



@oakwood

February - 2026

Any Questions? Live at OPGS

Dear Students, Parents and Carers

Further to some parental and carer feedback, I am so pleased to know that so many people are engaging with @oakwood. It really is the best way to showcase what is going on across the school. Sometimes, each edition can be very long but I often find this reassuring and an opportunity to reflect on the many things which take place across our school. This edition considers sporting moments, academic achievements and personal successes.

My thanks as always goes to the media team who put this together and the staff and students who contribute each term to make sure this captures some magic moments in time. In years to come, this will be the primary source evidence that people use to learn about this brilliant school.

Strive and Serve



Mrs S Craig
Headteacher

STRIVE

AND

SERVE

Inspiring our students OPGS Careers Fair

On Tuesday 20th January, students from all year groups took part in our bi-annual Careers Fair, which welcomed over 30 employers, training providers and universities into school.

The bustling event gave students a valuable opportunity to explore future pathways and speak directly with professionals from a wide range of industries including construction, engineering, healthcare, and



public services.

Students engaged enthusiastically, asking thoughtful questions about topics such as artificial intelligence's impact on jobs, apprenticeship opportunities, university life and entry requirements, work experience placements, and the employers own personal career paths. The providers all commented on how impressive our students



were, praising them for being polite, confident, and articulate, and for showing genuine curiosity about their future options.

To encourage meaningful conversations, students also took part in a Conversation Card Competition, designed to support high-quality discussions with the exhibitors. Congratulations to Owen in Year 9, who was selected as the winner and received a £10 Amazon voucher.





We would like to thank all the employers, training providers and universities who supported the event, and well done to our students for representing the school so positively. The Careers Fair was a fantastic success and an important step in helping students feel informed and confident about their next steps.

If you can support our future fair or other careers events, please reach out to Mrs West via office@opgs.org, we'd be delighted to hear from you.



Join us for 'Coffee Connections'

We're pleased to invite parents and carers to our next Coffee Connections meeting on Thursday 26 February at 9am. This is an informal and relaxed opportunity to enjoy a coffee and chat with staff about how we support students in school and with their next steps.



During the connection, you're welcome to talk about topics of interest to you, including SEND support for students with the SDS team, as well as our Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) provision. This includes how we support students during the school day, with transitions,



choices, and work experience opportunities.

This is a perfect opportunity to ask questions, share thoughts with the school and other parents/carers, and find out more about how we work together to meet your child's needs.

Whether you have specific questions, would like to connect with us/other parents, or simply want to find out more, we'd love you to join us. There's no need to book, just come along on the morning.

**Future Coffee connections diary date:
Friday 5 June at 9am.**



COFFEE & CONNECTIONS

Student Entrepreneur Meet-up

On the 27th January Year 9 students engaged in an enrichment day where they were able to pick electives from subjects they might want to pick for their option subjects at GCSE in Year 10.

One subject students were able to explore was Art and Design. In the sessions students engaged with a space theme, exploring a range of visuals and processes to create narrative images. At GCSE students must show the ability to explore an idea with a range of materials, some traditional and others more experimental. The idea of the sessions was to show students alternative processes they had not yet explored in art classes, but they would explore at GCSE. One set of students explored chalk and charcoal drawings, investigating how the materials can be used to blend and add tone and contrast, even exploring how bread can be used to draw with charcoal. Another set of students engaged with



acetone printing and collaging, creating narrative scenes using a range of found images. The final group investigated foam prints, cutting into polyfoam and then using printing ink to print their space scenes. They experimented with different colour ink, paper, and backgrounds to create visual exciting work. All the students who undertook the sessions engaged fantastically, exploring materials and developing their skill, producing creative and personal work.



Articulation prize

On Monday, the 26th January, Year 12 and 13 Art students engaged with the National Gallery - Articulation competition. Students had to prepare a 7–10-minute presentation about a piece of Art work that they felt passionately about. The competition helps students develop their analysis and oracy abilities, 2 key skills that allow them to be successful as they progress through life.

Students prepared presentations on a variety of topics including the work of Otto Dix exploring his work commenting on veterans of the 1st world war, Illustrations from Lord of the rings, architecture in the form of Basilica da la Sagrada Familia, the work of Jonathan Yeo, Van Gogh, Frida Kahlo, David Lobla, Trevor Waugh and Victoria Olt to name but a few of the artists explored. The presentations showed the knowledge and understanding students had gained from their research as well as their passion for the subject and artwork they had chosen.

The standard was very high but only one student



could proceed to the regional finals on the 12th February to compete against other schools. After much deliberation Leah M. in year 12 was chosen for her personal and thoughtful talk.

The Art department was extremely impressed with the dedication and passion displayed by the A level art students for their subject.



Animal Farm Propaganda Posters

The students in Year 8 English are currently studying the Orwellian classic, *Animal Farm*. The short novella is a political satire on the rise of Communism in the USSR under Stalin's rule.

The rebellion on Manor Farm which means the animals take over from Mr. Jones, and rename it Animal Farm, is an allegory used to represent key players in the Russian Revolution of 1917. As such, the students have done a lot of contextual research into the real-life political figures which inspired the characters in Orwell's retelling.

One of the ways in which the animals' power is gradually taken away from them, is through the spread of misinformation, from one of the pigs called Squealer. Squealer's character is supposed to represent the propaganda machine. Propaganda is the strategic, often biased dissemination of



information and rumours—through speeches—designed to influence public opinion, emotions, and behaviour to promote a specific agenda.

