

BERKHAMPSHEAD  
SCHOOL  
MAGAZINE

AUTUMN TERM  
2022

# BLAZER

A IS FOR   
BERKY  
TECHNOLOGY

CHRISTMAS  
PRODUCTIONS  
OUR PUPILS  
SHINE IN THE  
LIMELIGHT

JOIN THE CLUB  
SOMETHING FOR  
EVERYONE



INSIDE: SPOTLIGHT ON BHAVNA AMANI | DAY NURSERY NEWS | THE IMPORTANCE OF CHESS





## ...THOUGHTS... FROM THE HEAD

At the start of each holiday, I reflect on the past term and on just how much I enjoy my job! I have seen plays and recitals, I've seen the focus and animation of children absorbed in tasks, I've seen endeavour on the games field and in the classroom. I have seen remarkable teachers in action and children smiling at their achievements and learning and doing more than they might have thought possible. This edition of the Blazer will give you a flavour of what I've seen. I hope that you enjoy it.

We are a very strong school musically, with well over 90% of Prep children playing an instrument and the highlight this term being one of our pupils gaining a place in the National Children's Orchestra. But at the heart of the school is the genuine 'can-do' attitude that every Berky child comes to adopt. This willingness to participate and persevere means that we excel in disciplines as diverse as chess, art, computing and a range of sports, and that we embrace the academic, winning grammar school and independent school places; at Berky, it's 'cool' to work hard and fun to do so too!

I am enormously proud to be Headmaster of this remarkable school and to work alongside a fine body of staff. They bring the same vigour, innovation and commitment to the children that we have always had.

Developments this term have included further use of technology to enhance learning; the children are such good visual and auditory learners and curriculum changes have been made to capitalise on this. Having taught Year 6 maths this term, I fully appreciate the problem-solving approach that is now embedded along with a more investigative and skills-based approach to the other academic subjects. These have enhanced learning and are equipping children with key skills. Questioning and experimenting is always encouraged here and making mistakes is viewed as a positive aid to learning... what a great place to learn!

*Richard Cross*

Richard Cross  
Headmaster



## ...SPOTLIGHT ON... BHAVNA AMLANI

Bhavna Amlani is the Year 1 teaching assistant who started here at the beginning of the Autumn term. Originally from Bristol, she moved to Cheltenham in 1994 after her marriage to husband Manish. She has three children, Krisha who is 23 and twins (Nikesh and Priya) who are 22. She studied Psychology with Writing & Publishing at Middlesex University.



### What were your first jobs?

I worked at Waitrose in Bristol while studying for my A Levels and also at an insurance company during the summer holidays. After graduating, I took up a position as a customer advisor in a building society, where I established a career as a mortgage advisor.

### What made you change career?

I've always wanted to work with children, and so when I had an opportunity to re-train, I did! I completed my Level 3 in Teaching and Learning at Gloucestershire College. It was the best thing I ever did!

### What do you love about being a teaching assistant?

I believe that if children are given the best opportunities to be the 'best that they can be', they can achieve many things in their education and in society too. Through perseverance and a nurturing environment, such as here at Berky, children can thrive, and I love being part of their growth.

### Is there anything you would like to master?

I would love to learn how to plant, grow and maintain a vegetable patch. I think that self-sufficiency is so important especially in the current climate.

### What club do you run?

I have been running the Pre-Prep Lego Club. Every week, we challenge the children to build different structures using Lego. This is great fun and the children have really taken the challenges on board and produced some amazing structures such as a house with a car port and balcony!

### What do you love about working at Berky?

I love the family atmosphere at Berkhamstead. I felt part of Berky the day I started! The children made me feel so welcome, and their enthusiasm for learning is infectious. There is a genuine passion for learning and an open mindedness that I have never come across in the other schools I've worked in. Every morning, I wake up and look forward to the day!

