

BERKHAMPTSTEAD
SCHOOL
MAGAZINE

AUTUMN TERM
2023

BLAZER

CHRISTMAS PRODUCTIONS

IT'S THE MOST
WONDERFUL
TIME OF
THE YEAR

CLUB
TOGETHER!

SOMETHING FOR
EVERYONE

FOOD, GLORIOUS, FOOD!

A CELEBRATION OF OUR
CATERING DEPARTMENT

INSIDE: SPOTLIGHT ON JO SHOUKRY | DAY NURSERY NEWS | CHILDREN'S AUTHOR VISIT



...THOUGHTS... FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

As the new Head of School, the beginning of the academic year was a tremendously special occasion, filled with much anticipation and excitement. Stepping into my brand new role brought with it a profound sense of responsibility, and a determination to foster our nurturing and academically enriching environment. The headteacher can lay the groundwork for a successful and harmonious school year, and the start of the year is a unique opportunity to set the tone for a positive and collaborative school culture. This involves not only establishing clear expectations for the continuation of academic excellence and good behaviour, but also for cultivating a supportive atmosphere that encourages creativity, curiosity and personal growth.

Navigating the initial weeks as a headteacher involved continuing to build relationships within the school community, including the parents, teachers and pupils. I believe that open communication is vital, as it allows for a better understanding of the unique needs and aspirations of both the children and their parents. By meeting and talking, we encourage a shared sense of purpose. It has been an absolute pleasure to be able to meet so many parents at Parents' Evenings and our 'Keeping Parents in the Loop' events. Alongside this, it has been a delight to see so many parents at all the wonderful Christmas productions. A huge well done to all the pupils who have performed so beautifully; our Christmas events have really been magical, and a highlight of the Berky calendar.

It is my vision that Berkhamstead will continue to provide the best holistic development of the children in our care, and the professional growth of the staff. This, I hope, sets the stage for a happy, fulfilling and rewarding journey throughout the school year.

Michelle Bareham

Michelle Bareham
Head of School



...SPOTLIGHT ON... MRS SHOUKRY



Mrs Shoukry is the Head of Learning Support (SENDCo) who started teaching at Berkhamstead at the beginning of the Autumn term. Originally from Worcester, she moved to Cheltenham in 2010 after completing her PGCE. In Cheltenham, she met her husband Shak and they had their daughter (Sienna), who is three years old. She studied Psychology at the University of Swansea.

What was your first job?

My first job was when I was 15. I was a waitress in a small cafe in Pershore on a Saturday morning.

What did you want to be when you were younger?

I have always loved musical theatre, so when I was younger, I enjoyed being in the school musical productions. I would dream of being involved in the big West End productions like Starlight Express or The Lion King.

What do you enjoy about teaching?

Teaching is a wonderful career because you make a difference and shape the future for those you teach. I love watching the children experience awe and wonder in the classroom, I enjoy sharing those lightbulb moments and, most importantly, I love watching each child progress.

How long have you been a teacher?

I started my teaching journey 14 years ago. I trained at the University of Worcester and completed a PGCE before starting my first teaching job in KSI, teaching a mixed Year 1 and 2 class. I taught in KSI for a few years before moving into KS2 to teach Years 3 and 4.

Why did you decide to become a SENDCo?

I've always been passionate about making a difference and as a SENDCo you work closely with young people to ensure their needs are met and the right provision supports them to thrive.

What do you love about working at Berky?

The wonderful, friendly children and of course the staff. Over my first half term at Berky, I have been made to feel incredibly welcomed and supported by a fantastic team of professionals. The leadership is outstanding, and I look forward to the year ahead. The children have made me smile each day and I love the enthusiasm they ooze. There is a special buzz that you feel working at Berky which makes it such a lovely place to work.

Why did you want a job at Berky?

When I looked around Berky, the feeling of a family and sense of a close community was everywhere and shone through. The nurturing environment is fantastic, and I love how there is a strong holistic approach ensuring that the whole child is developed. There is something for everyone at Berky.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I grew up in a tennis-mad family and so tennis has always been a big part of my life. My husband and I enjoy playing together and I can't wait to get my daughter on the court. I enjoy keeping fit and staying active. Family and friends are very important to me. I enjoy spending quality time with my husband and daughter, making memories and exploring new places together.

Miss Walter with the Autumn Term
eco committee



A FOND FAREWELL

It is with the heaviest of hearts that we say a fond farewell to Louise Walter. A superb teacher here for more than 16 years, she was originally appointed Head of PE and Girls' Games, but has proved an accomplished teacher in so much more. Cookery, religious studies, and even Year 3 tapestry are subjects in her repertoire, and her special needs diploma was beneficial for supporting children in English lessons. For the last few years, she has been an exceptional Prep geography teacher - a role that she has embraced with much passion - and has rewritten the geography curriculum to make it interesting, comprehensive and inspiring. She has also been the lead of the Prep School eco team. Idiosyncratic, energetic and oozing with fun, we will all miss Miss Walter tremendously! Everyone at Berkhamstead School wishes you a long and very happy retirement, Miss Walter!



Children are naturally drawn to playing outside, and there are numerous benefits to doing so. Playing outside is fun, exciting and important for children's learning and development. Outdoor play improves a child's mental wellbeing and self-esteem - and happy children are what we strive for from the earliest age here at Berkhamstead. With all these benefits in mind, the Day Nursery team continuously brainstorm and plan ways to further improve their outside provision.

The generous space is made up of a number of key areas - such as a Water Station, Construction Area and Dinosaur World - which are based on the nursery's belief in the 'Curiosity Approach'. (The Curiosity Approach is an approach to Early Years learning which encourages a child's natural curiosity and imagination.) The brilliant Mud Kitchen, for instance, is a super area for imaginative play. With its exciting concoction of stones, soil, leaves, pinecones and real pots and pans, the children have tremendous fun mixing magic potions and mud pies! Needless to say, the Construction Area also appeals to the children who enjoy role play. This is a gravel pit for digging and imaginative play, encouraged by props such as hard hats, high-vis jackets, spades and wheelbarrows - great fun! Teamwork skills are also learnt in the Day Nursery's super outside area for instance, at the water station, children hold pipes for one another whilst

their playmate happily pours water from the jug.

There are plenty of areas in the garden aimed to foster an appreciation of nature. The planting area is for digging, planting, and for teaching the children

about what plants need to grow. Lovely, soft to the touch heather has been planted recently, and fragrant herbs will be planted in the spring, both thoughtfully chosen to enhance the children's sensory experience. The bug hotel is brilliant for our budding entomologists who love the bug hunting paraphernalia - such as magnifying glasses and bug checklists, - and the bird table is proving popular for our children who enjoy feeding their feathered friends. The majority of the garden has been planted with grass, not only to encourage wildlife, but also to give a home-from-home garden feel. A cosy book corner provides an area for the children to relax in, again mimicking a typical family set up at home.