Having read halfway through the novella, when the time comes for the animals to vote for either Snowball's building the windmill and a three-day week, whereas Napoleon argues they must get the harvest in and food production should be their top priority. Snowball is chased from the farm by Napoleon's guard dogs; Squealer then goes on to tell the animals the idea for the windmill was never Snowball's in the first place but was in fact Napoleon's. Snowball represents the exiled Leon Trotsky and Napoleon the vicious totalitarian ruler, Joseph Stalin. In response to this, students were tasked with creating propaganda posters on who to vote for and expounding the principles of Animalism.



National Apprenticeship Week

National Apprenticeship Week is a week-long celebration that brings together businesses and apprentices across the country to shine a light on the positive impact that apprenticeships make to individuals, businesses and the wider economy. This year marks the 19th year of the annual celebrations, with this year's theme being 'Skills for Life', therefore, the school have rolled out all the stops to get involved and share information on different routes into apprenticeships as possible for our young people.

On Monday, students were invited to take part in The Apprenticeship Quiz 2026 - Amazing Apprenticeships as a fun way to introduce the week and gauge knowledge. Students had to vote on the correct facts and statistics surrounding apprenticeships, including learning that apprenticeships have 5 different levels of difficulty ranging from foundation, intermediate, advanced, higher and degree level. According to government data, nearly 70% of occupations can be entered into via an apprenticeship.

There is a clear correlation between apprenticeships and nationwide economic growth; for every £1 invested in apprenticeships, the UK economy gains £21. Additionally, more young people are choosing apprenticeships, as is evident from the last academic year, there was reported a 4% increase from the previous year to 353,500. This is win-win as businesses secure

**NATIONAL
APPRENTICESHIP
WEEK 2026**

9-15TH FEBRUARY

top talent and the apprenticeship programmes they offer enable individuals to build sustainable careers.

This was highlighted in our 5th Careers Newsletter with a wide range of information on the NAW Padlet including links to employer insight talks and events, stories from apprentices, fun activities, a parent section, and much more. (Password: #NAW2026).

There was also a chance for students to enter an apprenticeship poster competition. The rules were simple: A4 poster, presentation should be bright and clear, and most importantly it needed to include 3 apprenticeship facts. Students were invited to choose a theme of their own or from the following: 'Why are apprenticeships a good option' or 'An apprenticeship job I didn't know existed'. The winning poster(s) will be displayed on the Careers noticeboard and a small prize awarded.

Students were given assemblies by our Careers and Higher Education Lead, Mrs West across the course of the week. Our weekly awareness sessions were also based around apprenticeships, with some resources from the BBC Bitesize website, students were able to watch the video 'Comedians try an apprenticeship' where well-known comedians including Russel Kane, meet apprentices working in the fire service, zookeeping and Formula 1. Students were given the chance to note down the aspects of each role they'd like or dislike. This was followed by another short video entitled 'Apprenticeships: Busting the myths' that challenged some common misconceptions about apprenticeships. Students were then able to discuss in their pairs and debate as a whole class discuss the pros and cons of doing an apprenticeship, versus staying on in full-time education, to get them thinking about the different potential pathways into the world of work beyond Oakwood.

**JOIN US FOR NATIONAL
APPRENTICESHIP WEEK**

#NAW2026





CAREERS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is a collation of all the opportunities we have heard about from employers and universities. Please use the links included to read more information and apply to anything you are interested in. Links are underlined.


 [Listen to this newsletter](#)


OPPORTUNITIES


IT'S NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK!




This week is dedicated to celebrating all things apprenticeships. During this week, you will find lots of opportunities to learn more about apprenticeships including where to find them, how to apply to them and top tips from employers and current apprentices. You can view [lots of events here](#).

 Meet David from South London, he moved to the UK from Romania at the age of eight and did not speak English when he arrived. David successfully secured a Level 4 project management apprenticeship with Jellyfish. [In this video](#), David talks about why he chose an apprenticeship, what his job involves, the role of AI in modern workplaces, misconceptions about Gen Z and why school is about more than just academic knowledge.

 Explore 1,600+ Higher and Degree apprenticeships in the January 2026 edition of the [Higher & Degree Vacancy listing](#). Discover vacancy details from over 65+ employers, including vacancy locations, salary information and direct application links.

 [All About T Levels](#) | Thurs 26th Feb - 6-7pm | On this call we'll tell you how T levels work, how we at Lloyds support students with extended work experience and you'll hear from apprentices at Lloyds joining us through the T level route.

 [Understanding T Levels: The Industry Placement Webinar](#) | Mon 2nd March - 3:30pm-4:15pm | The rise in popularity has been matched by the increase in employers opening their doors and designing T Level Industry Placements that support students to develop their skills, and provide crucial opportunities to apply their learning in a real workplace. Join this webinar to hear about Industry Placements from Suzanne Chambers of the T Level Delivery Division at the Department for Education.

JOB OF THE WEEK



[Forensic Linguist](#)

A forensic linguist is a language expert who applies linguistic knowledge to legal contexts, acting as a detective to analyse written or spoken evidence. They investigate cases by examining idiolect (unique writing style), authorship of threats or notes, and contractual language, working with law enforcement and legal teams to uncover the truth.

LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION FACT

As employers 'top up' the salary of an apprentice beyond National Minimum Wage, the average apprentice salary in the United Kingdom is £27,721 per year or £14.22 per hour. This varies across different apprenticeships and regions.

[Source](#)

If you have any questions or need support, please email

LWest@opgs.org



CAREERS NEWSLETTER

OPPORTUNITIES

Rapid Read: Apprenticeship levels explained.

With apprenticeship levels ranging from level 2 (foundation and intermediate) through to level 7 (master's level) and lots of recent changes, this updated Rapid Read will help you understand the different levels and which might be right for you.