### What else should we know about you?

I am passionate about keeping fit and eating healthily. I also love listening to music, from Vivaldi's Four Seasons to Bollywood film songs! I also really enjoy going to live concerts and have seen Ed Sheeran a few times. I also enjoy going out and trying new cuisines. My favourite is Thai food.



## BERKY THROWBACK

On 25th November 2013, our senior choir, 'VoxBox' was invited to sing for His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. He was touring Cheltenham, and his visit to the newly refurbished Regent Arcade was his final appointment of the day. On 10th September 2022, King Charles III was proclaimed King!

Our VoxBox choir - which was started at Berkhamstead 17 years ago - is made up of singers from Years 5 and 6, and has been invited to perform in public many times. Needless to say, this particular occasion was a huge honour. Read more about our clubs on pages 14-16.



# ...NEWS... FROM AROUND THE SCHOOL



## KINDNESS CUP

Congratulations to Rocco B and Lucy W who have been awarded the Sally Lee Pre-Prep Kindness Cup this term, and to Charlie F and Emilia F who have been awarded the Gill Agg Kindness Cup, which is the Prep School equivalent.



## ALL IN GOOD TASTE

As is customary, the kitchen has worked tirelessly this term to provide their usual delicious home-cooked meals and mid-morning snacks. They have also prepared tempting spreads of home baking for events such as Open Morning. The PTA held a coffee morning this term, and there was the opportunity to 'Taste the Menu.' Dishes on offer included a selection of break time snacks such as seeded fruit flapjacks, chocolate brownies and cheese straws, and lunches including chicken korma, Berky burgers, and mixed bean chilli. Everything went down extremely well. In other kitchen news, the department is determined to do their bit to support the school's eco initiatives, and have invested in some food waste scales. Food waste is weighed after each sitting, the aim being to reduce it.



## FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Year 1 children were delighted to find their classrooms filled with candlelight and decorated with peacock feathers, bangles, saris and shalwar kameez - the perfect backdrop for Mrs Amlani to teach the children all about Diwali. The children enjoyed her chapati and Bombay also making session, particularly when they tasted her delicious cooking. Meanwhile, Kindergarten and Reception children made colourful lanterns and diva lamps to mark the festival.



## 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 'Mr Scarecrow' and 'Little Red Hen', VoxBox performing 'The Beautiful Rain' by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and eloquent readings by pupils from Years 3 to 6. Thank you for your generous donations - we raised an impressive total of £619.48 for the Cheltenham Food Bank.



## LEST WE FORGET

Children and staff in the School came together on 11th November to pay tribute to all those who fell in the First World War, and in other conflicts since. Everyone took part in one or two minutes of silence (depending on their age) to reflect and pay their respects to the fallen. Pre-Prep and Early Years children also showed their own respects by painting beautiful poppy pictures.



## ANTI-BULLYING WEEK

The highlight of Anti-Bullying Week was Odd Socks Day, when everyone - including Mr Cross and the teachers - wore odd socks or jazzy tights! Odd Socks Day was all about encouraging the children to celebrate their individuality, and was a really fun way to raise awareness of the message. Year 6 School Council leaders also helped deliver the message to their younger counterparts in one of the week's special assemblies. Well done to Emily B, Emilia F and Alexa S. Meanwhile, across the road in the Pre-Prep and Early Years departments, the children took part in circle times, discussing the importance of being kind to one another, and the Kindergarten children were rewarded for 'random acts of kindness.' This all-important anti-bullying message is fundamental to everyday life at Berkhamstead, but was highlighted in particular this week.



## BERKY GETS GREENER

This has been a busy term and the enthusiastic eco-committees have put forward many ideas for discussion. In the Pre-Prep, the children have created recycling drawers for every classroom and in the Prep, we have been busy planting spider plants for the classrooms. Both eco-committees met before school for a litter pick and there were many volunteers to help at the Christmas Fayre. Over the next few months, the garden on the Prep side will be completed with bug hotels, bird tables and water butts and it is hoped over the Christmas holidays lots of children will work towards gaining their eco-warrior badges. Well done to both eco-committees. LVV



## CHARITY NEWS

After discussions with their classmates about which charities to support this year, the School Council reps voted to support the Cheltenham Animal Shelter and Sue Ryder. Fundraising activities so far have included carol singing at Waitrose, Christmas Jumper Day and the Christmas Stamp Competition. Thank you to everyone for contributing so generously to these worthy causes.



