative process.

From the public gallery they saw the Health Secretary, Wes Streeting, argue against puberty blockers and heard the Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, lay out her plans for cutting illegal migration.

The most memorable part of their trip will probably be the noisy and entertaining walk back to Victoria Station. The direct action by the National Farmers Union had hundreds of tractors blocking the roads. We were deafened by the sound of many horns, some playing recognisable dance tunes, as we left Westminster.

Whatever your view is of the inheritance tax on farmers, we all agreed it was quite a spectacle.

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# Students visit Auschwitz

Written by Joseph Fisher, Jacob Holness and Lily Stevens

The visit to Auschwitz has been a deeply affecting experience. In a world of awareness of all the injustice, death and war that is reported on in the news, to visit a site where the most atrocious genocide took place was deeply emotional. It did not just highlight how awful the conditions of these people suffering then were but all the people since and today that have suffered.

Growing up in a privileged world it may sound naïve, but the murders committed by the Nazis have always been difficult to comprehend. With me becoming desensitised to the violence and dehumanised to the people of the Holocaust as merely making up statistics. However, the trip to Auschwitz has broken down the stats into real stories, with key moments profoundly affecting me.

Specifically, how truly how terrible the conditions of the various peoples that suffered under the Nazis were, with the biting Polish Cold not being protected by the barns that the people suffered through in. To endure this while being stripped of their belongings and identity; something which really hits you upon seeing and visualising how thousands upon thousands of people everyday had to endure in the most terrible conditions. From the glasses held in the cases that would give you an inkling of what personality they had, to the locks of hair, Auschwitz makes you understand that they weren't just a number they were people with lives that were taken away from them.

Furthermore, I think it was interesting to understand that a lot of the evidence (in particular photographs) that we have evidencing how people were treated during the Holocaust and within these particular camps were actually taken by SS soldiers and

should be received with the understanding that they attempted to present the experiences in less graphic and false manner. This makes it even harder for us today to understand what these people truly went through, and therefore making it even more important to be aware of the suffering they went through today, with it being important to remember and understand these events in order to prevent similar cases

in the future. One of the many things I took from the trip was those who learn, and those who visit becomes a witness, that's why I think that when given the opportunity everyone should go and see what happened there.

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# Lille Trip Review by Sam Denton

Although it was an early start, the trip was amazing! On day 1, we boarded Le Shuttle at Folkstone and before we knew it we were gazing out of the window at French scenery.

After an hour's drive, we stopped at the waffle factory, where we learned how Flemish waffles are made, and we even got to try some (they were delicious!). Once we had reached the city of Lille, we walked around and looked at the amazing architecture of the city, before eventually getting to explore the Christmas market. By this time, all the lights had been switched on: the Ferris wheel, the Christmas tree and, best of all, the Christmas market. On day 2, after a breakfast of croissants and pains au chocolat, we got to further explore the city and spend some money on souvenirs and Christmas gifts. Next, we walked to Le Lautrec chocolate factory, where we got to try different chocolates and even purchase some for ourselves. After that, we had a lunch of French chips and baguettes. Our time was drawing to an end, but we had one last moment in the city, and some of us went on the Ferris wheel and experienced the amazing views. This was an amazing trip and a great experience and opportunity to speak French. It has made me realise that I would love to take French as one of my GCSE options.



## French Trip Review by Samuel White

I really enjoyed how we were told facts about France and French culture on the bus, for example how much wine the French drink per year on average. I found it interesting and entertaining to learn these things. I also really enjoyed going to the chocolate factory and the waffle factory, because it showed how the French make waffles differently to the English, as well as the difference in chocolates. I also really liked how we were the only ones in the factories whilst they were explaining, as it created a fun atmosphere.

I also really enjoyed going to the French Christmas market, called ‘Marchés de Noel’. I really enjoyed the Christmas atmosphere, as well as having crepes and churros, and other market treats. I also really enjoyed how the people at the Christmas market stalls helped us with pronunciation of what we were requesting, and were patient with us. This gave me slightly more confidence about speaking more French than before we went.

The only thing that I wish was different, was possibly letting us order our hotel food ourselves in French, or possibly ordering for us and then insisting that we ask for the food from you in French, or risk going hungry! This might help us have to speak French more over the period we were there.

Thank you very much for organising and accompanying us on this trip.

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# London GCSE Art Trip

On the 23rd of October the Year 10 GCSE Art class travelled to London to explore art work from the masters and contemporaries of the artworld. Students started the day by drawing in Trafalgar Square. This gave students the chance to explore drawing outside of the classroom, observing from life and having to take into account moving objects and a dynamic surrounding.

We then quickly went to the National Gallery where students explored the galleries looking at work from Canaletto, Titian, Monet and Seurat to name put a few. The students choose art work that spoke to them and sat in the gallery drawing, taking inspiration from some of the greatest art works from the art world.

After a quick lunch break in Leicester Square, students were revitalised and proceeded to the National Portrait Gallery where they had the chance to explore paintings and photographs from a range of historical and contemporary artists. Again they chose pieces that inspired them exploring the art work drawing from life.

On the journey home on the train students continued to work into and develop their sketches. All the students worked in a exemplary fashion producing lovely work and engaging with the galleries fantastically. The Art department was extremely proud of how they conducted themselves on the day and the work they produced.

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# London Philharmonic Orchestra Trip

On Wednesday 20th November, GCSE and A Level Music students enjoyed a trip to the Royal Festival Hall.

Here they saw the London Philharmonic Orchestra perform a selection of orchestral pieces from Badinerie by Bach (our set work) to film music Dam Busters March. This was conducted by Jack Sheen and presented by Rachel Leach who shared analysis and key musical terminology on several pieces with engaging quizzes for students to complete throughout the performances.

After the concert, students were offered the chance to look around the Southbank Centre and visit the gift shop.

Through this trip, much has been learnt by the students with many joyful emotions and great enthusiasm.

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# Maths Olympiad for Girls

On the 25th of September, four Oakwood Park students took part in the Maths Olympiad for Girls. The competition is to encourage young female and non-binary students in mathematics.


Around 5000 of the top mathematicians across the UK sat the paper, so it is incredibly competitive. If a student attains a merit award, then this signifies they are of the top scorers in the country. A small proportion are rewarded a distinction award, which signifies a notably high score.

Congratulations to Rhiannon Atkins for achieving a Merit and to Yancy Chan for achieving a Distinction. Both achieving full marks in 2 of the 5 questions, which really is quite a feat. We are incredibly proud of their hard work. The photo shows both students with their certificates after being congratulated by Mrs Craig.

# Senior Kangaroo

Pictured are all those who took part in the Senior Kangaroo, meaning they achieved in around the top 5% nationally. These candidates were invited by UKMT to take part in the follow-on round. To add to the highly competitive nature of this follow-on round, only the top candidates achieve a Merit certificate, with no other award being possible.


To make it even more difficult, the questions were no longer multiple-choice, and the time is no longer 90 minutes. Each question is a 3-digt answer and they only have one hour. We would like to warmly congratulate Matthew Sandman of Year 11 and Joshua Bruce of Year 12 for both achieving Merit certificates. A big well done to all who took part, since qualifying in itself is incredibly difficult.