Get Career Confident has brought together a range of virtual work experience opportunities available to young people. They do not run virtual work experience placements, they research and list established organisations offering placements.

Access the brand new ERIC Library from Monday 9th Feb 2026. "A library of bite-sized creative careers talks designed for school, college or university students. Each talk is 10-15 minutes long, made for young people aged 14-21. The library will be available all year round, with new talks added regularly."

Did you know that Not Going To Uni have a podcast? It is hosted by a current apprentice, Ethan. On the podcast, he interviews other apprentices who give you advice and valuable tips. The aim of the podcast is to help you kickstart your career with confidence.

If you'd prefer to read than listen, the Not Going To Uni case studies are another great way to learn from current apprentices and take inspiration from their journeys.

Heard of an apprenticeship but not sure what it's all about? The UCAS Parent and guardian guide to apprenticeships shares what you need to know and practical tips for supporting someone who might be thinking about an apprenticeship.

This apprenticeship glossary will help you to understand any words that you haven't come across before. There are also a lot of myths about apprenticeships. This myth buster will support you to realise the facts from the fiction!

From Quizzes to Arcade games, this website has a range of interactive activities to help you learn more about apprenticeships.

EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHT

"Start your career with impact and purpose. At Nationwide, you will build a meaningful career and help shape banking to be fairer, more rewarding, and for the good of society. With structured development, hands-on experience, and support at every step, you will gain the confidence to start a rewarding career in banking." You can read more about careers at Nationwide here.

UNI SPOTLIGHT

"Students fall in love with Bristol - a city small enough to remain friendly, but large enough to offer lots of interest and excitement. With our central location, outstanding facilities and active Students' Union, you can enjoy the best of student life. We're ranked 51st in the World and 8th in the UK." You can read more about the University of Bristol here.

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Japanese Traditional Tea Ceremony

On Monday 26th January, students had the opportunity to take part in a traditional Japanese tea ceremony or 茶道 (sado). We welcomed two special guests to OPGS to help us share this experience with the students, Sarah Rush-Weinmann and John Weinmann. By participating in her school's Tea Ceremony Club during her time working as a Junior High School English Teacher in Japan, Sarah learned the ritual significance and art of Sado. She explained the meanings of the materials used in tea ceremonies and the process of making the matcha which involves several intricate steps.

Students were able to witness the traditional ceremony, prepare and sample the matcha, as well as try some Japanese お菓子 (okashi) or sweets. The event was organised by Ms Rose as an extension of Japanese Club which is open to students from across the school.



Y7 & Y8 Film Club:

Film club runs every Thursday lunch-time and gives Y7-Y8 students the chance to enjoy a range of films and to socialise with fellow movie lovers. So far, we have watched Spiderman: Into the Spider-Verse and Wicked; these have both been reviewed by students below.

Simon T's review of Spiderman: Into the Spider-Verse

At Film Club, we watched "Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse". It was a good watch, and the graphics are amazing and unique.

It is all about a boy, wanting to be Spider-Man who overtime, starts becoming a Spider-Man Junior. Miles and his team battle and try to defeat the enemy that threatens to destroy New York.

It had amazing animation, music that tied in perfectly with the movie and a real sense of tension.



Overall, I really liked the film, and I would recommend watching it.

Samuel E-U's review of Wicked

As someone who had never watched Wicked before, I did not expect much. A musical was the last thing I wanted to watch.

However, it started to grow on me, and I realised the greater meaning behind it. Wicked wasn't only a musical, but a story. A story of the problems of our society and the normalisation of dehumanising others because they are different. Wicked wasn't a musical it was, an eye opener.

Wicked is a musical about the great racism that we face in our society. Elphaba and Glinda both attend Shiz university. As they progress, they build a great friendship. My favourite part is when Glinda went



with Elphaba to go with the wizard as it shows her willingness to trust Elphaba.

James S's review of Spiderman: Into the Spider-Verse

The film (Spider-man into the Spider-verse) is an animated film made Marvel; the story line consists of 5 spider-people coming into this world from other dimensions, them being Peter B. Parker, Gwen Stacy, Peter Porker, Peni parker and Peter Parker.

After they arrive, they meet the protagonist (Miles Morales) who becomes a spider-man like them. Then they all work together to get themselves home and defeat the villain: Kingpin.

I really like this film since the music and colour pallet match the scene so well. Also, the type of animation is different to normal cartoons which makes look visually pleasing and is a new take on cartoons,



which is why it is such a successful movie and later franchise.

Recreating the Romans:

In September at our first lunchtime History Club session, Year 7 and Year 8 students made it clear to me that they wanted their project to be both factual and creative.

Last term we learnt about Roman settlements in Kent and about Watling Street. Now sustainable construction of their models of *Durovernum Cantia-corum* (Roman Canterbury) has begun using all recyclable materials. Groups are working on the tem-



ple, domestic housing, the baths and the theatre. Students are using information from the Canterbury Roman Museum to help them. More students are always welcome; it is a fun way to meet new friends and there is lots more construction to come.

When, where and who? Wednesdays Week 1, Room 11, Year 7 and Year 8 with Miss Aldous.



Duxford Photographic Competition Winners

As the House system lead, I set a photography competition for the Year 8 students who visited Duxford, something a little extra focus on through the day and to contribute to the House Trophy. They were tasked with taking a photo which depicted the day, combining today to the past and the amazing feats of aviation.

We had some amazing entries from a fifth of the year group, which made the decision extremely hard to select the winners. We managed to narrow it down to the top 5.