## PTA NEWS

It's been a busy and fun term as the new PTA Chair, bringing back some big events, including the PTA Quiz Night - with the brilliant Mr Titley - and Fireworks Night with a new team making it happen. Both events sold out! A big thanks to everyone who has offered to help. I've lots to learn so really appreciate the kindness and support from parents and the school.

The PTA likes to bring the school community together, so it's been good to see old and new parents at events, enjoying some of the things that make Berky special. We've introduced some new things, like the PTA Coffee Morning & Taste The Menu and were delighted that so many of you came along! It's a great opportunity to meet other parents and get to know the PTA. We launched our Reusable Party Packs - 'Betsy' and 'Bertie' - which you can book for your parties - and we introduced our second-hand uniform team. Next time, we'll highlight some of the things we've funded for the school as it's nice for you to see the difference we make.

It was lovely to end the school year with the Christmas Fayre. It was a brilliant afternoon of festive fun for the family, with games, face painting, a tombola and our famous Berky Hamper Raffle! We welcomed Santa back to the magical grotto, and with the help of his elves, gave gifts to lots of children. It was a really special event that we've all missed, so thank you to the PTA elves, class reps and everyone who helped to make it such a success!

There's lots to look forward to in 2023, and we will be bringing back more of our favourite events as well some new ones. If you'd like to get involved, please get in touch via [pta@berkhamsteadschool.co.uk](mailto:pta@berkhamsteadschool.co.uk)  
Katie, PTA Chair







## HAPPY CHILDREN LEARN BEST

Children at our lovely Day Nursery benefit in ways that are unique to a Berkhamstead education. 'Happy children learn best' maintained Edna Andrews, the school's founder. This credence has been a touchstone here since 1945, and remains integral to life at Berkhamstead to this day. The Day Nursery - which opened over 10 years ago - was established with this belief very firmly in mind, with an aim to support and encourage the same principles and values as the school: namely that happy children are children that learn.

Children at the Day Nursery benefit from the school's specialist teachers. Madame McCreanor is the Modern Foreign Languages specialist, and our oldest Wise Bear children visit the school weekly for her joyous French sessions. Early Years music specialist, Mrs Sallis also shares her expertise with the Day Nursery children, and her music sessions are brilliant! The Day Nursery welcomes Mr Tittley from time to time. He is one of the school's most respected English teachers and is renowned for his animated storytelling skills.

Assembly is important all over the school. Mrs Roddy-Watts - head of Early Years at the school - leads a dedicated Early Years assembly each week for Kindergarten and Reception children. Our Wise Bear children are welcomed too, encouraged to feel an important part of the Berky community, and simultaneously to become familiar with a school environment. This helps prepare them for Reception and general school life. The children learn to sit quietly, to concentrate and to acknowledge one another's achievements. The staff and children come together to celebrate 'Living Our Values' and are awarded 'leaves' from the Values Tree for positive behaviour and learning: Perseverance, Honesty, Politeness, Trust and Kindness are values that are continuously, patiently and gently encouraged by all our Early Years staff at the School and the Day Nursery.

Access to the school's excellent facilities is also an advantage for our children here at the Day Nursery. The Andrews Centre houses a specialist Early Years gym, and this is enjoyed by all the children here. The Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and playground - with its excellent climbing apparatus and Wildlife Garden - is also well trodden by the Day Nursery children. The older children benefit from the school's cookery room too.



### OPEN MORNING

The School is holding an **Early Years Open Morning on Friday 27th January**, from 9am-11am. We would love to welcome you to meet our specialist Early Years staff, and Madame McCreanor, Mrs Sallis and Miss Keegan (our specialist games teacher). Everyone is welcome!