Day Nursery Manager Mollie is delighted with the new outdoor provision and enthuses, 'We are thrilled with the new Nature Garden - it has been such a worthwhile project. We can already see such huge benefits to the children; new interests have been ignited, and we have witnessed improved language skills. We will continue to develop the areas within the garden, inspired by the children's interests.'

"NEW INTERESTS HAVE BEEN IGNITED, & WE HAVE WITNESSED IMPROVED LANGUAGE SKILLS."



...NEWS...

FROM AROUND THE SCHOOL



ANTI-BULLYING WEEK

The highlight of Anti-Bullying Week was Odd Socks Day, when everyone - including Mrs Bareham and the other teachers - wore odd socks or jazzy tights to school! Odd Socks Day was all about encouraging the children to celebrate their individuality, and was a really fun way to raise awareness. The theme for this year's Anti-Bullying Week was Make a Noise About Bullying, and across the week there were assemblies, discussions and activities exploring the importance of consideration and kindness - and how to speak out and stop bullying in our everyday lives. This all-important anti-bullying message is fundamental to everyday life at Berkhamstead, but was highlighted in particular this week.

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Harvest Festival - at the beautiful All Saints' Church - was a memorable occasion. The order of service included Early Years and Pre-Prep performing 'Nsawe', a rhythmical African harvest song, VoxBox performing 'Streets of London' by Ralph McTell and eloquent readings by pupils from Year 3 to 6. Thank you for your generous donations - we raised an impressive total of £547.78 for The Thomas Franks Foundation.



CHARITY NEWS

After discussions with their classmates about which charities to support this year, the School Council reps voted to support Emily's Gift and Rainforest Concern. Fundraising activities so far have included carol singing at Waitrose, Christmas Jumper and Crazy Hat Day and the Christmas Stamp Competition. Thank you to everyone for contributing so generously to these worthy causes.

BERKY GETS GREENER

Another busy term for the eco-warriors! The Pre-Prep children have been busy working on their challenges for their eco badges and they have also been discussing eco-Christmas decorations, for example Christmas trees made out of lollipop sticks and orange peel decorations that both look and smell nice.

In Prep, spider plants were delivered to all classrooms in decorative pots and there is now a food bin in the cookery room which they are in charge of. The Prep have had some wonderful ideas over the term and recently, in pairs, they made posters asking everyone to bring in their blister packs to stop them going to landfill.

The Pre-Prep and Prep met for a joint litter pick at the end of term. The children were keen and enthusiastic and I am pleased to report that we did not find much litter in Pittville Circus Road or in front of the nursery. LVV



...NEWS... FROM AROUND THE SCHOOL



LEST WE FORGET

Children and staff in the school came together on 9th November (the 11th fell at the weekend) to pay tribute to all those who fell in the First World War and in other conflicts since. Children from Reception to Year 6 took part in one or two minutes of silence (depending on their age) to reflect and pay their respects to the fallen, and children throughout the school also showed their respects with creative tributes including beautiful poppy paintings by Year 2, thoughtful sentences about soldiers by Year 1, and war poems and imaginary letters from a soldier by our Year 5 and 6 wordsmiths.



KINDNESS CUP

Congratulations to Harry P and Daniel D who have been awarded the Sally Lee Pre-Prep Kindness Cup this term, and to Eulalie G and Toby R who have been awarded the Gill Agg Kindness Cup, which is the Prep School equivalent.



PTA NEWS

There's always lots of PTA fun in the Autumn Term! We kept Mr Titley busy with the ever popular Quiz Night for parents, and our first Berky Bingo Night for Prep children and parents. Both were brilliantly organised and helped to raise over £900. It was fun to launch Christmas month on Festive Friday with school families. There was also some secret planning with Santa, which resulted in a delivery of gifts to all of the year groups across the school and nursery. Our Christmas Hamper Raffle was as popular as ever, helping us to raise £2,000. All the money we raise helps us to say 'yes' to requests from school. Recently, we've funded lots of new books, sports equipment, workshops for the children a new keyboard for the music department and we funded all of the class gifts from Santa! We're already looking ahead to Spring and Summer events, with the venue and dates booked for the Spring School Disco AND Summer Ball 2024.

All PTA events and activities are organised by a very small group of parents who volunteer their time - so a big thank you to those parents!

Katie Chapman, PTA Chair



This term we have welcomed old and new friends back to Kindergarten and feel so blessed to have such an amazing group of children. We have loved our topics of 'Marvellous Me!' and 'Festivals and Celebrations'; the children have been so enthusiastic, adding their own ideas to our daily plans to create a fun learning environment for all.

Our topic 'Marvellous Me!' helped the children to develop strong friendships whilst enabling us to learn more about the children. This year our Kindergarten children have loved role play situations and have requested a variety of role play areas based on occupations. We have found out what the children would like to be when they grow up; we have some budding doctors, firefighters, paramedics, a pilot, princesses, and a mermaid!

Our themed weeks have been successful. During Teddy Bear Week, we read lots of 'Bear' stories, and acted out the story of 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' by Michael Rosen. The children thought of different actions they could use for swishy, swashy grass and a swirling, whirling snowstorm. We also re-enacted the story during our Forest School sessions.

To make maths fun and to learn the names of 2D shapes, the children made honey sandwiches, cutting the bread into a variety of 2D shapes and then eating them afterwards... Yummy!

During World Nursery Rhyme Week we dressed up as our favourite nursery rhyme characters and recited many rhymes and poems, old and new. Rhyming is so important in Early Years as it helps children to discriminate between sounds and develops their phonic awareness.

During our topic of 'Festivals and Celebrations', we have been learning to appreciate cultural diversity. The Kindergarten community has allowed us to celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, Diwali and Dia de los Reyes

Magos - the Three Kings parade celebrated in Spain on 6 January 2024.

Traditions and celebrations help our children to develop a positive sense of identity and build self-esteem!
MM



"FROM HEATWAVE TO FROSTY MORNINGS, WE HAVE LOVED WATCHING THE SEASONS CHANGE"



The Reception children have embraced the Autumn Term and have thoroughly enjoyed getting into the rhythm of school life. From heatwave to frosty mornings, we have loved watching the seasons change, especially in the run up to Christmas!



Our first topic of 'Marvellous Me!' allowed the children to showcase their families, interests and aspirations and it was wonderful to hear children talking so positively about themselves. When talking about what we wanted to be when we grow up, the responses varied from

firefighters to unicorn hairdressers and everything in between!