Congratulations to all who entered but especially the winners:

The top 3 photos and reasons for them are:

**3rd Place(below) OREN HARRISON
Fisher**

Sense of pride, a photo I can picture being sent home from the 'Front Lines'. A member of the armed forces proud to be wearing the uniform



**2nd Place(above) GEORGE HUL-
BERT Broughton**

Sense of solidarity in the air. Whilst flying alone, I can picture the pilot feeling supported by fellow air personal around them. Support in achieving a central cause.

**1st PLACE(below) SAMMY NWOGU
Fisher**

A picture I have read as showing how Proud we all should be of the development in aviation. The shining example of a plane flying in the bright skies. Not only to protect and serve the country, but also to allow us to explore the world and develop our cultural and social understanding around the world.



Sadler House Competition

January's House challenge was a great opportunity for our students and staff to get out and about. Be that forming new habits or finding something interesting that they would like to do with their time, or just to spend time with families and friends taking in the local area and what it offers.

We received some varied responses to the competition, which were interesting to look at or read about. Once again, it was difficult to make a decision on the winners but, our finalists are:

In Third Place, Sanjeev Vinod Year 10 in Hazlitt House, with his written piece related to motivation and habit formation:

"Rewards, routines and reminders are three effective strategies for maintaining motivation when working toward New Year's resolutions. This is because they support both habit formation and reinforcement. Firstly, rewards use extrinsic motivation by providing an external incentive for completing a task, such as treating yourself after studying or exercising. These rewards reinforce the behaviour, making it more likely to be repeated. Over time, repeated reinforcement can also support intrinsic motivation, as the individual begins to enjoy the sense of progress or personal growth associated with the behaviour itself.

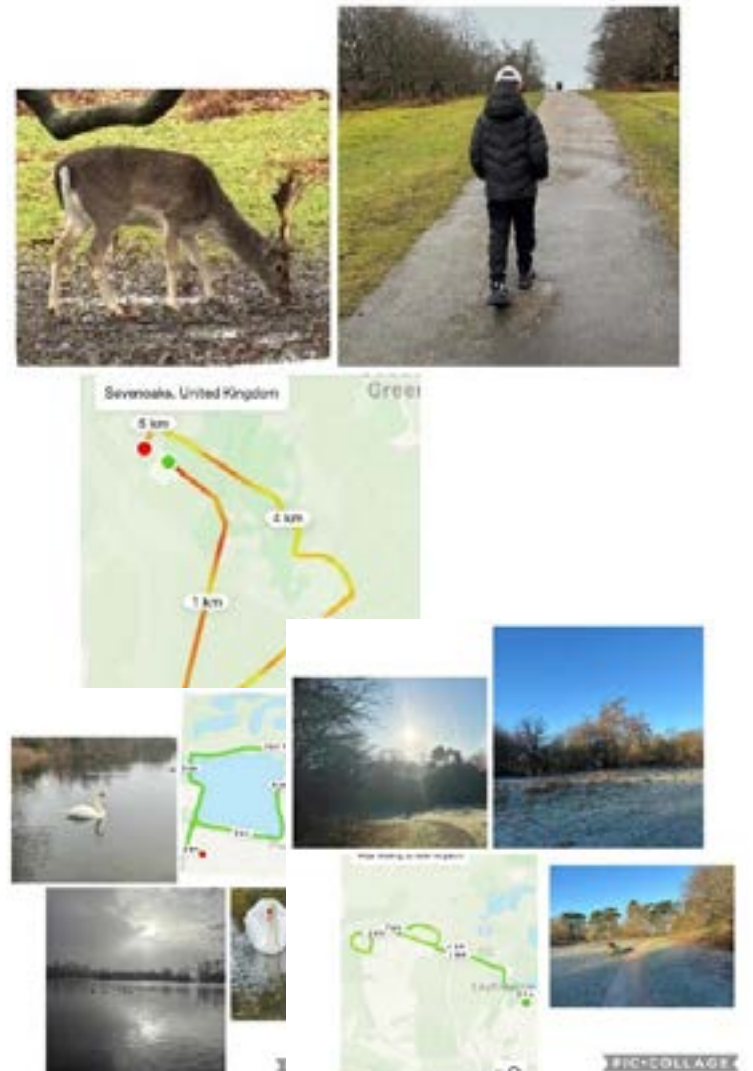
Secondly, routines help motivation by turning goals into habits through the habit loop, which consists of a cue, behaviour, and reward. For example, exercising at the same time each day creates a predictable cue, reducing the need for constant decision-making. This consistency makes the behaviour feel automatic rather than effortful. As the routine becomes established, motivation shifts from relying on short-term extrinsic rewards to longer-lasting intrinsic motivation, such as feeling healthier or more confident.

Finally, reminders act as cues within the habit loop, prompting the desired behaviour before motivation disappears. Alarms, notes, or notifications help keep goals visible and reduce forgetfulness. By consistently triggering the behaviour, reminders support repetition and reinforcement, strengthening the habit over time. When combined with rewards and routines, reminders help maintain motivation and increase the likelihood of successfully achieving New Year's resolutions instead of abandoning them early on."



Second place goes to Dylan Botton and Archie Smith Year 7 and both in Sadler House, with their Loose Valley walking.

In first place, a familiar name, someone who has entered and placed in almost all Monthly competitions this academic year, Jude Higman Year 8, representing Wilberforce House, with his stunning Kent walks.



February's Monthly Challenge – Geography

This month's House Challenge has been set by Broughton (Mr Lindsey and the Senior Prefects). They have chosen to link this challenge to the exciting sports hall development.

Members of the community have been asked to think about a sustainable future, with Climate Change at the forefront of many people's mind, what can OPGS offer for the future.

We look forward to what suggestions members of the school community can offer.