We await the BMO results which should come near the beginning of December term break. Students will be notified of their results once they are available.

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# Senior Maths Challenge

The Senior Maths Challenge is sat by around 80,000 Year 12 & Year 13 students across approximately 2000 schools from across the UK and even overseas. It does not test A level content, but the problem solving required is incredibly difficult and often unfamiliar. It tests a different set of skills that cannot be easily prepared for, so a lot of hard work and cunning is required to succeed.

The top 50% scorers receive a Bronze certificate, top 16% receive a Silver certificate, top 8% receive a Gold. Of the 67 candidates, the school received 14 Gold certificates, 19 Silver, and 24 Bronze. This means 21% of our candidates achieved the highest award, something we are incredibly proud of, with around half of our students receiving one of the two highest awards possible.

We also had 14 students invited to the next round of the competition. The top 5000 in the country were invited to the Senior Kangaroo and the top 1000 in the country were invited to take part in the British Maths Olympiad. This is extremely impressive and we are incredibly proud of all who took part and their hard work.

We also entered four Year 11 students (Aston Cheng, Matthew Sandman, Angus Kenny, Angus Wong), all of whom received certificates (2 Gold, Silver, and Bronze). Since they were up against mostly A Level students who were 2 years older, this is quite the accomplishment. especially since two were invited to the follow-on rounds, one of which attained a place in the top 1000. OPGS have not previously had a student outside of A-Level enter the BMO, but given Aston's hard work each lunchtime in preparation for the competition it is clear to see that it is well-earned.

I would also like to highlight Elliot Ford of Year 10, who achieved a Gold certificate, and Alfie Wagon, with a Silver certificate. It is exciting to see our young mathematicians perform so highly at a national level. Pictured are some of the successful candidates, including Alfie Wagon receiving a book prize award with Mrs Craig, to celebrate his achievement.

# Invicta Teams Challenge

On the 21st of November, Tamas Kovacs, Tom Williamson, Angus Kenny, and Angus Wong represented Oakwood Park Grammar School in the Invicta Teams Challenge. This encourages students to solve mathematical problems as a team. It was an incredible day and our students enjoyed it thoroughly. It is a great opportunity for them to see mathematics outside of the classroom and to work collaboratively.

The competition was tough, with many of the best schools in the area attending. Oakwood Park managed to attain second place, securing a spot in the finals. coming second to Tonbridge, with Skinners taking third place and also securing a spot in the finals. Congratulations to all who took part.

The other semi-final is taking place in January, where another Oakwood Park team is competing. We wish them the best of luck and are looking forward to the upcoming finals in early 2025.
Thank you again to Invicta Grammar School for hosting the event and for such a fun and challenging day out.


# Advanced Mathematics Support Programme event at Imperial College London

AMSP held an event at Imperial College London on the 11th of December, where we were able to bring 10 students. The event was for those who are hoping to pursue STEM degrees at top universities such as Cambridge, Oxford, Imperial, LSE, Warwick, and others that require entrance examinations or interviews.

They showed examples of hard maths problems they'd have to be able to solve to look at getting into these universities and gave advice on personal statements and what they should be doing now to help set their personal statement apart from other candidates. The feedback from the students was overwhelmingly positive and they all had a great time.

We are always looking for opportunities to best stretch our students and allow them the opportunities to push students to reach as high as they can. We are already looking into attending more events in the future that allow our students to extend their mathematics beyond the classroom.

IMPERIAL

# Oakwood Park Teams Challenge

On the 27th of November, Oakwood Park hosted a maths teams challenge for Year 12 and 13 students. Overall, 10 schools took part (Barton Court Grammar, Gravesend Grammar, Invicta Grammar, Simon Langton Girls Grammar, Maidstone Grammar School, Maidstone Grammar School for Girls, Oakwood Park Grammar, Sevenoaks School, St Stimon's Stock, Tonbridge School) with a total of 19 teams of four participating.

The day consisted of four rounds of difficult, head-scratching maths problems that really put to test their problem solving skills and ability to think outside the box. It encouraged collaboration and a mixture of quick thinking, but also one round where there were only 3 problems but one hour to complete them. These problems had no defined 'end' and encouraged the students to investigate the maths surrounding the problems. In total 100 problems were created, all by Mr Handy.

Congratulations to Tonbridge school who achieved first and second place and to Gravesend who took fourth place. Oakwood Park managed to achieve third and fifth place. We are incredibly grateful for everyone who took part and we look forward to seeing you next year.

This event could not have run without all the sixth form volunteers who helped throughout the day. They were incredible and we are fortunate as a school to have such diligent students who would give their time in order to help their school community. A photo below shows all the volunteers pictured with Mrs Craig.


Thank you again to Charlie Razey, Lucas Dick, Bailey Barnett, Aly Ahmed, Ethan Woodward, Jakub Talaska, Tyler Payne, Nova Attard Montalto, Alexander Archer, Aleena Eldho, Angel Eldho, Sam Leung, Joseph Leung, Mohamed Ahmed, Ewan Tweddell, Aston Cheng, and Isaac Wenborn.
Our third-place team consisted of Marcus Choi, Arthur Mak, Austin Lam, and Hallee Lou. Our fifth-place team consisted of Joshua Bruce, Yancy Chan, Joshua Kwong, and Sebastian Lane. A big congratulations to all.

I would like to share some feedback I received from one of the teachers the morning after the event: 'All they can talk about this morning is about how much fun they had, so thank you'. It is great to see these students use their immense mathematical ability in these unusual and difficult scenarios and enjoy the challenge.

Thank you again to all and we will see you again next year.

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# Music Lessons

Year 7 have been learning about the Carnival of the Animals and how the elements of music can be used through animals. Students are working in small groups to create a piece of music inspired by their chosen animal.

Year 8 and 9 have been learning via the Musical Futures approach in bands. Year 8 have been learning Happier by Bastille and Marshmello on ukulele, keyboard, guitar and bass guitar. Year 9 have chosen different songs to learn in lessons; with the addition of vocals and drums, with most year 9 classes booking practice rooms outside of lesson time!

# Musical Achievements

## Jasper Lloyd - Grade 1 Contemporary Drums (Distinction)

If you have taken any music graded examinations and are awaiting your results, please keep Mrs Judges informed.

# OPGS Parents & Friends Association AGM

The Parent's and Friends Association welcomes all Parents and Carers to our AGM: Thursday 30 January 2025 5.30pm to 7.00pm at school. This meeting will be online and I will send the link nearer the time. Unfortunately, we did not have enough attendees at our November meeting to be quorum.

To be charity compliant, OPGSPFA will need to vote in a Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary. To support our fundraising activities, communications and workload, OPGSPFA would benefit by also having a Pre-loved coordinator and a Social Media coordinator. These five roles will form the committee; committee members are required to be Trustees of the OPGSPFA charity.

If you have knowledge or want to upskill, please consider taking on one of these roles. Our team is really supportive, no-one is left on their own.

Many hands make light work, and funds more resources and enrichments opportunities for all OPGS students.