During the first half of term, we shared familiar stories in literacy, including making flapjacks linked to Goldilocks, and built on the foundations of early maths, as well as getting out into Forest School, developing our fundamental skills in PE with Miss Keegan, enjoying making music using a variety of instruments with Mrs Sallis and exploring songs and stories in French with Madame McCreanor.

During the second half of the Autumn term, we have been 'Celebrating the Good Times!' by looking at different festivals, such as Diwali with the story of Rama and Sita, Thanksgiving and Hannukah, not to mention the all-important Christmas. We celebrated Festive Friday with a Pyjama Day and decorating our Christmas tree and classrooms. The classroom was awash with glitter and glue as the children lovingly created special Christmas gifts for their families. Making gingerbread in the cookery room was a highlight for us all - it smelt delicious and we hope it tasted good too! Z M-S

...OFF WE GO...

LEARNING BROUGHT TO LIFE FOR OUR INQUISITIVE PUPILS



CRICKLEY HILL TRIP

Kindergarten's sensory experience to Crickley Hill was a great morning out. First, the children listened to a story about Frank the Hedgehog who needed to find a home for winter, and the children had the opportunity to stroke a 'real' hedgehog. Their adventures continued with activities such as rolling pinecones and conkers down guttering, making leaf crowns, planting seeds, water painting, digging and going on a hedgehog hunt by following some picture clues. MM

THE BRISTOL ZOO PROJECT

On a rather wet and stormy day, Year 1 excitedly boarded the coach for our long-awaited trip to the Bristol Zoo Project. We were warmly welcomed by our guide, who gave us some background information about Africa and allowed the children to handle many artefacts, from a leopard's paw to crocodile, snake and giraffe skins and an elephant's tusk. After lunch, we walked around the grounds,



allowing the children to enthuse over a variety of African animals: giraffes, cheetahs, lemurs, meercats, zebras and elands. Happy and exhausted, we headed home. What a fabulous day! C M-L

LIVING RAINFOREST

A forest of intertwined greenery, huge leaves of all descriptions and roaming animals greeted the very excited Year 5s for our trip to the 'Living Rainforest'. Our guided tour was called the 'Amazing Adaptations of the Plants and Animals Living in the Rainforest'. Did you know that the giant stick insect (which has the most amazing camouflage) can lose a leg when attacked by a predator, and regrow it again? Did you know the water lettuce has a special feature that allows water to run off the leaves so it doesn't rot? And a special air structure that lets it float to the surface again if it is trodden on by an animal? Our Year 5s were superb, answering all the questions the tour guide gave them. Sadly, Cinnamon the sloth was very elusive this year - a firm



favourite with everyone when spotted. Well done to all the Year 5s for an excellent trip. LW



WILDERNESS CENTRE

The Year 4 trip to the Wilderness Centre gave the pupils the chance to develop a range of skills whilst out in the wonderful surroundings of the Forest of Dean. The activities included building a catapult, where each member of the team had a vital role to play to ensure it fired through, and rifle shooting, which involved careful concentration, listening and accuracy skills to hit the target. During the day, the teams built up points to buy materials for the final task of the egg drop. It was lovely to see the pupils bring together each other's ideas and amalgamate them into the final challenge to provide the egg with the safety that it needed to remain intact. The pupils all supported each other as egg after egg was thrown off the roof of the old manor house to see which survived the fall. The day was superb with the pupils thoroughly enjoying the different activities. IP

VINEY HILL

At the start of the Autumn Term, Year 5 went on their first residential trip to Viney Hill in the Forest of Dean. This trip is all about team building and working with others in the year group who the children may not know well. Activities this year included tunnelling, crate stack, bush craft, low ropes, archery, a night walk and, for the first time, climbing on the new climbing tower and Jacob's Ladder. This was a challenge for everyone, including the staff, but the children made it look easy with lots climbing to the top of Jacob's Ladder with the support of their partner. The weather was good, and the children had a great time. I was impressed with how well the children within each group bonded and they all worked well together. DB





"THIS HAS BEEN
A TERM FULL OF
WARMTH & FUN"



A BLAST OF WARMTH IS SOMETHING WE COULD ALL DO WITH RIGHT NOW AND THE CHILDREN IN YEAR 1 HAVE SPENT THEIR TERM LEARNING ABOUT AFRICA.

They have identified on world maps where the equator is, learning that the countries closest are the warmest and those furthest away are the coolest. They started English reading 'An African Adventure' and wrote their own list of things they would need on Safari.



This was followed by 'Handa's Surprise', which was their inspiration for enthusiastically tasting a variety of exotic fruits; they thought of lots of wonderful words to describe their taste and appearance. This led very nicely to studying the work of Arcimboldo;

the children created wonderful faces using fruit and vegetables, as well as some fabulous still life drawings. An important part of our topic has been learning about Nelson Mandela. The children were eager to find out all about his fight for justice and equality.

The children have loved finding out about the range of animals found in Africa, from the length of a King Cobra snake to the speed of a cheetah - the children were stunned to discover they travel at a whopping 60mph. Unfortunately, we couldn't organise a trip to Africa, but the children experienced a jam-packed visit to the Bristol Zoo Project. African animals have appeared in our computing lessons too, through programming Bee-Bots. During the Year 1 drumming and dance workshop, the children were able to try a variety of traditional African instruments, sing, dance and wear authentic African clothing.

One of the highlights this term must be the celebration of Diwali. Mrs Amlani organised an amazing day-cooking potato curry, creating rangoli and henna patterns, as well as providing the opportunity to try on a beautiful selection of Indian outfits.

This has been a term full of warmth and fun. C M-L



MEANWHILE, YEAR 2 REMAINED CLOSER TO HOME AND TOOK A TRIP AROUND THE UK.

In September, 24 brilliant young minds commenced their Year 2 journey; they started strongly and haven't looked back! The children have explored the length and breadth of the United Kingdom, finding out facts about each of the home nations, learning traditional dances and showcasing their learning through art, writing and even via iPad presentations. They have immersed themselves in the festivals of Harvest and Christmas, looking at traditions and stories that support these momentous events before visiting our fantastic local church to celebrate themselves. In Computing lessons, digital literacy and online safety have been the main focus, with children using iPads to create and edit documents using Book Creator and KeyNote, discovering how to carry out safe online searches while also thinking about the importance of keeping personal information, including their passwords, private in this digital age.