We still have many exciting challenges ahead, remember they are not just for the House named, this is just the house responsible for organising and selecting the winning entries.



- September – **Broughton**: Physics (2025)
- October – **Fisher**: RS/ART (2025)
- November – **Hazlitt**: English (2025)
- December – **Sadler**: Psychology (2025)
- January – **Wilberforce**: Maths (2026)
- February – **Broughton**: Geography (2026)

- March – **Fisher**: History (2026)
- April – **Hazlitt**: Music (2026)
- May – **Sadler**: Biology (2026)
- June – **Wilberforce**: Languages (2026)
- July – House Captains: PE (2026)

Sports House Captain & PE Prefect roles

Our Sports Captains and PE Prefects met in the first half of this term to begin work on their tasks for the academic year. We now have small groups working together to help develop OPGS sport in the following areas:

- Lunchtime recreation clubs – they have been tasked with developing the provision of recreation activities at lunchtime. Looking at running small competitions for houses, building on the success of the table tennis competition we ran for year 7 students.
- Developing Primary School opportunities –

initially students will be organising students to help run our current events offered to primary schools, with the look to introduce new activities to offer to our feeder primary schools.

- Publicity – support the department in publicising the in school and out of school successes of our students and staff. Helping to promote excellence, inclusion and stretch and challenge by promoting the academic aspects of the subject.
- Watch this space for the New Sports Council, providing opportunities for our school community to liaise with the PE department to develop OPGS sport.

Overall Current Standings Whole School as of 6th February

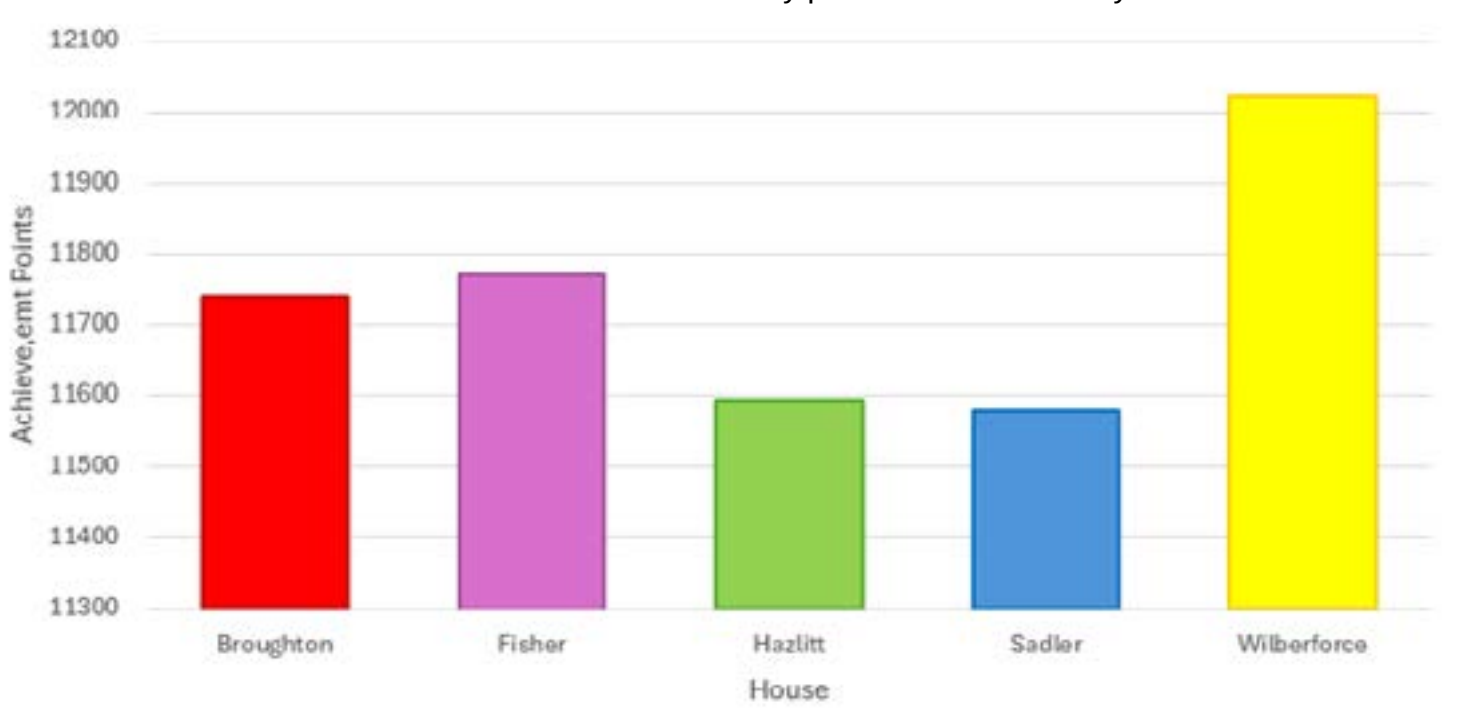
As we approach the halfway point of the year, could we have a new challenger for the overall title? 2025-2026 could be Wilberforce's year.

They are in a strong position leading Fisher by 250+ points. There is still a long way to go and many more competitions and opportunities for house members to claim points. Will the monthly challenges make a difference when added to the overall tally. What about Sports Day? Could the gap be closed. I am sure all those in Wilberforce who have not experienced success will be working hard to maintain, if not further the gap between the other houses. Sadler and Hazlitt, you have some work to do to close the gap and challenge for the top spot.

	Total Points
Broughton	11739
Fisher	11771
Hazlitt	11593
Sadler	11580
Wilberforce	12023

Overall Current Standings – By Year group (as of 6th February): - Featured at the bottom of the page.