## Volunteering with the PA

As a volunteer you can make a positive impact upon the lives of young people whilst giving something back and making a positive impact to the heart and soul of our community – OPGS!

Being a volunteer for OPGSPFA will significantly support your core professional development. Research shows volunteering is highly beneficial for both volunteers and their employers because it shows commitment, the ability to think strategically and engage with local community, making you a valuable asset to any organisation. Volunteering for OPGSPFA will help strengthen, develop and sharpen your skills, bring new experiences and perspectives to your workplace, and meet people from different professional backgrounds.

The Parents and Friends Association are all parents and carers of OPGS young adults, and we fundraise to enhance pupils learning experiences and enrichment. We are all volunteers, doing this valuable work around our jobs and family life. If you can offer any time to help support fundraising activities, please come to the AGM - Thursday 30 January 2025 5.30pm to 7.00pm

We really appreciate any time you can give: setting up or putting away pre-loved sales, selling pre-loved and refreshments, helping at fundraising events and discussing fundraising ideas.

## Pre-Loved Uniform

We need more donations! We take all uniform and the new style PE kit. Please leave clean uniform and new style PE kit at the school office.

The Parents Association sell Pre-Loved at the year 7 to 11 parent consultations.

Other ways you can support the PA

It is really easy to sign up for Easy Fundraising and nominate OPGSPFA.

You can earn free donations for OPGSPFA every time you shop online. Online stores include Amazon, M&S, Tesco/Morrisons/Sainsburys groceries, John Lewis, Ebay, Just Eat, Argos - there are 100s of stores.

Get the app on your phone and do all your online shopping via Easy Fundraising to raise free donations for OPGSPFA.

https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/oakwoodparkgrammar/

# Evil and the God of Love
# Peter Vardy RS Conference - Year 12 and 13

On the bitter morning of Friday 22d November 2024, years 12 and 13 RS students travelled up to Bloomsbury Baptist Church, where Dr Peter Vardy gave a lecture on evil. The day was exceptionally enjoyable, providing us with the chance to engage in exploration and share ideas with other students who share similar interests. The highlight of the day occurred after Vardy's lectures, when we participated in a debate that allowed us to express our perspectives on the issue of evil and whether this affected God's status of omnibenevolent.

In his first lecture, Peter Vardy explored the concepts of good and evil. He began by presenting various perspectives on evil, particularly the Catholic approach and situation ethics. The Catholic perspective, which is grounded in natural moral law, states that an action is believed evil if it falls short of its intended purpose. On the other hand, situation ethics defines evil as a rejection of love. Vardy ultimately concludes that an act is considered evil if it dehumanises individuals; for instance, he refers to Trump's policies regarding immigrants and the treatment of employees as mere units as examples of dehumanisation.

In order to critique the existence of God, Vardy examined the evidential problem of evil, which challenges God's existence due to the suffering in the world. Vardy presented both sides of the argument, highlighting critics who suggest that without suffering, the other human experiences would be meaningless. However, he also emphasised that extreme tragedies pose a significant challenge to justifying the existence of God. He further observes that God has given us the gift of freedom, and it is our responsibility to use it responsibly. Additionally, he says that evil is an inevitable outcome of our choices.

He then went on to talk about St Augustine, and The Augustinian Theory about evil. Augustine realised that within all humans, there is an inbuilt human inclination to sin, and he emphasises the idea of original sin. He states that all human nature is corrupted by sin, and that sin is seeking lesser goods rather than the greatest good. He describes this as a 'Privato Bonni' - an absence of good. Vardy then goes on to explain where - according to Augustine - evil exists. Augustine says that Evil exists in two things; anything that puts finite ends or purposes in the first place instead of God, and the confidence of a created individual. He argues that humans are incapable of changing themselves due to original sin, and that God's grace is essential.

Vardy's final lecture was about challenges to Augustine. Vardy starts off with giving us an example from biology - Charles Darwin and his theory of natural selection. Augustine's theory relies on the idea of original sin, set from Adam and Eve, but natural selection goes against the idea of Adam and Eve.

Secondly, he talks about Pelagius - a Celtic monk who was a contemporary of Augustine. He says that all humans are free, and God will judge them on the basis if we do good or evil, not only if we accept his grace. Thirdly, he talks about Alvin Plantinga. He says that God gives human beings genuine freedom and it is the result of the abuse of that freedom that evil exists in the world. He says that our free choices are central, and original sin is not the cause. Finally, he gives the criticism from John Hick. Hick affirms human freedom and therefore, he says we are responsible for our own decisions. He also says that God gave us freedom and we are responsible for how we exercise it, but without God, there would be no freedom, therefore God is also responsible.

Overall, the experience of listening to Peter Vardy was both unique and engaging, providing an enjoyable method for exploring different approaches to the problem of evil, in contrast to traditional classroom learning.