The second half of the Autumn Term has allowed the children to develop their knowledge of Cheltenham, comparing its human and physical geographical features to that of New York in Humanities sessions, creating thoughtful topical artwork to recognise Remembrance Day and Christmas in Art lessons, and developing sequencing and algorithmic thinking skills within Computing time. Pupils have absolutely loved showing their creative prowess both on paper and screen; these lessons have not only supported their growing imagination but also their collaborative and problem-solving skills. Within the specialist subjects of French and PE, Madame McCreanor and Miss Keegan have been working with the children on transport and weather-related vocabulary, prepositions and determiners (in French) and invasion games, gymnastics and dance (in PE).

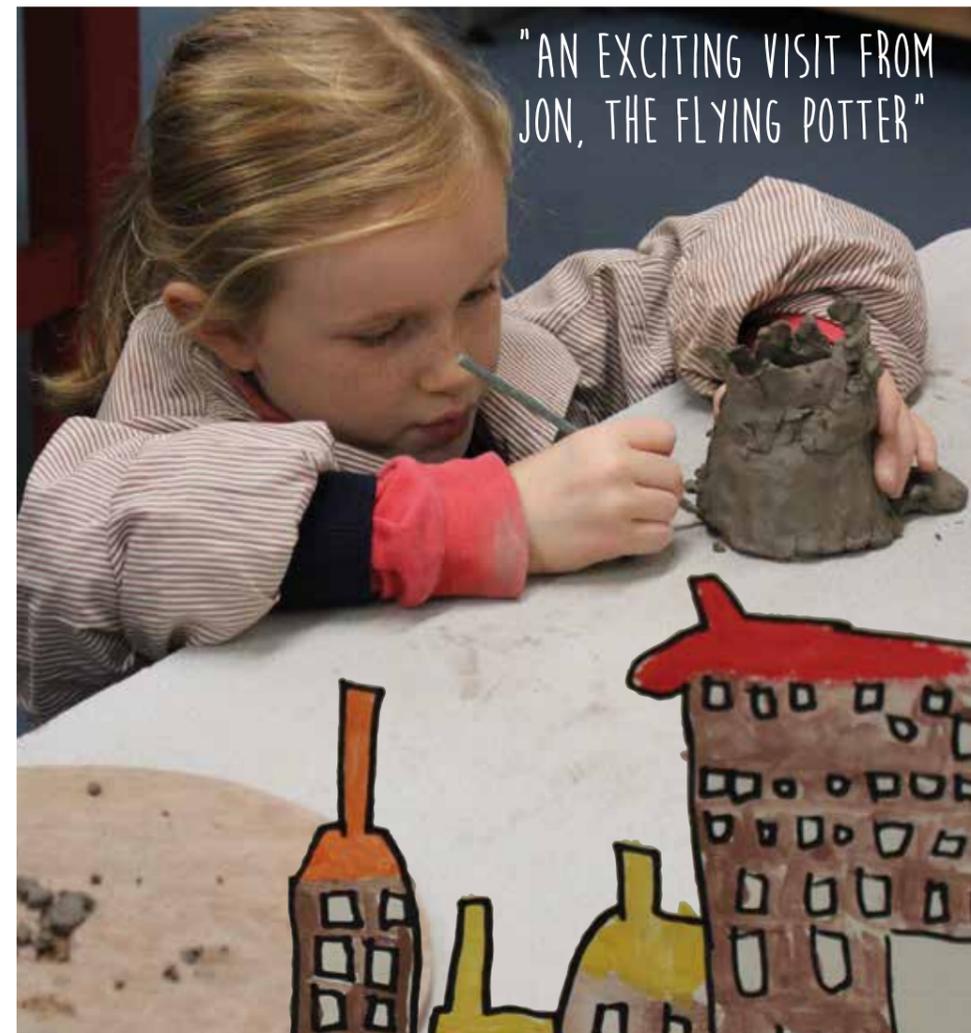
Somehow, the children have managed all this learning while not missing out on core subjects, exploring place value, addition, subtraction and shape within maths, and narrative and non fiction writing in English. They loved writing fantastical journey stories before half term, and incredible information texts on imaginary animals during the second half of term. Some of their inventions have been truly mind-blowing!

The term has been rounded off beautifully with an exciting visit from Jon, the Flying Potter, who taught children how to create clay castles, and finally an end of term

Christmas party - streamers and cake aplenty! KS



"AN EXCITING VISIT FROM JON, THE FLYING POTTER"





FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

WE HAD SOME GHASTLY SCHOOL MEALS WHEN I WAS A CHILD BACK IN THE 1960s - GRISTLY, GREASY MINCE WITH PALLID BOILED POTATOES OR MASH, FULL OF INDETERMINATE BLACK LUMPS, ACCOMPANIED BY OVERCOOKED, WATERY CABBAGE. APPLE PIE SHOULD HAVE BEEN A TREAT, BUT IT WAS FULL OF WHAT WERE REPUTED TO BE THE COOK MRS WIGGETT'S TOENAILS AND SERVED WITH LUMPY, SKIN-COVERED CUSTARD.

Yes, there were always a lot of lumps back then! Luckily, having a linen napkin was compulsory, so some of the nastier offerings could be wrapped up, transferred discreetly into one's pocket and disposed of outside at breaktime, the alternative being to spend the afternoon in front of one's rapidly congealing lunch until it was eaten. Things have changed for the better, thank goodness, and the only tradition we retain from those days is the staff serving the children's meals and sitting with them to eat, as this is a wonderful chance to have a chat with the children while reinforcing good table manners.

What was lacking in the 1960s was a feeling that the children mattered and that it was important to serve high-quality, enjoyable meals – any old meal would suffice. In contrast, our Berkhamstead catering team, led by the brilliant partnership of Rob the Catering Manager and Mark the Head Chef, couldn't be more helpful and obliging. They are passionate about what they do and take great pride in producing tasty, nutritious, well-balanced meals and snacks which are genuinely looked forward to by both pupils and staff.

Healthy meals build healthy children. As a father of two young children himself, Rob is very aware of the need to educate children about what comprises a balanced diet and how important it is to fuel your body in order to be able to work and play effectively. Healthy and adventurous eating patterns can be established at an early age, so a wide variety of ingredients, dishes, flavours, textures and tastes are introduced as the children progress through the school.

I panic if I have to cook for more than six people but imagine having to cater for over 300 people every single day! Apart from lunch, there is tea, breakfast for the new Breakfast Club, morning snack, packed lunches for year groups out on trips, match teas and other events, such as the King's Coronation Garden Party or the Leavers' Lunch to cater for. It's not just meals for school that have to be provided, either - there is also the Day Nursery to consider.