Congratulations to our leading students at the halfway point of the academic year.



	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Yr 12/13
Broughton	Xavier W C7	Thomas J S8	Dexter D T9	Ronnie C S10	Harry M X11	Gabi M JLS & Leo J JRH
Fisher	Riley H C7	Ruben A P8	Oscar E-B S9	Ma'ad A T10	James S T11	Frankie O AED & Angus K JRH
Hazlitt	Jacob H S7	Jay H S8	Kiran J S9	Sanjeev V X10	Rayan A T11	Tristan T EJU
Sadler	Wilf F C7	Suhan J C8	Oscar W S9	Jayce M-K C10	George G S11	Ben W KCA, Jack N EJU & Alex B EJU
Wilberforce	Ahmed M T7	Saad A S8	Jaydon P S9	Raahil H P10	Kian T X11	Ifan B RBU

Y13 Attend Japan Local Government Centre Seminar

A group of Y13 students had the opportunity to attend the Japan Local Government Centre's annual seminar last week.

This year's event focused on crisis management & urban preparedness and featured presenters from the Newcastle City Council and Kobe City Government. Students heard case studies from the local government officials. Kobe's recovery journey since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, in addition to its development of flood-resilient infrastructure following major flooding events, offers a case study for how local governments can build resilient communities. All students left the event commenting on the insightful content and, for the A Level Geography students, how what they had learned could be applied in their upcoming summer exams.



Children's Mental Health Week ran from 9th-15th February 2026.

The theme for Children's Mental Health Week 2026 is 'This is My Place', with the aim to support the systems around children and young people to help them feel they belong. Place2Be is a children's mental health charity who have provided counselling, mental health support and training in UK schools since 1994. The charity believe that children should not have to face mental health problems alone. Children's Mental Health Week takes place every February. It was started in 2015 to give a voice to and raise awareness of children and young people's mental health.

We know that our sense of belonging as individuals, in our friendships, in school, and in communities plays a vital role in our mental health and wellbeing. When we feel that we belong, it empowers us to contribute to the world and make a real difference.

As such, OPGS Wellbeing Ambassadors ran a working-display outside the hall in which students were encouraged to consider how they manage their wellbeing and share their strategies to destress and unwind. Students filled out cards with suggestions for others to see, as the ideas filled up, students were able to glean ideas of how others their own age relax and cope with school and help life, with a view to helping them too!

This means we were added to the Place2Be map, to make us one of 465 schools and a whopping



185,993 students supporting the week.

If you would like to find out more, please use this Place2Be downloadable pack of resources, with inspiring activities to do at home as a family, around this year's theme: <https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/media/yrnb3g2g/families-and-communities-pack-childrens-mental-health-week-2026.pdf>



Scholastics Book Fair

The Scholastic Book Fair meant a variety of books for teens were available for students to peruse and purchase for the week between 2nd-6th February, the books were on display both outside the hall and in the library at lunchtimes. In 2026, the UK is marking a National Year of Reading due to data indicating that children's reading for pleasure has hit a 20-year low.

However, we know that reading for pleasure is transformative for our students' academic success and personal wellbeing. As a result, we were delighted to offer them this opportunity to inspire and excite their imaginations, by bringing books to the students in the heart of our school site, with this pop-up school bookshop!

One of the Scholastic top picks for our teen age bracket at the Spring Book Fair was 'People like Stars' by Patrice Lawrence.

The story follows three 13-year-old strangers, who are connected by one big secret. Multi-award-winning Patrice Lawrence's first contemporary middle grade novel is a page-turning mystery and exploration of fractured families, long-buried secrets and the power of friendship, told with warmth and compassion.

Stunning storytelling – by turns powerful and witty – from an exceptional writer for young people.

Certainly, we feel reading for pleasure isn't just a hobby. It's linked to a range of benefits including stronger writing skills, improved wellbeing and

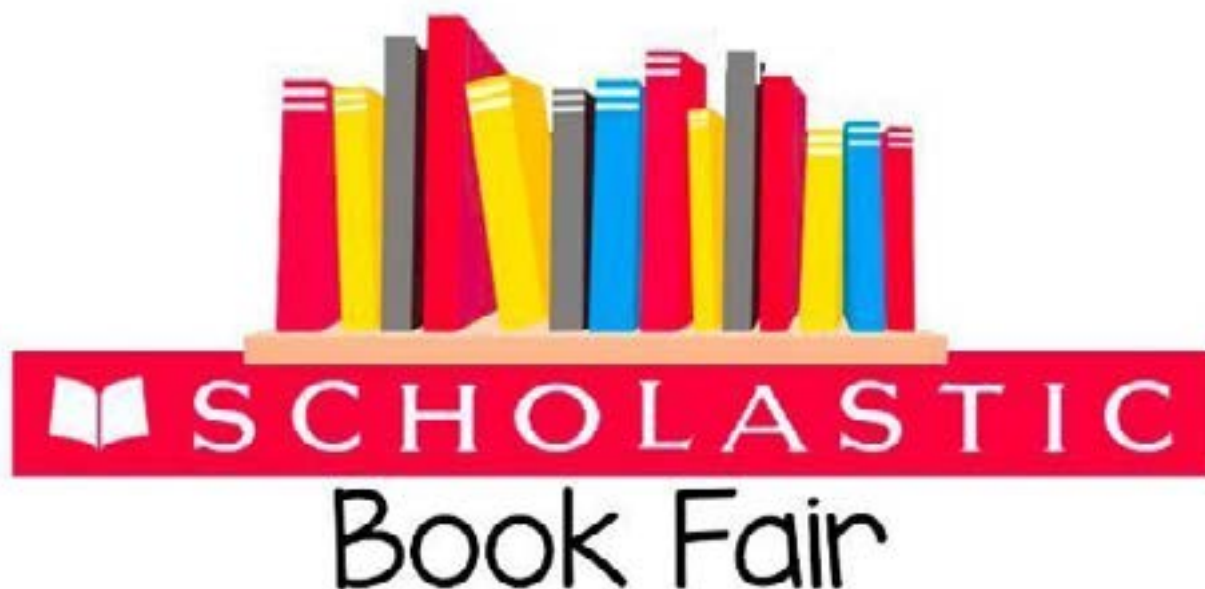
confidence, and even higher future earnings, with new data showing those proficient in reading and writing in primary school earn £65,000 more over their lifetime, according to statistics from GOV.UK