By Jess Townsley and Dylan Wright

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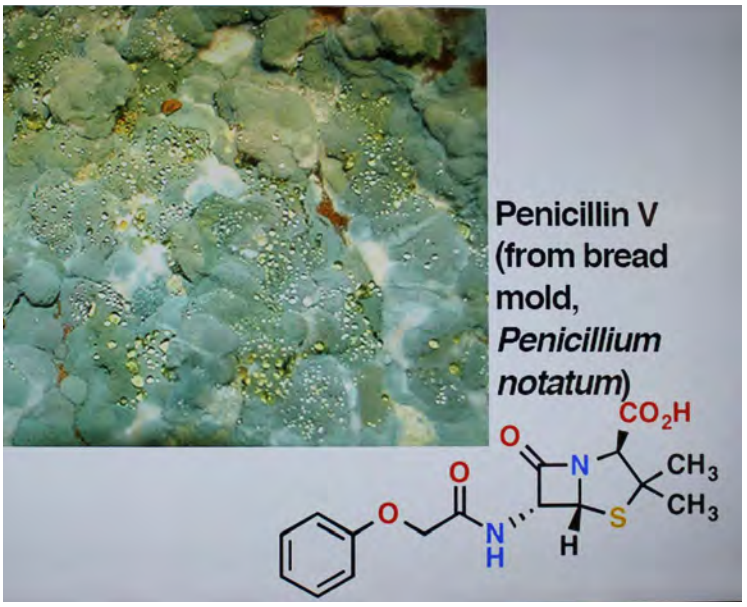
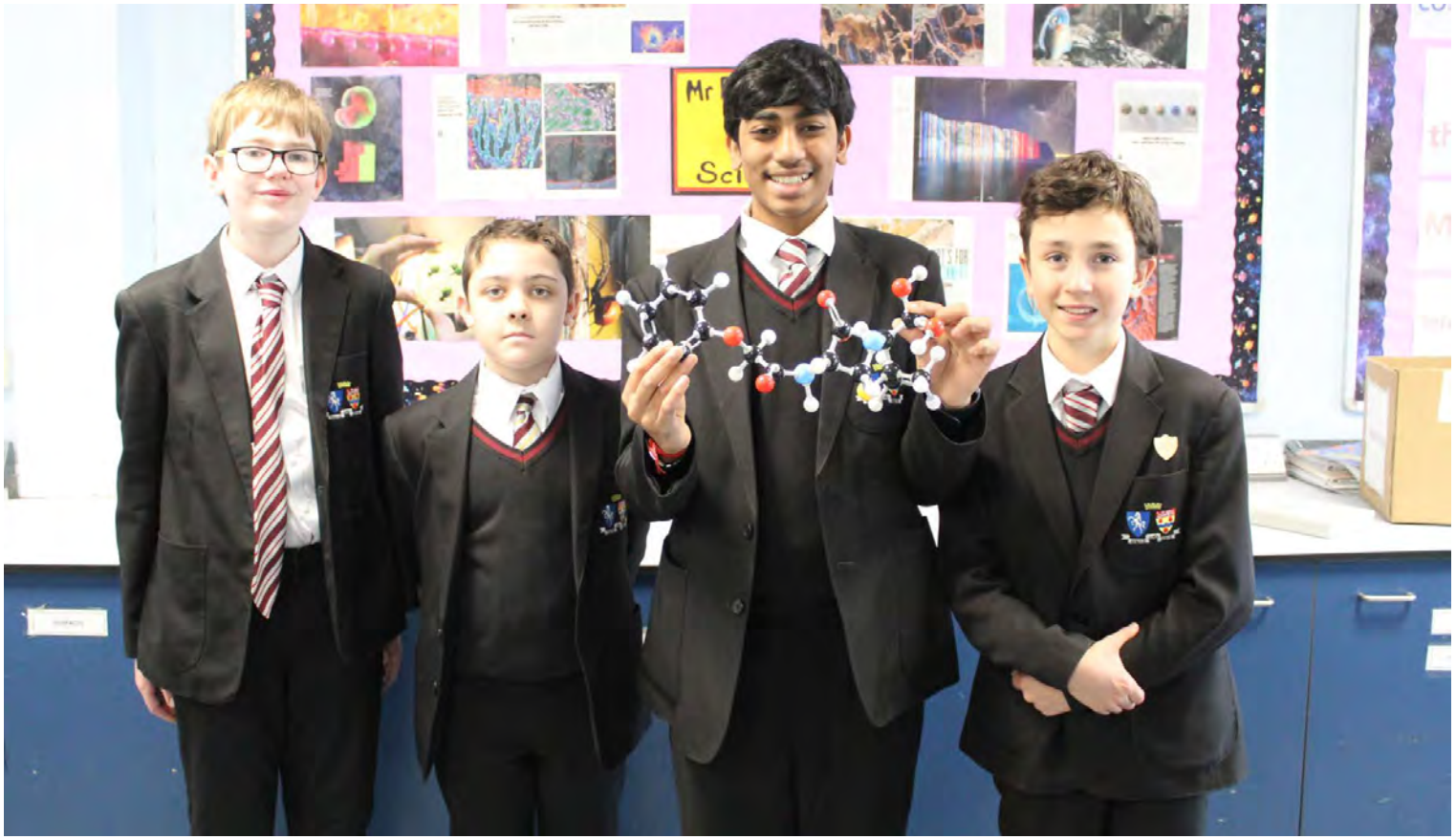
# Science Club

Alexander Fleming famously observed in 1928 that one of his staphylcocci cultures had developed a fungus and the colonies around the fungus had been destroyed.




The structure of the key antibacterial agent was elucidated in 1945 by Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin using X-ray crystallography. The key to antibiotic

activity is the beta lactam ring (cyclic amide 4-membered ring) which inhibits formation of the bacterial cell wall. There is a large family of these molecules, largely differing by the identity of the group forming the amide in the bottom left part of the molecule. The molecule shown (Penicillin V) was later synthesized (after heroic effort) by John Sheehan and colleagues at MIT in 1951.



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# Term 2 Football Report (SPS & RDE)

## Year 7

Unbeaten and among the Elite!
The Year 7 A team continues to shine, maintaining their perfect record this season:

- Played: 9
- Won: 9
- Drawn: 0
- Lost: 0
- Goals For: 38
- Goals Against: 13
- Goal Difference: +25

The team's journey to the National Cup quarter-finals was secured with a thrilling 3-2 victory over Riverside School last week, thanks to a strike from Andreas Koffas and two ice-cool penalties from Logan Laird. In the County Cup, they advanced to the quarterfinals with a commanding 5-1 away win against Wrotham School, showcasing their dominance on the road.

The challenges keep coming as they prepare for another National Cup clash against St Dunstan's College and an MSFA league fixture versus Maplesden Noakes School in the final week of term. With a string of important matches ahead, the squad is proving they belong among the best, now officially ranked as one of the top 8 teams in England at their age level.

This incredible unbeaten run is a testament to the team's talent, resilience, and unity. With tougher games looming, they can enter the new year with confidence, eager to face every challenge head-on. What a season it's shaping up to be!

## Year 8

Both the Year 8 teams have shared mixed success during term 2 and have both gained experience playing against opposition teams who have shown greater athleticism and strength at times. This has been interspersed with performances where our levels have been too much for the opposition. This demonstrates the need to play high quality opposition at every opportunity to push ourselves to the next level. The A Team won against Lenham school 7-0 and lost against Tunbridge Wells 1-0 and Shenfield 4-0 both in the ESFA Cup's. Shenfield are always very tough opposition and attract several academy players from West Ham, Colchester and Ipswich Town due to their ideal location in Brentwood. Unfortunately, we had a couple of key players absent and whilst bolstered by the addition of some B team players they were collectively too strong. The experience of playing such a team will help us after Christmas when we start playing in the Maidstone League.

The B Team have enjoyed successes against Simon Langton GS (winning 6-0) and Norton Knatchbull (winning 4-1), progressing to the quarter final of the Kent Cup against Hurstmere School. Hurstmere are again another strong footballing school who progress to the later stages of Kent competitions on a regular basis. At 1-0 the tie was in the balance at half-time, but following four substitutions we ended up losing 8-0. We now play Dover GS in the next round of the ESFA Cup (the same opposition that Hurstmere have in the semi-final of the Kent Cup). Perhaps this will be the season where both A and B teams meet each other in the finals of the Maidstone League and Cup – I do hope so!

## Year 10

The U15 A team continued their season with a strong 3-0 victory over Harvey GS in the Kent Cup, setting up an exciting 4th round clash away to Norton Knatchbull before the Christmas break. A win there would see them progress to the quarterfinals. In the new year, the team will turn their focus to the MSFA competition, where they aim to return to the District Cup Final, set to be held at the prestigious Gallagher Stadium.

The U15 B team has also enjoyed success, reaching the round of 32 in the National Competition. They face Tunbridge Wells GS next, with a potential matchup against Harris Academy in the following round. Despite a hard-fought defeat to St Simon Stock A team, the boys gained valuable experience and showed great determination, holding their own for much of the game.

This group of players is brimming with enthusiasm, and their energy has inspired wider participation,

with many year 10 players expressing keen interest in being part of the school teams. The future looks bright for both squads as they build on their successes and aim for further progress in their respective competitions.