Just look at these statistics for school and Day Nursery:

TERM TIME LUNCHES PER YEAR.....	70,875
HOLIDAY LUNCHES PER YEAR.....	9,100
TEAS (TERM TIME/HOLIDAY) PER YEAR.....	21,675

Then there are special dietary requirements to be remembered (and there are particularly stringent procedures in place for preparing these): 45 children in school with special requirements due to allergies (or preference - vegetarians, vegans etc.) need different snacks, lunches, puddings and teas, plus 18 more in Day Nursery every day...

The Year 6 School Council Leaders have the opportunity to voice the children's opinions about the food at Food Committee meetings held with Rob; Rob can also gauge opinion on new additions to the menu by handing out feedback forms for the children to complete. He introduces new meals - 'challenging' dishes, as he calls them, such as the recent Japanese-style ramen with noodles, seaweed, meat and vegetables - carefully keeping the components separate so that children can try as many or as few things as they like. That way, they will always find something they can enjoy.

Our Eco Committee are also working together with Rob to ensure Berky's kitchen has good 'green' credentials. Their Food Waste Challenge has involved monitoring all food waste - weighing it before sending it off to be composted every Friday. Rob also carefully monitors what is wasted so that he is better informed about how much to make next time. All are rightly proud that these measures have reduced food waste from 200kg per week to 120kg. The kitchen staff have also made a concerted effort to reduce plastic use by cutting down on the amount of cling film usage. When catering for events such as the Summer Fete, the menu is chosen so as to minimise wastage - cold pizza Marguerita is fine for later whereas cold hot dogs aren't! Finally, our fresh ingredients are locally sourced, thereby minimising food miles.

Every term, parents have the opportunity to 'Taste the Menu' which gives them the chance to sample some of what their children are being served. This term's 'Taste the Menu' morning offered parents plenty of delicious examples of snacks and main meals, including oat bakes, banana bread, fruit cake, freshly baked sourdough, chicken noodle ramen and salmon pasta bake.

Last Summer holiday, the kitchen was treated to a well-deserved make-over which will hopefully make the kitchen staff's demanding job a little easier to do; they truly are unsung heroes! To Rob, Mark and the kitchen team, a big thank you from us all - without the meals you provide with such care and thought, school days would be so much the poorer. *By Gill Agg*



JOIN...THE CLUB!

We are keen for our pupils to be offered a breadth of interests and experiences, and our wide-ranging timetable of clubs allows pupils to pursue interests with passion and perseverance; they add a tremendous amount to the children's all-round education.

An age-appropriate programme of clubs is offered as children progress through the school, from ballet and football in Kindergarten, to STEM and Musical Theatre in the Pre-Prep to chess, yoga and a plethora of music clubs in the Prep School. Not only are these activities tremendous fun, but they enable the children to experience new challenges, to work with others and to develop their confidence. Here is a taste of what we have offered in the Autumn Term.

PREP CLUBS... RAZZAMAJAZZ

We have two bands - our Big Band 'Razzmajazz' of 18 musicians and our smaller Berky Blues. Razzmajazz is for wind and brass players with one year's experience who play alongside more experienced players in the rhythm section on keyboard, bass, percussion and drums. Our bands are directed by experienced, professional musicians Miss Becca Holman, who plays brass, and Mr Dan Lewis (guitar).

JIGSAW

This is our group for string players who are absolute beginners. Jigsaw has 12 pupils playing violin, viola, cello and bass, and is directed by Mrs Judith Weeks. Mrs Weeks teaches and plays violin, viola and piano and performs with Cheltenham Symphony Orchestra.

BERKY BOWS

For string players with a minimum of one year's experience, Grade 1 - 2 level, Berky Bows boasts 12 players and they are directed by Miss Pippa Ginns, (violin and viola) and Mr Mike Bacon (cello and bass). Miss Ginns is Head of Strings at Cheltenham College and performs in the Cheltenham Symphony Orchestra. Mr Bacon is a professional cellist performing with a Quartet at the Edinburgh Festival and other events. He also teaches at Cheltenham Ladies' College and Cheltenham College Prep.

CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

This ensemble is a small Chamber group of our top players. We have seven players in this group who rehearse pieces composed and arranged for them by their director Mr Jon Trim, who has had many pieces for orchestras and ensembles published. Mr Trim also teaches and conducts several local adult and student orchestras and is a tutor for the National Children's Orchestra.

SAMBA & AFRICAN DRUMMERS

All our pupils in Years 3 and 4 have sessions with percussion specialist, Mrs Debbie Sallis. Her lessons encompass Latin-American Samba and African-style drumming and improvisation

- which lead to thrilling performances in the Spring Concerts. Mrs Sallis is a member of the Music Junction, a community-based music school, and she leads percussions workshops locally for adults and schools.

BERKY BEATS

Our six energetic kit drummers and percussion players from Years 4 - 6 join forces in this ensemble to play arrangements of lively, exciting music. Their performances are always creatively developed by the pupils themselves with percussion specialist Mr Tom Peverelle directing.

GUITAR CLUB

Prep School guitar players are taught to play recent - and not so recent - pop songs in a fun learning environment, with Mr Dan Lewis and Mr Marc Titley.



arpeggios, part songs and descants. The singers learn to sight-sing and take independent harmony parts. VoxBox singers have been invited to perform in public many times including for our annual Carol Singing charity event.

HOCKEY (GIRLS) & RUGBY (BOYS)

An after-school club for all the Prep children that ran until half term. The club will resume after the February half term with football for the boys and netball for the girls.

HOCKEY

An after-school club for girls and boys in Years 3 and 4 - which takes place all year round - and is delivered by the RO Coaching team. The children build on their basic skills and begin to learn the importance of decision making through gameplay. By understanding when to use the skill first, we can improve our application in a match (As we often say, "Decision before skill").

GIRLS' FOOTBALL

A lunchtime club for girls in Years 5 and 6. The club takes place on the MUGA, and is run by Mr McCreanor and Mr Banks. The girls learn to master basic football skills ready to participate in the annual Cheltenham Primary Schools Competition.

SENIOR CHESS (YEARS 5&6)

Senior Chess Club for Years 5 and 6 is a popular lunchtime activity, with over 30 pupils pitting their wits against one another. Mr Cole organises leagues with all abilities playing one another within the first few weeks, but then the pupils are placed into divisions based on ability and performance.

JUNIOR CHESS

Another lunchtime Chess Club - this time for children in Years 3 and 4. Traditionally, older pupils help Mr Cole coach the 40 children who attend this club.



BERKEYS

This group provides the unusual opportunity for pianists to play together in an ensemble. They learn to play in parts, creating an exciting, multi-layered texture. Each musician's part is specially written and adapted to suit their skill level. The pupils learn to use the keyboards with a full range of exciting features and sounds. It is directed by Miss Nicola Jee.