## MEANWHILE, OVER IN KINDERGARTEN

Our topic of 'Marvellous Mel' gave us an opportunity to learn all about the children in Kindergarten, and we used their ideas in our planning over the term. The children enjoyed learning about different emotions, playing games such as 'Name that Feeling'. The idea was for the children to choose a card that showed an expression, and to act out what they could see. The other children guessed what was being expressed. We used puppets to help the children understand feelings such as happiness, sadness or worry. We are so lucky to have such fantastic children in Kindergarten, who care for each other and want the best for their friends.

To find out the children's favourite places in school, we went for a walk, and each child used an iPad to take a selfie in their special place. The castle was a definite winner, but the dining hall, gym and outdoor classroom were also favourites.

The children have been enjoying our morning routine of 'Squiggle Whilst you Wiggle'. This activity helps improve their gross motor skills as they dance to music with scarves in each hand. Dancing helps to develop coordination, and encouraging large arm movements helps in the development of early writing skills. The children also enjoy 'Dough Disco'. The children copy a different routine each day to manipulate and mould their dough. This helps improve finger control and helps develop fine motor control - also useful for learning to write.

Our second topic 'Festivals and Celebrations', started with the celebration of Diwali. The children created Rangoli patterns outside Kindergarten to welcome everyone who visited, and made clay diva lamps to symbolise kindness. We thought about how we can be kind to each other. Our Christmas activities included baking, and the children made individual Christmas cakes to take home. They helped to weigh and mix the ingredients together, and we all stirred in our Christmas wishes. Andrew Bear's Adventure Day was super fun, with Andrew up to his old tricks in hiding the children's snack - fortunately he left us hot chocolate as a treat, and we eventually found him hiding, covered in tinsel, in our outdoor shed. MM





## ...OFF WE GO...

LEARNING BROUGHT TO LIFE FOR  
OUR INQUISITIVE PUPILS

## VINEY HILL

At the start of this term, Year 5 went on their first trip of the year to Viney Hill in the Forest of Dean. The objective of this trip is to encourage the children to work together as a team, and they take part in activities with children within the year group that they might not know well. Activities included tunnelling, climbing, crate stack, orienteering, bush craft, low ropes, archery, and a night walk. There was a campfire on the last evening with toasted marshmallows and Mr Morphew brought his telescopes so the children could look at the stars! 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 were all working well together. Well done, Year 5, it was a fantastic trip. DB

CHELTENHAM  
LITERATURE  
FESTIVAL

Many of our pupils attended excellent events at the Cheltenham Literature Festival: Year 6 went to entertaining talks given by popular children's authors Robin Stevens and Emma Carroll, Year 5 learnt the art of journalism from the team of 'The Week Junior', and Year 4 were thoroughly entertained by the hilarious Rob Biddulph, learning how to draw his character 'Doodle'. Meanwhile, Year 3 were lucky enough to welcome children's author Christopher Edge to school, a visit that was kindly funded by the PTA.



## THINKTANK

Reception enjoyed their Topic, 'Magical ME' so much that we decided to visit Thinktank Science Museum in Birmingham. The children and staff could not fail to be impressed by the sheer size of the museum and the variety of things there were to see and do. The children loved the visit to the workshop 'Our Amazing Bodies.' The session explored the five senses and how they inform us about the world. It highlighted the importance of eating a balanced diet to help us grow and stay healthy. The children were also introduced to Tommy, with his specially designed tummy, which opened up to reveal his internal organs! H R-W

DANTASTIC  
WORKSHOP

Year 1 staff were unable to arrange a trip to the Arctic, so invited a real explorer into school instead! A hands-on - and very inspiring - workshop enabled the children to discover so much about exploring the polar regions. They asked many questions and learnt what life is like for a real explorer. They learnt even more about Ernest Shackleton and the race to the South Pole. The children were thrilled to handle some real artefacts such as a walrus tusk, an arctic fox tail, a polar bear claw, an orca tooth and seal skin that had been sourced from Inuits. AS