## Year 11

The U16 football team has demonstrated strong performance so far this season. With six matches played, the team has secured four victories, resulting in a commendable record. The team has scored a total of 21 goals while conceding 16, giving them a positive goal difference of 5.

The team's performance in the County Cup and ESFA competitions has been particularly impressive, with four consecutive wins showcasing their ability to compete at a high level. Despite the setbacks in both National Cups with away defeats to Herne Bay and Norton Knatchbull, the squad has maintained a strong overall form and will be looking to bounce back in the Kent Cup.

The next match is a local derby against Maidstone Grammar School in the Kent Cup round of 16. This match is highly anticipated and represents a significant challenge as well as an opportunity for the team to advance further in the competition, having already beaten MGS once this season, this game is set up to be a classic with the winners progressing into the ¼ Finals.

The U16 squad has shown remarkable progress and resilience this season. Their strong performance, characterised by an impressive goal-scoring record and crucial victories in key matches, sets a positive tone for the remainder of the season. The team's dedication and hard work will be pivotal as they prepare for the upcoming Kent Cup and aim to continue their successful run in the competition.

## 2nd XI Football

The 2XI have continued to progress this season and have only lost once against Borden GS, managing to avenge this defeat with a 2-0 win in the return fixture last week. We are unbeaten against MGS having drawn 0-0 in the first game and winning 2-1 in the away fixture. Other notable performances came against Simon Langton GS (6-0 win) and Norton Knatchbull (4-1 win). Current league standings are below and we are lying in second position with two games in hand. We have given ourselves every opportunity to win the league. Both MGS and ourselves have yet to play Norton Knatchbull GS. It looks like the final games of the season will decide who takes the title this year!

The 2XI also progressed against Harris Academy in the quarter finals of the Kent Cup to make it to the semi-finals in January. The game was filled with controversy and with a minute to go we looked to be going out at 1-0 down. A final roll of the dice meant sending the goalkeeper up for one last chance and the confusion in the box led to us gaining an equalising goal. We then proceeded to knock the opposition out on penalties much to the dismay of the Harris Academy players and to the delight of our students.

FIXTURES
EAST KENT DIVISION 2

LEAGUE TABLE

| Pos | Association | Pl | W | D | L | F | A | Pts | GD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | Maidstone GS for Boys | 9 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 28 | 11 | 20 | +17 |
| 2nd | Oakwood Park GS | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 19 | 8 | 14 | +11 |
| 3rd | Norton Knatchbull School | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 14 | 7 | 13 | +7 |
| 4th | Borden GS | 8 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 22 | 14 | 12 | +8 |

## 1st XI Football

The 1st XI delivered a thrilling 3-2 Kent Cup victory away to Thomas Tallis School after extra time, earning them a 4th round match next year against Simon Langton GS. This represents their best chance for silverware this season and will be a critical focus moving forward.

However, their league campaign has been a story of missed opportunities. An unbeaten run dating back to September came to an end with a disappointing 2-1 home loss to Dane Court GS in early December, effectively ending any hopes of winning the U19 league. That result was compounded by a 2-2 draw away to Dover GS, where the team let a 2-0 lead slip within 10 minutes—a recurring issue this season.

The team's achilles heel has been conceding goals after taking the lead, costing them 7 points from winning positions. While this can happen in football, the players understand the importance of maintaining focus and intensity if they want to progress to the Kent Cup quarterfinals. With the new year bringing new challenges, the group remains determined to improve and make the most of their cup opportunities.

# Term 2 Rugby Report (RMR & MKJ)

## Year 7:

The year 7 rugby team have enjoyed a fantastic term of results, remaining unbeaten across the five competitive matches they have played. The term started well with a hard fought 10-10 draw against Chatham & Clarendon GS. This was an excellent result given it was the first competitive rugby fixture for most of the boys in the squad.

Next up was a long away trip to play St Lawrence College in Ramsgate, a school renowned for having a strong rugby programme. The boys tackling & forward play came to the fore in this fixture, denying St Lawrence possession and territory whilst making the most of defensive line breaks to finish 25-15 winners. The team then backed this performance up with two further wins against Malling (25-15) and Holmesdale (40-0) School in the Maidstone Schools District Cup.

This term finished with a step up in the level of opposition against a skilled & powerful Bennett School team. OPGS started slowly in this fixture as the boys came to terms with the average size of the opposition team! Having fallen five points behind at half time the team rallied, showing great character to improve the intensity of their play and dominate the second half. Two successive tries put OPGS 10-5 up with just five minutes to play. Unfortunately Bennett launched a counterattack in the dying seconds of the game, breaking the OPGS defence to leave the score 10-10 at full time. Despite feeling disappointed at the result, the squad should feel immensely proud of the progress they have made as a team in just 7 weeks this term. They now look forward to the remainder of the Maidstone Schools District Rugby Cup and friendly fixtures against fellow grammar schools in terms 3&4.

## Year 8

The Under 13 matches began immediately after the half term with a home fixture v Chatham and Clarendon GS. The fixture was probably the best we have seen the team play over the past two seasons, with a good defensive structure meaning we were competing and turning over the ball effectively to gain possession regularly. This built confidence and allowed the team to build attacking routines. Maintaining possession and structure in attack opened up the spaces around the field and players from a multitude of positions were able to score. The final score was a 50pts -25pts win for the squad. Real confidence building for the next match against a tough side at St Lawrence College.

With a minimal squad due to injuries, we arrived on a wind-swept pitch ready to compete. The match started well, our attaching play was positive, taking the opposition on and recycling well. We could tell though that the match was going to be a tough one to win as St Lawrence had several club players in key positions which allowed them to stay in the match. Unfortunately, against the run of play St Lawrence College were able to take the lead; however, this did not see the team drop their heads, instead they stepped up to the challenge and scored two well played tries to take the lead into half time at 10pts – 5pts. It was clear that St Lawrence College were not going to let this go and they battled hard to regain parity in the match, scoring twice quickly in the second half, putting them one score ahead. With tiredness setting in the squad started to make some errors, passes were not going to hand, players were getting isolated and tackles missed. All the time putting pressure on the team and regaining the lead. At the end of the game St Lawrence ran in one final try, taking the score to 20pts-10pts, a first loss of the term.

There were plenty of positives to take from the match and with commitment improving for training we have seen a development in their team cohesiveness. Unfortunately, this ended up being the final match of the term due to the poor weather conditions and unavailability of opposition. We look forward to next term, further friendlies and the introduction of the Maidstone District Competitions.

## Year 9

The start of the term gave us our biggest challenge so far, we were drawn against Norton Knatchbull GS in the Kent Shield Semi-Final, a game we knew we could win, whilst being tough to play away from home. Arriving at the venue, Norton Knatchbull were checked out by the squad and their assumptions were correct, the large player who had defeated them in Year 7 was playing again. However, a rallying captains talk from Rory built confidence in the squad: the game started, and what a game it turned out to be. The first half was with the wind and downhill, could we take advantage? That we did, taking the lead quickly the boys were buoyed with excitement and anticipation with what they could do.