JUNIOR CHOIR

All our Year 3 and 4 pupils take part in the Junior Choir where they learn many useful and fun warm-up routines for developing good techniques of posture, breathing, articulation and pitching. They sing rounds and simple part songs, which develop listening and ensemble skills. The Junior Choir performs at the Carol Service and Spring Concerts. The group is directed by Mrs Mitchell, who sings with Gloucester Choral Society, the Three Choirs Festival Chorus and Ex Collegio. She also plays clarinet in the Capriol Orchestra, conducted by Mr Trim!

VOXBOX

Our popular VoxBox choir is for Year 5 and 6 pupils who are keen to develop their vocal skills further. Directed by Mrs Penny Mitchell, the singers enjoy lively warm-ups, scales and

STEM

A brilliant after-school activity for our oldest pupils in Years 5 and 6. The club - which is run by Head of Science, Mr Morpew - gives the children the opportunity to explore aspects of science, technology, engineering and maths in a really fun, engaging and hands-on way.



FENCING

Fencing is an after-school club for Year 6 pupils, taught by Mr Kevin Nelson. Over the course of a year, our oldest pupils are taught all three fencing weapons, foil, sabre and epee, and with each, they earn their British Academy of Fencing Bronze Proficiency Awards.

YOGA

During this after-school club, children from Years 3 - 6 improve their strength, balance, attention and coordination through fun yoga games and poses. Through breathing and relaxation exercises, they learn the tools to cultivate a calm mind to help them manage stress in their daily lives. The club is run by Jay from The Yoga Glow UK.

RUNNING

Mr McCreanor's popular club takes place before school on a Friday morning, and is available to all pupils in Years 3 - 6. Children with an interest in running develop their fitness and race tactics, ready to compete in inter-school competitions and House events.

MANDARIN

Mrs Thorn's club is a fun, after-school activity for children from Years 3 - 6. The children learn about Chinese culture and language through fun games and songs. Mrs Thorn is a native speaker and is a fully qualified teacher who has taught Mandarin for many years.

GARDENING

This Year 3 club - run by Mr and Mrs Taylor - ran until half term and took place in the Jubilee Garden. Tasks for the green-fingered youngsters included weeding the lavender and vegetable beds, planting allium bulbs and planting up pots. The plan is for the club to resume after the February half term.

KNITTING

A popular lunchtime club for pupils in Years 3-6. Mrs Taylor - with the help of Mrs John, Mrs McCreanor and Mrs McCreanor - teaches our young knitters the craft. The knitters are knitting squares to make a blanket for the Cheltenham Animal Shelter.

DRAMA

Drama Club takes place after school on Fridays for Years 3-5 and is taken by LAMDA teacher Rebecca Vines. The fun sessions cover all elements of the dramatic spectrum, including choral verse, physical theatre, musical theatre, acting and mime. The Year 6s have their Drama Club on Friday lunchtimes where they build upon the skills have discovered in earlier years. We currently have a wonderful group of learners who are working towards examination and public performance pieces.

ART

This term, Art Club, (for Years 5 and 6 children), has concentrated on sewing, and the children have made bookmarks and coasters. Next term, the club will explore art through ICT, and create pictures inspired by nature with the use of different sketching tools. It will be aimed at children from Years 4, 5 and 6.

PRE-PREP CLUBS... SUPASTRIKERS

A football club for Kindergarten and Reception, which takes place within the school day, and includes fun games and basic football skills. Each session starts with the 'Big Ball' and then a warm up, followed by structured games. The sessions always finish with 'Foam Ball Time' which teaches the children good hand-eye coordination.

AT SOCCERCAMPS

Years 1 & 2 benefit from fun warm up games, skills-based exercises and finish with mini matches. Trophies are awarded at the end of term for best attitude, best shooting and best dribbling!

HOCKEY

An after-school club for Year 2, which takes place throughout the year, and is run by the RO Coaching team. The children learn basic skills such as dribbling, how to receive the ball and 'team vision,' (teaching the children to be aware of their teammates' positions).

HELEN GILL BALLET

Ballet for Early Years children (during school hours for Kindergarten and after school for Reception). The classes - which have an emphasis on fun - focus on expression, performance, elevation, dynamics, musicality, rhythms, formations, space awareness and basic ballet technique suitable and safe for these age groups. A recent introduction has been tap dancing for Reception!



STEM

The purpose of Mrs Gargan and Miss Kang-Martinez's club is to explore computing and science skills, and the brilliant activities have included exploring chemical reactions using bicarbonate and vinegar, exploring cause and effect using STEAM Duplo sets and maths challenges. It takes place on a Wednesday after school.

BOARD GAMES & LEGO CLUB

This club gives the children the opportunity to expand their problem-solving skills in many different scenarios. Games on offer include Race to the Treasure, Shave the Sheep and Pass the Pigs. Lego allows the children to stretch their imaginations - either working alone or collaboratively - to build structures, vehicles and worlds. It is run by Mrs Jones and Mrs Amlani.



MULTI-SKILLS

The aim of this club is to develop the children's sporting skills, including agility, balance and coordination through fun and engaging activities. These include moving and travelling in different styles to develop gross motor control. The club is run by Mrs Macpherson-Light and Mr Jones.

MUSICAL THEATRE CLUB

This Year 1 club, run by Mrs Baker and Mrs Smith, focuses on a really fun combination of drama, singing, and dancing, learning songs and dances from well known musicals such as Matilda.



YEAR 6 MOVERS & SHAKERS!

Our Prep House Captains are chosen because we deem them to be excellent role models, who will do a superb job of leading and motivating their house mates. House Captains are elected at the start of the school year and second House Captains are voted in at the beginning of the Spring Term. Congratulations to Freddie L (St Andrew's), George E (St David's), Sidney R (St George's) and Eva H (St Patrick's). House Captain duties include leading inter-school competitions such as the 'House Shout', and handing out commendations in assembly. The House system is at the heart of the Prep School. When a child starts Prep in Year 3, they are allocated a House and receive a smart badge to wear on their blazers. House contests take place regularly throughout the year. It is a House Captain honour to receive winning cups at these events.

Congratulations, too, to this year's Year 6 Eco-Warrior leaders Jack F and Mollie R, and our School Council leaders George J, Luis M-R and Olivia W; we are equally sure you will make great leaders.