## ICT &amp; RIVERS

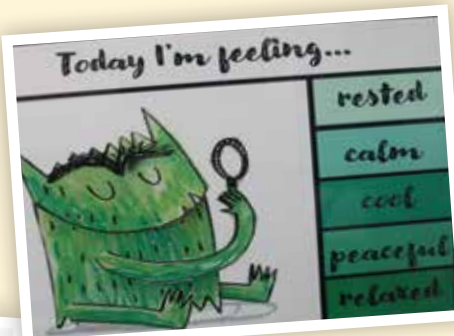
We were so lucky with the weather, not the brightest of days but dry, clear and mild. The first stop was to see the River Severn at Broadoak and then on to lovely Wenchoford picnic area to do the IT work of width, depth and speed of the water. From here to the picturesque Symonds Yat with the distinctive flood plain, riverbank erosion and the looping meanders - quite a sight. Then we drove down the Wye valley and over the Severn estuary. At each stop Year 6 took photographs and made notes as to what they saw. It was an enjoyable trip, and the Year 6 were a super group to take. Well done! LW

Our topic 'Magical ME' was a great way of getting to know one another. Activities included the children using their five senses to explore our school grounds, making porridge and discussing what they would like to be when they grow up. (Police officers and ballerinas were popular choices!)

The second part of the Autumn term is always so exciting leading up to Christmas, and our topic 'Sparkle and Dazzle' celebrated this and other special times. The topic kicked off with a big bang finding out about Guy Fawkes and his devious plan to blow up the Houses of Parliament. The children also enjoyed finding out about how Hindus and Sikhs celebrate Diwali. They learnt about Mendhi patterns, and the children created their own fantastic designs. The children became party planners for Berky Bear's birthday party, and we celebrated in style! We also thought about how we celebrate Christmas and discovered that people in other countries celebrate in different ways. The children were interested to find out, for instance, that in Australia, many people spend Christmas Day on the beach. It was lovely to have parents in to discuss with the children how they celebrated Christmas when they were young!

At the end of term, the Early Years department held their annual Christmas party. The morning was filled with games and dancing, and a very special visitor came to visit... Father Christmas! What a great ending to a very busy and successful term - it certainly proved to be a term filled with very happy endings! H R-W

We spent plenty of time exploring our emotions and the children were introduced to the story of 'The Colour Monster', a character who was baffled by his feelings. Throughout the story, his emotions are depicted in colours, and the children learnt to recognise these. We displayed the 'Monster Emotions' in our classrooms to help the children learn to recognise, express and react to different emotions and feelings. Each day, they have been identifying the emotion they are feeling and how this affects us and others!

RECEPTION:  
A TERM OF DISCOVERY  
& CELEBRATION!



## YEAR 1 VISIT THE

# ARCTIC

## AND BECOME POLAR EXPLORERS!

Year 1 donned their thermal layers, winter coats and snow boots and explored the Polar regions this term. The Arctic and Antarctica have been explored, investigated, researched and described. The children enjoyed finding out about the animals that live in the polar regions and now know why polar bears and penguins could never be friends! *'The Greatest Explorer'* by Chris Judge inspired our English lessons. The children wrote their own list of items they needed to pack to help rescue Tom's Dad who was lost in the

Arctic! The children dressed up and learnt about questions by 'hot seating' as the main character, Tom. The children's imaginations shone through when they created their own alternative ending to the story.

The children investigated weather and seasons and went on their own sensory walk spotting tell-tale signs of Autumn. Conkers were found and the children could feel the wind and hear leaves rustling in the trees. They were surprised at how different the temperature is in Antarctica! The children looked at world maps and this helped them to understand where the climate is so different.