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Norton Knatchbull came back into the match, with a Number 8 pick and go move, and yes you guessed it, with their biggest ball carrier taking the ball on. This move was then repeated and the squad found themselves up against it. However, with a quick team talk and a change in tactics, our ruck play improved and putting more men on the ball carrier shut him out of the game, meaning that the opposition had to rethink their tactics. By half time, the leadership and team cohesiveness bought the match to a one score game.

So, to the second half, uphill, into the wind, this was going to be tough! The match continued much in the same way, both teams dominating periods of play and much of the half being a one-point match, it could go either way. Due to the nature of the game, injuries influenced the final result. With our flyhalf taking a big hit and being taken out the game, we were down to 14 men, thankfully Norton Knatchbull matched our numbers, but the impact was the creation of space on the pitch. Which team would benefit most? A few minutes later, a second injury removed another player, again increasing the space on the pitch and this is where Norton Knatchbull took advantage. With the hill, wind and a huge ball carrier they were able to create space and run in two quick tries to take the game away from us, although, we did score the final try bringing the final score to 45-27. Norton Knatchbull went on to win the final 17-14.

Whilst disappointment was there, we moved on to the next match v Bennet Memorial School with an opportunity to show we had learnt from our mistakes and showcase our true ability. The match was played on a big 4G pitch, giving plenty of space to both teams. This was to be one game we could really demonstrate the progress we had made. With structure and team play being the focus of the match, we started superbly building phase play, creating space and converting our opportunities. With the first half panning out superbly, we ran in six tries (Woody x 2, Arturs, Ethan, Adeposi and Will). Unfortunately, our kicking boots were not on that day, only converting two of the tries. Half time score was 34-8. A great comeback after our semifinal. The second half provided opportunity to try out new moves, positions and remove certain players to see how the team responded. Whilst the structure fell off a little, we still played well and run some lovely plays. Scoring 4 tries to none giving a final score of 56-8. A great come back and opportunity to try new things for future matches.

Our final match of the term was against a developing side from Malling school. Whilst they were new to the game, the challenge of maintaining our structure and shape was key in winning the match. However, this was too much of a challenge at times and we struggled with the strength and tackling of the opposition, much of the time squandering try scoring opportunities because of ‘white line fever’, rather than playing how we should. Whilst the half time score was 35-0, we made hard work of the game. The second half was then an eye-opener. Malling School came out fighting, and ran in three unanswered tries, tackling had gone missing, our structure was lost and we didn’t seem to know where we were at times. Eventually towards the later stages of the match we managed to regain our composure and score two tries to bring the final score to 52-17, but losing the second half 17pts-12pts. A lesson to be learned as we look forward to future matches in terms 3&4.

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# U13 Kent Schools Table Tennis Team Championships (RMR)

## Huge congratulations to the U13 OPGS table tennis team who went one better than last year's squad to win the U13 Kent Schools Team Table Tennis Championship Plate competition.

OPGS entered A&B teams into the competition with this being the student's first opportunity to represent the school at a county competition. The boys faced strong opposition from schools across Kent that included Sevenoaks, Rochester Maths GS, Rainham Mark GS and Radnor House.

In round 1 of the cup competition the A&B teams were unfortunate to be drawn in groups that included Sevenoaks (the eventual winners) and Rainham Mark GS A team. Despite winning matches against Brompton Academy & St John's Catholic Comprehensive School they both finished second in a group of three schools, meaning they didn't progress into round 2 and were instead entered into the Plate competition.

The A team then prevailed 5-3 in a tense fixture against Tunbridge Wells GS who have been winners of the championships on numerous occasions. The B team recorded a thumping 8-0 victory against St John's Catholic Comprehensive B team to also progress into the next round. The A team then won 6-2 vs. Hadlow College before overcoming St John's Catholic Comprehensive School A team in the semi-final (5-3). The B team faced Radnor House School A team in the other plate semi-final fixture and were extremely unfortunate to be edged out by 5 games to 3. This meant that the OPGS B team would face St John's Catholic Comprehensive School A team in a 3rd/4th playoff whilst the OPGS A team would play Radnor House School A team in the plate competition final. Unfortunately the B team couldn't bounce back from their semi-final disappointment and finished in 4th place, just outside the medal positions. Guaranteed a silver medal, the A team played some phenomenal table tennis to triumph in the final by a margin of 5 games to 3, winning the U13 Kent Schools Team Table Tennis Championship Plate competition. This is an extra special achievement given that none of the boys play regular club level table tennis and instead developed their games through PE lessons in the last two years.

## A Team Squad- Oreoluwa Falodun, Daniel Weinrich, Kiran Joseph, Marvin Kuruvilla.

## B Team Squad- Oscar Eaton Best, Dominik Smykowski, Dylan Waite, Leo Amartey.



# Max Benwell Kent Cricket Area Selection (RMR)

Congratulations to Max Benwell in gaining selection to the Kent Area cricket squad for the coming 2025 season. Max is excited for the season ahead and has shared his experiences below.

I play cricket for Kings Hill U13, Ightham Men's team and have played for Sheperd Neame Pub Company Cricket Club, and have recently been selected to play for Kent District team. To be put forward for the trials for Kent District you must be nominated by a coach - my coach, Dave Sutton, nominated me for the trials, after speaking with my parents for permission.

In early September, I spent 4 sessions with the District team at Rochester Grammar School with other boys that had also been nominated for Kent. During these sessions, we had to demonstrate our batting, bowling and fielding skills. They gave some instructions, but it was left to us to showcase our skills. It was quite tough as we all knew what was at stake.

After these sessions, my parents received a message to say I had been selected as part of the team, along with 19 other boys. I was really pleased with this!

I now attend training sessions on a Tuesday 7:15pm-9:15pm, at Rochester Grammar where we are taught skills, coached on our strengths – and our weaknesses. I enjoy this as I have become a faster bowler through the coaching tips given and refined my off-side play, as well as my defensive and attacking shots.

During this time, I have recently been sponsored by Salix Cricket which has been a great boost for my confidence (and means I get a discount on their kit!)

I'm looking forward to completing the winter training programme and playing for the Kent team in the summer months.

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# Maidstone School District X-Country Championships (MKJ)

Thursday 14th November, a day with blue sky and sunshine, small chill in the air a group of excited young athletes boarded the school minibus to Mote Park for the annual Maidstone District Cross Country event. We had high hopes for this year as many students were returning athletes so knew exactly what was to be expected of the day.

The event includes a Year 7 3000m run, Year 8/9 4000m run and Yr 10/11 5000m run, across a tough hilly course, certainly a challenge but one our students were excited to take on.

The first event was the Year 7 team race. This year we were able to enter an 'A' and 'B' team for the event, with the top six students counting towards the team competition.

It was great to see such a range of students, all ready to take on the challenge.

They set off quickly following the tree line, setting an early pace, before settling down to a maintainable speed for the distance.

Parents and teachers supported from the side line as the students lapped around Mote Park taking in the sights as well as focusing on the task at hand. One half lap completed, the runners all seemed in good shape, one full lap to go. A long slog up the hill to the top of the park, before a steady down hill section where they could relax and maintain a decent pace before the final push up the hill.