CROSS COUNTRY

This term, some children in Years 4, 5 and 6 have represented the school at two cross country events, one at Newlands and another at Ashley Manor. All those who took part ran well; the Newlands events is flat whilst there is the famous hill to take on at Ashley Manor: Iris and Isabella did exceptionally well considering they are in Year 4 and racing with children who are a year older than them. Well done to Ella, Wilf, Tom R and Ollie B who all finished in the top 30 for at least one of the events. We look forward to the next two events next term. DB

...NEWS... FROM PREP



AUTUMN RECITAL

The first of our after-school recitals, at which 30 pupils performed, took place after half term. We heard delightful solos and duets played on many different instruments. Some of the performers had only started learning their instrument this term and were very confident about playing. There were several Christmas carols and a range of jazz and classical pieces from children from Years 3 - 6. It is always wonderful to see new players watching and admiring the more experienced and terrific that we have so many willing to get up and perform in front of an audience. There were also many beautifully sensitive performances with really expressive qualities.

Well done to everyone who played. PM

MUSIC EXAM RESULTS

Congratulations to the following musicians who have taken grade exams this term:

- Initial - Olivia M (Violin**)
- Grade 2 - Ioan C (Violin**), Charlie H (Clarinet*), George J (Drum Kit*)
- Grade 4 - Mollie R (Flute*)

*Denotes pass with merit **Denotes pass with distinction



PRE-PREP & EARLY YEARS PRESENTS...

A WRIGGLY NATIVITY

The Early Years performances of 'A Wiggly Nativity' were a treat for the parents and staff and there was not a dry eye in the house; we are so proud of how the children performed their songs and narration of the Christmas Story. The Kindergarten children wowed in their Christmas jumpers and the Reception children loved accompanying the songs with their musical talent! Z M-S

FOLLOW THE STAR

This year, Pre-Prep performed an amazing Christmas Concert for their parents. Alongside the traditional Christmas story fantastically read by children from Years 1 and 2, the songs old and new were beautifully sung. The Prep Hall was packed full with parents celebrating their children's hard work, and they were even roped in to dance to Gospel Angels! A huge thank you to Mrs Sallis for all her hard work. C M-L



...OFF WE GO...

LEARNING BROUGHT TO LIFE FOR OUR INQUISITIVE PUPILS



CAROL SERVICE

The Prep children worked hard to prepare for their beautiful Carol Service in All Saints' Church on the last day of term. Every pupil was involved in leading the congregation and performing some lively and more gentle carols. Y6 began the service with the traditional candlelit procession and combined delightful Christmas poems with bible verses telling the story of the Nativity as they all participated confidently. The singing from all the various groups was expressive and there were some confident instrumental accompaniments from Y4 and Y5 pupils. The Chamber Ensemble played well-known Christmas pieces as the congregation gathered and All Saints' was filled with joyful voices for the final hour of this term. PM



CHELTENHAM LITERATURE FESTIVAL

Many of our pupils attended excellent events at the Cheltenham Literature Festival; Year 4 went to see award-winning children's author, Pamela Butchart talking about her hilarious new book, 'There's a Beast in the Basement!', and Year 5 were entertained by Anna James who spoke about her magical adventure series, 'Pages and Co.' Meanwhile, Year 3 received a visit by children's author, Christopher Edge, see the back page).



CHEPSTOW CASTLE

The Year 4s enjoyed a fantastic history trip to Chepstow Castle in November. As well as a tour of the castle and exploring how we would attack and defend it, the children had the chance to handle medieval weapons and some got to try on armour such as a mail shirt and helmet.

We finished the day with an amazing display of shooting with a longbow and a crossbow and seeing the effectiveness of various swords and other weapons.

The children thoroughly enjoyed the day and it was great to see them have practical experience of things we have studied in class. PMcC



DINKY STREET

The Early Years trip to Dinky Street was certainly a highlight of the Autumn Term as we ventured into the magical world of imaginative role play. We travelled by double decker coach, which was incredibly exciting and featured many a rendition of 'The Wheels on the Bus' as well as a roar of delight as the top deck hit some low branches!

During the trip, the children represented the school beautifully with exceptional manners. They explored the different rooms from the supermarket and opticians to the vets and hairdressers. It was wonderful to see the children so engaged in their play, demonstrating super negotiation, communication and language skills and of course lots of smiles! Z M-S



ICT & RIVERS

We couldn't have asked for a better day. The weather was superb - a beautifully clear and sunny autumn day. The weather had been very wet over half term and the Severn and Wye were certainly flowing fast and furious. At each stop-over, the children had to record what river features they saw and take photos. Looking down on the River Wye at Symonds Yat rock was simply stunning with the amazing autumn colours and their photos certainly reflected this. At Wenchford, the Year 6s enjoyed paddling around in the water taking various measurements and I am pleased to report all and everything stayed dry! We had a really good trip. Well done everyone! LW



STEAM MUSEUM

The Year 6s always look forward to the trip to the Steam Museum in December. They looked amazing, resplendent in their evacuee clothing, with gas mask boxes, and evacuee labels.

We enjoyed two excellent workshops on evacuation and air raids. It really brought home to the children what life would have been like for them in World War II.

They got to handle artefacts, sit in a railway carriage and spend time in a communal air raid shelter.

The day was finished off with an exploration of the museum and a chance for the children to recreate evacuation photos with their iPads.

It was an excellent trip and the Year 6s were an absolute pleasure to take. P McC



U8 | GIRLS' HOCKEY

What a brilliant first term of hockey! The girls have really shone and made fantastic improvements in many areas. The Autumn Term began with learning to control our sticks, and moving with the ball before progressing on to passing and finding space. The girls have truly developed a brilliant team spirit with each pupil playing a variety of different positions across all the games. Alongside all of this, they have played with great friendship, always providing each other with guidance, care and encouragement. In all of our fixtures, we were always competitive and the effort could never be questioned. Well done to all the girls. IP

U8 Team: Olivia B, Eleanor C, Betty D, Isla E, Maddie E, Lillian L, Tilly M, Florence P, Florence R, Annabelle S, Eden S, Lucy W, Chloe W, Annie W



U9 | GIRLS' HOCKEY

This has been a most successful term of hockey for our Under 9 girls' teams! After two losses and a draw right at the beginning of the season in September, we then went from strength to strength and won the majority of the remaining games! The girls have made drastic improvements to their fitness, their stick skills and game-play over the season and will be a force to be reckoned with in the coming years. They are a great bunch of girls too and I have been very impressed indeed! CMcC

U9 Team: Nancy A, Isabella B, Eden B, Tamar C, Alanah F, Anna H, Hermione H, Starlar H, Jemima HS, Amelia I, Ellie K, Iris M, Alayna M, Amara M, Chloe R