Indeed, the government have joined forces with the National Literacy Trust to tackle the declining rates of reading for pleasure with Only 1 in 3



(roughly 33%) children aged 8–18 read in their spare time, a 36% decline since 2005. This is especially important in a boys' grammar school, as there is also a marked gender disparity with fewer than 1 in 5 children read daily, and a widening gender gap showing lower engagement among boys.

So, I hope students were able to take home some thrilling new reads, and in turn we will receive rewards from Scholastics which we can use to replenish our library stock of some brand-new titles there too



OPGS Shine at Kent Schools Individual Table Tennis Championships

Oakwood Park Grammar School students delivered a series of outstanding performances at the Kent Schools U13–U19 Individual Table Tennis Championships, held at Medway Sports Park in Gillingham.

Hosted across three sports halls with more than 20 tables in play simultaneously, the venue created an electric atmosphere worthy of one of the biggest school table tennis events in the county.

This year's championships saw record participation, with over 400 players competing across the U13, U16 and U19 age groups. With entries from the strongest schools in Kent, OPGS students faced an exceptionally high standard of opposition – and rose to the challenge with determination, skill and sportsmanship.

U13 Championship Highlights:

The U13 competition showcased the depth of talent at OPGS, with several students progressing deep into both the Cup and Plate competitions.

Suhan Jindal made an impressive start, securing convincing wins against Sevenoaks School and St John's Catholic Comprehensive School before defeating Maidstone Grammar School in round two. Suhan's run came to an end in the quarter-finals against Judd School after a hard-fought contest.

Simon Townsend demonstrated resilience and consistency throughout the event. After narrowly missing out in the Cup competition, Simon produced a strong Plate run, recording multiple dominant wins before reaching the semi-finals, where he was edged out in an extremely close match by fellow OPGS student Eon Bobby.

Harry King enjoyed a superb Cup run, overcoming opponents from Howard School, Judd School and Sevenoaks School before

meeting a strong Skinners School player in round two. His performances reflected excellent composure and attacking play.

Eon Bobby (pictured below) delivered one of the standout achievements of the championships. After progressing into the Plate competition, Eon reached a three-way final, competing against players from Barton Court and Skinners School – including an opponent with a high national ranking. Finishing second in the U13 Plate competition was a phenomenal accomplishment and a testament to his determination and skill.





U16 Championship Performances:

The U16 category once again highlighted OPGS's ability to compete at the highest county level.

Oliver East progressed confidently through the Cup competition, defeating Rainham Mark Grammar School and Howard School before narrowly losing a closely contested quarter-final against Skinners School.

Flynn Kemp produced an exceptional Cup run, avenging a previous club-level defeat by beating Howard School in the quarter-finals. He then pushed a very strong Sevenoaks School opponent in the semi-finals. Reaching this stage in such a competitive field was a brilliant achievement.

Strong performances also came from Jude Higman, who claimed victories in both Cup and Plate matches, and Jude Body, who recorded an emphatic 11-0 and 11-1 win against St John's Catholic Comprehensive School in round one of the Cup competition.

Raffaele Andreatta impressed in the group stage with a commanding win against Norton Knatchbull Grammar School before narrowly losing a thrilling quarter-final against Judd School.

Tristan Kemp produced an outstanding Cup run, defeating players from Thomas Aveling, Sevenoaks School and Rochester Maths School before edging past a highly skilled Skinners School opponent in the quarter-finals. Tristan was unfortunate to meet the number one ranked U13 player in Kent in the semi-finals, but his performance at this stage was a remarkable achievement.

Other notable performances came from Ma'ad Salman, Alfie Pearson, Lowan Sanderson, Oliver Roots and Jakub Druzkowski, all of whom gained valuable experience competing against top-ranked county players and represented OPGS with pride and resilience.

Islam El Hourma also impressed, navigating a challenging Cup group that included a nationally ranked player, before securing multiple wins in the Plate competition and narrowly missing out on a semi-final place.



Pictured above- Flynn Kemp competing in his U16 quarter final match vs. Howard School.



Pictured above- Oliver East in his U16 quarter final match and Alfie Pearson playing the U16

plate competition semi final vs. Rochester Maths School.

Huge congratulations to all the students who represented OPGS with fantastic skill, determination and sportsmanship at the Kent Schools Individual Table Tennis championships. The U16 squad now look forward to representing OPGS at the South East Area Championships in Surrey having qualified from the Kent Team Championships in November 2025. The U13 players will continue their development in both school & club training/competition before competing in both Maidstone District and Kent Championships in 2026/27.

Kent Schools Swimming Championships (MKJ)

The Kent Schools' Individual Swimming Championships took place on Sunday 18th January, bringing together talented swimmers from schools across the county to compete in a highly competitive programme of individual events.

The championships provided an excellent opportunity for students to represent their schools and perform at county level across a range of strokes and distances.