The frozen theme continued throughout Year 1's art lessons. The children explored a range of blocks to print their own igloos and snow scenes, and then progressed to using tiles, rollers and printing ink to create their polar tile prints. They practised blending paint to create wonderful penguin scenes which were on display in the small dining hall. Penguins also appeared in our computing lessons! Alongside learning to type and keep themselves safe online, the children were thrilled to use the Blue-Bots to make algorithms to navigate across the Arctic map! A very chilly, but fantastic term for Year 1! AS



## MEANWHILE, YEAR 2 REMAIN

# CLOSER TO HOME

## AND TAKE A TRIP AROUND THE UK

This term has seen Year 2 taking a whistle stop tour of the United Kingdom and discovering a range of facts and customs about the four United Kingdom countries. They particularly enjoyed the chance to dress up as a country or an item linked to the UK. We had to be careful of the many dragons who arrived and make sure Big Ben and Dick Van Dyke were safe from any fiery flames! The children revelled in participating in a range of country dancing, learning Welsh dancing, English dancing and of course a good Scottish Highland Fling! However, the UK highlight must have been making scones and enjoying afternoon tea with Miss Latham and Paddington Bear.

Artwork involved finding out about the artist L.S. Lowry with Year 2 attempting their very own matchstick men and matchstick cats and dogs! Imagine their surprise when Mrs Smith and Miss Latham serenaded them with a song of the same name! The children relish their music lessons with Mrs Sallis and have explored the rest of the world through a range of songs that they performed so beautifully as part of their aptly named Christmas Around the World performance at the end of term. GS





# A is for

**SINCE SEPTEMBER 2022, ALL YEAR 5 AND YEAR 6 PUPILS HAVE HAD THEIR OWN BERKHAMPSTEAD-APPROVED IPAD IN SCHOOL FOR USE IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT HOME; THE CHILDREN WILL BE ABLE TO KEEP THESE IPADS WHEN THEY LEAVE. GILL AGG EXPLORES THE REASONS WHY TECHNOLOGY IS SO IMPORTANT AT BERKHAMPSTEAD**

**E**ducation is the only business still debating the usefulness of technology.' So said Rod Paige, the former US Secretary of Education, and he has a point. Whether we like it or not, technology is here to stay; it has invaded every aspect of our lives to the extent that we feel bereft without our mobile phones. With this in mind, we have to ask ourselves this question: is there any point in maintaining what is basically a twentieth century education wholly based on such elements as handwritten work and using textbooks? Barnacle-like, we cling to what we know; we are cautious and even suspicious of change, but the world is changing dramatically. We owe it to the next generation to adapt, keep up and even be ahead of the game.



Here at Berkhamstead, we are fortunate to have a Headmaster with a Computer Science degree and several very tech-savvy staff led by Mr Banks. Mr Banks was our guiding light during the Covid lockdowns, expertly and patiently training us to use Teams in order to facilitate the continued delivery of education. The pandemic served to accelerate school's use of technology and we are now forging ahead with all kinds of innovative practices. Twenty years ago, there would have been a solitary, underused computer in the corner of the classroom; today's classrooms look and operate very differently.

continuum between home and school. Homework for the upper Prep years can be done on the iPad, continuing work done at school, with all necessary resources literally at the children's fingertips; worksheets won't get lost in transit... and 'the dog ate my homework' is now an obsolete excuse! Videos introducing topics can be watched at home beforehand, leaving more time at school to work on the 'meat' of the lesson. iPads will empower the children to take more control over their own learning, encouraging independence, collaboration and enquiry skills; teachers can also assess what the children know quickly and easily before moving on. They are managed by Berkhamstead's device management system and are preloaded with all the apps needed. They are much easier and lighter to carry around - no more bulging rucksacks, aching backs and parents doomed to be packhorses! They are also more eco-friendly as they lessen the need for photocopying; in turn, school's printing costs - which were substantial - are lowered.

Not everybody welcomes technology into the primary classroom with open arms; a few parents and even one or two staff members have reservations. High on their list of concerns are the increased use of screentime and the dying out of the more traditional learning methods they themselves experienced at school. Today's children are surrounded by technology at home and many of their parents are increasingly reliant on technology in the workplace; more use of technology in school is most definitely relevant to what they will go on to experience... and since the purpose of education is to prepare them for their adult life, we need to step up.