As the boys approached the finish line, Maroon was certainly spread amongst the top runners, with 9 runners in the top 25 finishers,

Coming in 5th Andreas K had pushed his fellow competitors superbly, he was followed by Noah C in 10th, Samuel N and George H in 13th and 14th respectively, Orhan A in 16th and just outside the top 20, Kyle S and Ben C.

This was a great team achievement and I am confident in saying that 7 of the 'A' squad placing in the top 30 we should be named as the winning team.

The next event saw our Year 10/11 team, or should I say Year 10 team as Year 11 students were sitting their PPEs, stepped up to the start line. This was going to be a great challenge, would they be able to place well to take the team event, even though they were competing against some competitors a year older. Well, they did not disappoint. Six of the eight runners were placed in the top 16. This is a great achievement and shows the depth and strength of our athletes in Year 10.

Freddie G led the way with an amazing run, leading from the start and finishing at least 3 or 4 minutes ahead of his closest rival. He was followed by Marli C in 7th, Daniel M and Kian T in 10th and 11th respectively. With Ryan K, Jake N (new to the squad this year), Ayman A and Zayd B finishing the team placings. I am again confident that this should mean we have one the Team event for the Year 10/11 age group, with only Year 10 students. An amazing achievement.

The final race of the day was the Year 8/9 students. With the largest field of athletes (106) this was potentially going to be one of the biggest challenges of the day. However, with some experienced runners I was confident that they could work together to get around the course and place well enough to make it three team events from three.

The packed start line was set off, everyone got into their stride quickly and settled down to the challenge of two complete laps of Mote Park, hills and all. Zach W and Josh E were early into the leaders pack, reading the competition well, not pushing too far too fast, just taking it all in, deciding when to push, when to relax. They both ran a really mature race placing themselves in the top 10. Josh finishing in 5th and Zach in 8th. Again, considering these athletes are Year 8, placing that highly against Year 9 runners is a huge achievement.

They were supported in the team event by Henry C (15th), Lewis C (17th), Gabriel K (20th) and Ethan B (22nd), which we are hoping will be enough to be awarded the team event as well.

This was a great experience for all students involved; coming home with three team events and NINE students being asked to represent the District in the Kent County Cross Country Championships in January 2025. Bring on next year to defend the three team titles and even more runners challenging to run for the district.

A massive congratulations to the following athletes:

## Year 7:

Andreas Koffas
Noah Campbell

## Year 8/9:

Josh Emin
Zach Ward
Henry Craig

## Year 10/11:

Freddie Gibson
Kian Thorn
Marli Collier
Daniel Mulvenna

# Year 9 House Sports Enrichment Day (RMR)

## On Friday 6th December Year 9 enjoyed a day of sport in their annual House Sports Enrichment Day competition. Students played tournaments in Football (A&B), Basketball & Table Tennis.

Round Robin matches prior to lunchtime were highly competitive and closely contested to determine group standings prior to finals in the afternoon. In basketball it was Broughton House, led by captain Joshua Adegoke (pictured below) who were triumphant. Broughton were winners of the table tennis competition whilst Broughton and Fisher won the football A&B competitions. Congratulations to the overall winners, Broughton house, who win this

years 9 House Sports competition. Well done to all students who represented their respective houses so well throughout an enjoyable day.

## Basketball Competition:

1st- Broughton (100)
2nd- Sadler (80)
3rd- Fisher (60)
4th- Wilberforce (40)
5th- Hazlitt (20)

## Table Tennis Competition:

1st- Broughton (100)
2nd- Wilberforce (80)
3rd- Fisher (60)
4th- Sadler (40)
5th- Hazlitt (20)

## Football ‘A’ Team Competition:

1st- Broughton (100)
2nd- Hazlitt (80)
3rd- Wilberforce (60)
4th- Sadler (40)
5th- Fisher (20)

## Football ‘B’ Team Competition:

1st- Fisher (100)
2nd- Hazlitt (80)
3rd- Sadler (60)
4th- Wilberforce & Broughton (40)

## OVERALL RESULTS:

Broughton- 340 (1st place)
Fisher- 240 (2nd place)
Sadler- 220 (joint 3rd place)
Wilberforce- 220 (joint 3rd place)
Hazlitt- 200 (4th place)

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# STEM: Debate

## Maths is constructed by humans and therefore does NOT exist independently of us.

### AGREE:

Mathematics, while widely applicable in many areas of the natural world, is not universally applicable, nor has it existed since the beginning of time. Non-Euclidean geometry is a great example of how Maths isn't applicable universally and is only a construct created by humans. For centuries, Euclidean geometry, created by the ancient Greek mathematician Euclid, was considered the only valid form of geometry. However, the development of non-Euclidean geometry in the 19th century by mathematicians like Gauss, Riemann, and Lobachevsky demonstrated that the rules of geometry could vary depending on the curvature of space. This led to the realization that geometry, and by extension mathematics, is not universally applicable in all contexts and as we discover new problems more solutions mathematicians have invented to fix the human flawed system called maths. Furthermore, mathematical models are often human-created abstractions used to describe observed phenomena, not inherent truths of the universe. For instance, quantum mechanics relies on mathematical models that may only apply under specific conditions at very small scales, and many aspects of quantum behavior are different from classical mathematical models. In quantum mechanics particles can exist in superposition, meaning they can be in multiple states simultaneously until measured. A well-known example of this is Schrödinger's cat thought experiment, which illustrates this idea. According to quantum mechanics, a cat inside a box could be both alive and dead at the same time, existing in a superposition of these two states. It is only when the box is opened and an observation is made that the cat "collapses" into one state (alive or dead), but until then, it exists in a combination of both states. Additionally, mathematical concepts like zero did not even exist in early human cultures until they were developed and formalized around the 5th century CE in India. Thus, mathematics is a construct that evolved with human civilization and may not reflect the fundamental structure of reality but instead offers a language created by humans to understand certain aspects of the world.

In addition, complex numbers provide compelling evidence that mathematics is a human creation. These numbers, which include the imaginary unit were initially introduced by Italian mathematician Gerolamo Cardano in the 16th century to solve cubic equations that lacked real solutions. However, they were not widely accepted for centuries due to their abstract and seemingly non-existent nature. Complex numbers have no direct physical representation in the natural world due to the fact that they exist on a 4D plane which is a construct and not able to be physically produced. Today, complex numbers are relied on in fields like electrical engineering and quantum mechanics. Despite their utility, their creation demonstrates how humans developed an entirely new numerical system to solve problems that our existing systems could not handle. The fact that nature does not inherently "require" imaginary numbers, yet they are fundamental in human-created systems, highlights their artificial origin and reinforces the idea that mathematics is a construct developed to meet human needs.