The championships always offer 'fast and furious' swimming, with enthusiastic participation from the students, support from the coaches and excitable families and friends cheering on the participants.

OPGS Team Performance

The OPGS swim team entered the Kent Schools' Individual Championships for the second consecutive year, delivering a number of strong performances and notable achievements.

- Ben Curd enjoyed an outstanding competition, winning gold medals in both the 100m Backstroke and the 100m Freestyle, demonstrating his versatility and strength across events.
- Seb Cullis also impressed, securing bronze in the 100m Backstroke and finishing 6th in the 100m Freestyle against strong opposition.
- Noah Teodorescu placed 4th in the 100m Butterfly, narrowly missing out on a podium finish in a highly competitive race.



- George Hammond recorded a personal best in the 200m Individual Medley, reflecting excellent progress and determination.
- Ben Noakes and Janus Ramos, both representing the school for the first time in an individual competition, produced commendable performances and narrowly missed personal bests in their respective events — a promising start at county level.

The championships were a valuable experience for all competitors, offering high-quality racing and the chance to compete against the best school swimmers in Kent.

The OPGS swimmers should be congratulated on their achievements, commitment, and sportsmanship, with several performances highlighting the depth of talent and positive future potential within the team.

On Enrichment Day, a group of Year 12 students spent the day at the University of Kent Canterbury Campus learning about university life, applications and more.

OPGS students were welcomed onto a rainy campus by University of Kent Student Ambassadors who stayed with the group throughout the day, offering advice, answering questions and sharing their experiences of undergraduate university studies. Additionally, the group were able to attend a Forensic Psychology lecture, allowing them to further understand the difference between A Level and University teaching. Student feedback from the trip was encouraging with all students saying the information they received would help them make a more informed decision about their post-Sixth Form choices.



Creative Writing Competition: 'I Have a Dream'

Young Writers are proud to have promoted poetry and creative writing within schools and poetry competitions for the past 33 years.

This term, we are thrilled to announce that a couple of students from Creative Writing Club, run by Miss Hance, have been selected for publication in the Young Writer's poetry anthology entitled 'I Have a Dream'. The theme asked students to consider what do they dream of?

This allowed for a variety of ideas to come to life, including travelling in time? Their future career? A million TikTok subscribers? A kinder and more equal world? Whatever dream they choose to write about, they can do so in any poetic style. This engaging topic on which to centre their poetry was meant to encourage reflective and imaginative thinking, whilst giving them space to expand their vocabulary, composition, and stylistic through their creative expression.

Every winning entry receiving a bookmark, sticker



and certificate. Therefore, a superb well done to Lucas and Ruben in Year 8 who have successfully had their work chosen for publication!

Ben Curd's Outstanding Performances at the Kent Swimming Championships

Ben Curd delivered an exceptional set of performances across two weekends at the Kent Swimming Championships, firmly establishing himself as one of the leading swimmers in his age group nationally.

At the Kent Swimming Championships on Saturday 24th January, Ben produced a superb double victory in the backstroke events. He won gold in the 100m backstroke, recording a personal best time, and followed this with another gold in the 50m backstroke. These outstanding swims saw Ben rise to Number

1 in the British Isles for the 100m backstroke and Number 2 for the 50m backstroke, an incredible achievement at this level of competition. touching the wall in 1:01.83, a new personal season best that ranks him 11th fastest in the country. He also secured silver in the 50m freestyle, swimming a new personal best of 28.18 in the heats, again placing him 11th nationally. Rounding off a fantastic weekend, Ben won bronze in the 50m butterfly with a new personal best time of 31.62, ranking him 31st in the country.



Across the two weekends, Ben amassed an impressive medal haul of three gold medals, one silver, one bronze, along with a finalists' medal, making this a highly successful Kent Championships and a clear reflection of his hard work, dedication, and continued progression.

1 in the British Isles for the 100m backstroke and Number 2 for the 50m backstroke, an incredible achievement at this level of competition.

Ben continued his impressive form the following weekend at the Championships on Saturday 31st January. He claimed gold in the 100m freestyle,

OPGS athletes produced strong performances at the KSAA Cross Country Championships 2026, contributing valuable points to Maidstone's team results across multiple age groups.

In the Year 7 race, Gus Searle finished 83rd out of 106 runners, showing determination throughout the course. His effort played a key role in helping Maidstone secure an excellent 2nd place team finish. The Year 8 race saw a solid collective performance from OPGS runners. Zach Ward led the group home with an impressive 24th place finish out of 122 competitors, followed by Thomas James in 43rd place. Jayden Purewel placed 72nd, while Ben Curd, competing after an exceptional weekend of swimming achievements the day before, finished 113th. Together, their combined efforts helped Maidstone achieve 5th place in the team standings.

Zach describes his experience

"This is my third time competing in the School's District Cross Country Championship race representing Maidstone in Dartford. Despite me coming first in the qualifying heat at Mote Park earlier in the year, I knew this would be the more challenging race as I am starting to recognise some of the other competitors including some of my teammates from my external running club.

As the starter pistol went, I got off to a good start managing to stay in the lead pack for the first half



of the race. Unfortunately, towards the second half of the race, I started to get worn out and I began to slip back in positions, although I did manage to do a sprint finish and end the race in 24th place."

A standout performance of the championships came from Freddie Gibson, who delivered a dominant run to claim 1st place, finishing with a remarkable 24-second gap ahead of second place. His outstanding victory contributed to Maidstone finishing 7th in the team competition.

Overall, the championships showcased excellent commitment and resilience from all OPGS runners, with several athletes competing across demanding schedules and still delivering strong results for their teams.