However, this is not a revolution; the tried and tested traditional methods and skills are still very much in evidence. Mr Cross said last term in his introductory letter, 'We are excited about blending traditional teaching methods with technology. It is important for us to emphasise that the iPad will not replace pen and paper and it will not be used all lesson, every lesson. It will be used as a tool to support and enhance children's learning.'

iPads suit a variety of learning styles and engage even the most reluctant learner, but only a small percentage of time is spent actually looking at a screen; iPads will soon become seen as a useful tool rather than forbidden (or severely limited) fruit.

Research into the use of the iPads in the Prep this term indicates that there is indeed a happy balance. For example, in science, the iPads are used but most of a typical lesson is still taken up with discussion and practical work, with some written recording; in English, there is still an emphasis on neat handwriting and presentation, but iPads are used for research, reference and as a textbook replacement; in maths, concepts are explained very effectively through videos and interactive animations used alongside more traditional concrete resources.

It is early days but already the staff are displaying their usual creativity. In MFL, iPads allow language learning to be more focused - recording their voices and listening back critically, using the iPad as a dictionary and using Duolingo for extension work. Music, Art, CWB and P.E. continue to be taught in the usual way, although even these subjects benefit - for example, Garage Band or Loopseque can be used occasionally for composing music, there is an inbuilt camera for use in art lessons, along with a wealth of artists' work to study, and a timer for fitness tests in P.E. John Dewey, an educational reformer, said, "If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow." Far better to embrace these changes - recognising and welcoming their huge potential benefits and opportunities - than to be wary of them. Most important of all, the children find working on the iPads exciting and fun and, as we know, children learn best when they are happy. Finally, an encouraging quote from the innovative teaching and learning consultant George Couros: "Technology will not replace great teachers but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational." There is no doubt that we have great teachers at Berkhamstead so the outlook is rosy; our children are the citizens of the future, and we owe it to them to equip them with every advantage we can.



**"TECHNOLOGY WILL NOT REPLACE GREAT TEACHERS BUT TECHNOLOGY IN THE HANDS OF GREAT TEACHERS CAN BE TRANSFORMATIONAL."**



# JOIN.... THE CLUB!



STEM CLUB WITH MR MORPHEW

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 board games and multi-skills 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 'Razzamajazz' of 18 musicians and our smaller Jazz Combo. Razzamajazz is for wind and brass players with one year's experience who play alongside more experienced pupils in the rhythm section on keyboard, bass, percussion and drums. Our bands are directed by experienced, professional musicians Miss Becca Holman, who plays brass, with Mrs Sallis (percussion) and Mrs Mitchell (wind.)

### JIGSAW

This is our group for string players who are absolute beginners. Jigsaw has 15 pupils playing violin, viola, cello and bass, and is directed by Mrs Judith Weeks and Mrs Sallis. 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, Berkly Bows boasts 17 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 others. 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 especially for them by their director Mr Jon Trims, who has 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 percussion workshops locally for adults and schools.

### BERKY BEATS

Our nine 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

Any of our pupils from Years 3 - 6 who wish to learn guitar chords and accompany songs are able to join Guitar Club. Led by Mr Marc Titley and Mrs Debbie Sallis, they are taught to play recent - and not so recent - pop songs in a fun learning environment.

### BERKEYS

We have keyboard players in this orchestra who have reached a minimum of Grade 1 level. The 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 Mr Matthew Sharp.

### 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 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 & RUGBY

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.

### 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 nearly 40 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.

### 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 Morphey - 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 the 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 the repotting of bamboos, and planting pots and troughs with Spring bulbs, vegetables and even conkers! 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 and Mrs McCreanor - teach our young knitters the craft. The knitters have recently contributed a square each to make a blanket for the Cheltenham Animal Shelter.