U10 | GIRLS' HOCKEY

It has certainly been a great season for the girls with some super wins and only a few frustrating draws and losses. All the girls have improved upon their positional play and have begun to use the space effectively when driving the ball forward. I have been really pleased to see a number of girls volunteering for a stint in goal, and even enjoying it! There have been a few memorable matches – the one that really stands out for me was the Cricklade match, where every girl played to the best of her ability to produce a stunning display of skills and team effort. Well done ladies, you have all improved your skills and shown some resilience and determination. I have thoroughly enjoyed this season, watching you grow as a team. Looking forward to next season already! JH

U10 Team: Annabelle A, Rose B, Polly B, Isabella B, Lara C, Harriet CW, Rosie E, Amelia E, Melba F, Olivia M, Matilda M, Emily O, Megan P, Flo PT, Hannah P, Isla R, Allegra S, Evie W, Yaz Y



U11 | GIRLS' HOCKEY

It has been a pleasure to experience some good hockey and teamwork this year. All the girls have worked well on their progression, really fighting for the ball and keeping possession. The U11 teams have played with huge energy and endeavour and deserved better results at times. The Berky B team were often the better team, with both the attack and defence working brilliantly. However, despite having the ball for most of the play in many games, we often struggled to get it in the back of the net. As the season went on, we worked on set plays and deflections, and consequently we saw greater success! The A team have gelled well this season, with all girls stepping up and working hard. The games that stood out were the RPS matches, which were fast and forceful; the girls never gave up and held their own against a really strong team. The girls should all be proud of what they have achieved this season, regardless of some of the results. Well done to you all. CK

U11 Team: Hattie E, Eulalie G, Eva H, Kitty H, Ella H, Charlotte J, Estella L, Frankie M, Coco P, Ellie P, Millie R, Betty R, Mollie R and Olivia W.
Colours: Eulalie G, Eva H, Kitty H (GK), Charlotte J, Estella L (GK), Coco P, Millie R
Outstanding: Ella H



U8 | BOYS' RUGBY

The Year 3 boys were split into either two or three mixed ability teams for the rugby season. We played tag rugby and learnt how to form defensive and attacking lines. Throughout the term, all of the boys improved their ability to pass and catch the rugby ball and to run in a straight line. We played multiple matches against local schools with a variety of results. On the whole, the boys played well and will move on to full tackling in Year 4, where they will build on the skills that they have worked on this year. Thank you to all parents who were able to support the team at any of the matches. TM

Bisons Team: Rocco B, Ned D, Jack O'K, Arturo P, Ralph A, Ezra B, Jonah B, Guy D
Buffaloes Team: Jacob P, Devan P, Sebbie R, Arlo R, Leo D, Archie D, George R
Bulls Team: George R-S, Rupert S, Ollie S, Ben S, Felix T, Max T, Jack W



U9 | BOYS' RUGBY

The As and Bs have worked hard all season in training, and this showed in the matches. The boys steadily improved in both their skills and confidence. Captaincy on both sides was shared weekly with all boys working together as a unit and always supporting each other. Tackling was the most improved skill of the term with just about all of the boys showing a growing confidence in this tricky area. The A's defence, passing and handling out of contact was an area of strength and was evident in our best game of the season against Dean Close. Victories against Beaudesert, RPS, and King's in the latter half of the season sealed an almost unbeaten season and this team should be very proud of its efforts.

The Bs played eight games this term, facing some strong competitive sides. In training, they were always enthusiastic and committed, and this spirit was taken into matches. What was impressive was the boys' attitude to competition: they were never disheartened by defeat and showed a genuine enjoyment of match play. Wins in their first match at Ashley Manor and their penultimate match at

Dean Close proved the highlights of the season and this side should also feel very proud of its efforts this term. Well done, boys! SM

U9A Team: Arthur H, Jacob H, Seth L, Max L, George L, Ellis M, Oliver S, Dion W

U9B Team: Freddie B, Ioan C, Magnus D, Quinn H, Eddie H, Toby M, Milo R, Eddie S, Ethan S, Harvey W



U10 | BOYS' RUGBY

The U10 boys have had a fantastic season on the rugby field. They have worked hard in training and used their new skills with great success. The boys have won most of their matches and they became more resilient when they lost. They played well during the rugby festival at Dean Close where they played teams from around Gloucestershire including a very close fixture against The Richard Pate School which finished in a draw. The final game of the season, against King's, Gloucester was one of the highlights. I was really impressed with how well the boys offloaded the ball, avoiding contact where they could and scoring lots of tries. The game finished in a well-deserved draw. Well done, boys: a fantastic season. DB

U9 Team: Hughie B, Oliver B, Leo C, Angus C, Lucas D CV, Charlie F, Jack F, Fergus G, Jack H, Charles H, Miles H, Tharusha J, Henry P, Rishik R, Toby R, Atlas M, Archie M, Isaac S R, Charlie W, Jasper W



U11 | BOYS' RUGBY

The U11 teams have displayed a fantastic attitude this season. They have listened to advice, worked hard and made great progress during the season. The A team played a lot of hard fixtures and acquitted themselves superbly in all matches. The second half of the season really saw them gel as a team, as their skills sharpened in attack and they upped their levels of aggression in defence. Our final four games saw victories against Cricklade, The Richard Pate School and King's, Gloucester, as well as a loss against a very strong Dean Close team.

The Bs similarly developed into a cohesive team during the course of the season. They were fully committed in the tackle and the ruck and their passing skills and lines of running saw them play an entertaining brand of rugby. They had some fine victories against Kitebrook, Ashley Manor and King's, Gloucester. They also had some tight games against RPS and Dean Close where they just came on the wrong side of the result.

All of the Year 6 boys have been an absolute delight to coach and it has been a very enjoyable season. Well done to all of the boys. P McC

U11 Team: George E, Jack F, Tommy G, Hugo H, George J, Freddie L, Alastair M, Luis M R, Wilf M, Zack P, Isaac R, Josiah R, Sid R, Ben R, Tom R, Ben S, Ben W

Colours: George E, Jack F, George J, Wilf M, Alastair M, Zack P, Josiah R, Sid R, Tom R, Ben S
Outstanding: George E, Jack F, Wilf M, Zack P





AWARD-WINNING CHILDREN'S AUTHOR VISITS BERKY!

One Thursday in October - soon after the Cheltenham Literature Festival had drawn to a close - we were delighted to welcome children's author Christopher Edge to school. Not only did he entertain us all, but he also thoroughly inspired this year's cohort of Year 3 budding authors too. In his customary animated style - he visited us last year as well - the zany wordsmith delivered a fabulous interactive event about his latest book, 'Escape Room.' The excited children were invited to 'explore' the rooms of The Escape Room and solve the puzzles and challenges they found there. Everyone enjoyed Christopher's visit tremendously; thank you to the PTA for so generously funding this memorable visit!



The Blazer is printed on carbon balanced and FSC certified paper using vegan based inks.



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