### NO

The first thing to consider is how we define Maths. Maths is relatively easy to define, Maths is the science of numbers, shapes and their relationships. However, the way we define a number is more difficult. Take a mole in Chemistry 6.02*10^23 particles, if you were to line up all these particles in a set you would be able to match each of these particles with a symbol (it just so happens that we use the Arabic numeral system 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 and base 10 originating from humans having 10 fingers) however if in a different universe where humans didn't have 10 fingers and a used different set of symbols (for example the romans used Roman Numerals), the set of particles could still be matched to a set of symbols and the relationships of the quantities related to these symbols would still exist. These mathematical relationships have always existed even before humans existed, as the universe expanded and planets formed, it is the mathematical relationships that dictated and governed the way this happened. And while there were no humans around to observe these relationships, this in no way means that they didn't exist. Let me ask a question to biologists: modern

humans existed on the earth over 300,000 years ago, they had a heart and a brain the same as humans today, but it wasn't until a few hundred years after Christ that the heart and other biological structures were actually discovered, does this mean that the heart is a social construct created by humans? Clearly not. And the same goes for Maths while we still make mathematical discoveries today and maths is not complete, the relationships have always existed and will continue to exist even after the extinction of humans. Which is why by studying these relationships humans were able to predict the existence of the Higgs Boson particle in Physics. It is maths that governs the universe.

## YES:

The fundamentals of maths began with the Sumerians, who developed a basic counting system – assigning an arbitrary symbol for quantities and the ancient Egyptians, developing geometry to measure land along the Nile. All modern maths is based on these concepts – algebra, probability, calculus and so on. All that maths is about, is applying the real world into our unified system of maths, for example in chemistry the mole – a set quantity of molecules or in physics, the elementary charge – a constant for the electric charge carried by a proton - the reason these values exist is so that they work with the entire system, a system which we invented and is the most universally applicable to all branches of stem. Well, you may be asking about other systems with similar concepts simultaneously, for example the Pythagorean theorem where the Babylonians, Egyptians and Greek all independently found the Pythagorean theorem. This was not a discovery of nature that the opposing side will attempt to prove but an invention of mathematics where near identical methods of finding the relationship on sides and angles in a triangle were found – a relationship merely modelled in maths. This includes the sine rule, cosine rule and Pythagorean theorem. All that these independent civilisations were observing is a relationship in mathematics – which is what all mathematics is. If mathematics were discovered rather than invented its development would be uniform and universal across time and cultures, which is not the case.

Some civilisations differ on what counting system they use, for example the Egyptians use base 12 and the Babylonians use base 60. This is how civilisations differ as maths is not discovered; it is created. Maths relies on symbols, for example numbers, operators, and variables, for manipulation and logic functions. These systems and the rules governing them are not inherent in the universe but merely constructs of human thought – the lack of continuity throughout time proves this.

Although mathematical principles often relate to nature, for example the Fibonacci sequence in plants aka the golden ratio, humans have recognized these patterns and then transformed them into mathematics, the closeness of mathematics to the natural world is testament to its usefulness as a tool, not evidence of its reality within the natural world.
While it may feel intuitive to view mathematics as a discovery, its dependence on human cognition, invention of symbols and systems, cultural variation, and inability to exist without interpretation strongly supports the idea that it is a human invention. It does not exist independently of human minds, even if the relationships that it describes in nature are real.

## No:

Maths exists in all constructs of reality, from the edge of the observable universe or to the diameter of an atom. I am here to discuss how maths is inherent to the function of reality, without all these proportionalities and mathematical relationships, cars could not drive, birds would not fly, plants wouldn't grow.

A simple example of this would be seen with the golden ratio, phi which appears in most aspects of the world, this is shown with how sunflower seeds rotate about the centre "phi times" which means that a new seed is planted roughly 1.618 turns around the centre which then creates a spiralling pattern full of seeds in order to maximise the amount of seeds that can grow on a sunflower. How can these adaptations be so exact and specific in the presence of our chaotic and random world, this can only be because maths is a part of our reality and is the fabric that holds us all together.

The famous equation a^2 + b^2=c^2 is famously

credited to the Greek mathematician and philosopher Pythagoras, but in fact it was discovered thousands of years before by the ancient Babylonians, Indians, Chinese and even the Egyptians. Similarly enough, Pascal's triangle was also discovered and used in eastern civilisations before being found in Europe.

My question then would be, how can multiple people, with no real connection or communication between one another can come to the same exact conclusion with one another? The reason being, if the discovery is fact rather than derivation or a simplification of a more complex and erratic idea. Stepping away from geometry, the reality of maths is apparent in all of statistics, allowing us to mode probability and chance to predict the choices of masses at once, or to predict the distribution or rolling a 6 on a dice 7 times. Newton once said "I can predict the motion of heavenly bodies, but not the chaos of man". Whilst Newton himself was unable to understand statistics or the stock markets 500 years ago. In our modern age industries worth have been set up on the mathematics related to the stock market. If maths was a social construct created by man, who is imperfect, these equations and calculations would be too unpredictable too rely upon for building societies.

In our Sixth Form STEM debate, the NO side won. Maths is NOT a social construct. It exists independently of us. Thank you to Ewan and Nova on the Yes side and to Joshua and Mohammed on the yes side.

# UK Bebras challenge

In November, Computing students from across years 7-13 took part in the UK Bebras challenge competition. Further information can be found here: https://bebras.uk/

The aim of the Bebras Challenges is to solve as many problems as you can in 40 minutes. The problems come in three levels of difficulty: A, B and C. The "A" problems are the easiest. "C" problems the hardest.

The difficulty of a problem determines how it will be scored. The scoring rules are as follows:

| Difficulty | Correct | Incorrect | Unanswered |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | +6 Points | 0 Points | 0 Points |
| B | +9 Points | -2 Points | 0 Points |
| C | +12 Points | -4 Points | 0 Points |

Year 7 students participated in the Junior category, Years 8 & 9 in the Intermediate category, Years 10 & 11 in the senior category and years 12 & 13 in the Elite category.

## Results

- 154 year 7 students participated in the Junior category, and 39 were awarded a distinction with Finlay Dalzell from X7 being awarded best in school.
- 301 students from years 8 and 9 participated in the Intermediate category. 76 students were awarded with a distinction and Alfie Wagon from X9 was awarded best in school.
- 35 computing GCSE students across years 10 and 11 participated in the senior category and 9 were awarded a distinction with Elliot Ford from X10 being awarded best in school.
- 16 students participated in the Elite category, with 4 achieving distinction and Ethan Nyiro-King from year 13 being awarded best in school.

62 students from OPGS were placed in the top 10% nationally in the Bebras challenge and were awarded a gold certificate.

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# Tate Britian Trip

On Friday 6th December Art and Graphics students from year 12 and 13 travelled to London to engage with galleries and drawing tasks to help develop their understanding of Art and the different ways artists can work.

Students spent the morning investigating the exciting Tate Britain, independently investigating various styles of art work from across history to modern masterpieces. Students explored a diverse range of art including sculpture, photography, painting and textiles from a range of culturally diverse artists exploring a range of challenging themes. Students were especially inspired by the work of John Everett Millais, William Turner, Henry Moore and Francis Bacon to name but a few.

Students then travelled to Leicester Square and given the chance to buy specialist materials for their projects from the Cass Art shop. In the afternoon students engaged in drawing tasks in Covent Garden, drawing from life. They were tasked with capturing the bustling and dynamic nature of Convent Garden. The day was a great success with all students having come away inspired by the work they saw and created. The Art department was very proud of their excellent engagement with the art work and tasks through the day.