## CYCLING PROFICIENCY

Cycle Stars has been providing cycling proficiency to Years 4-6, and these fun sessions aim to improve the children's confidence and ability. The skills learnt in a traffic-free environment are an essential first step to riding on the road safely. The club has been generously funded by the PTA.



## DRAMA

Drama Club takes place after school on Fridays for Year 4 and 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. We currently have a wonderful group of learners who are working towards examination and public performance pieces.

## 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.

### HOCKEY

An after-school club for Year 2, which takes place throughout the year, and is run by Richie from RO Coaching. 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 Miss Kang-Martinez and Mrs Gargan's club is to explore computing and science skills, and the brilliant activities have included making invisible ink, making catapults and earthquake experiments! It takes place on a Tuesday after school.

## BOARD GAMES & ACTIVITIES

Games on offer at this after-school club include Chess, Dobble, Shut the Box, Jenga, Pop-Up Pirate, Kerplunk, Connect 4, Snakes and Ladders and Monopoly.

## LEGO

Challenges are set each week - such as building houses or a rockets - at this after-school club. The children's creations are then judged by Mrs Amlani and Mrs Butler at the end of each session. A 'free choice' station encourages the children's creativity!

## MULTI-SKILLS

The aim is to develop the children's sporting skills, including agility, balance and coordination. Team skills are also developed. The children try a range of sporting activities and games including dribbling (football and basketball), bean bag toss, hit and catch activities, agility run, assault course, balance test and ball mastering.

## NATURE & SKETCH CLUB

This is a beautifully calming lunchtime club for small groups of Prep-Prep children, run by Miss Latham, and taking place in the Wildlife Garden. The children are encouraged to observe the nature around them, and to make careful drawings in their sketch books.

# ...NEWS... FROM PREP



## CROSS COUNTRY

This term, some children in Years 5 and 6 have represented the school at two cross country events, one at Newlands and another at St Edward's. All those who took part ran well; the Newlands event is flat, whilst there is the famous hill to take on at St Edward's. At Newlands, we had six runners finishing in the top 50, which was great;

Carly in Year 6 ran exceptionally well, finishing in 6th position. At St Edward's we had four runners in the top 50 and Chloe improved on her last result finishing in 13th place whilst Carly finished in 6th place again. Well done, girls! We look forward to the next two events after Christmas where we hope a couple of children will qualify for the county final. DB



## 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 Frankie H (St Andrew's), Seb C (St David's), Carly H (St George's) and Sophia B (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: Amelia J and Lawson B and our School Council leaders Emily B, Emilia F and Alexa S; we are equally sure you will make great leaders.



## THE CODE SHOW

It is more usual for our computing department to embrace the latest technological advances, but a day in November was devoted to celebrating the home computing boom of the late 1970s, 80s and 90s instead. The PTA kindly funded the most brilliant workshop for Years 1-6 who spent a hands-on Friday enjoying the kit that plenty of their teachers grew up with. The Prep hall oozed with nostalgia that day!

## MUSIC NOTES

### WIND & BRASS DAY

A group of 11 players spent a day in October at Dean Close Prep School rehearsing and preparing for a concert of 'Songs from the Shows' at the end of the day. Our players were amongst the youngest there with most Prep schools fielding Year 6, Year 7 and Year 8 pupils, but they rose to the challenge of sight-reading three new pieces and rehearsing intensively in various sections. The flute, clarinet and saxophone players learnt 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight', the brass group played 'All that Jazz' and the more experienced players of all instruments learnt 'My Favourite Things'. The final concert included 'Phantom of the Opera' and 'Any Dream Will Do' with all 70 players - a truly rousing sound and great experience for our players.

### AUTUMN RECITAL

The Autumn term's Recital was also a super event, showcasing 30 Prep pupils. Five of them had only just started their instruments and, just seven or eight lessons later, were confident to show what they had learnt so far! There were many beautiful performances with more experienced players and the combination was inspirational. We heard drummers, brass, wind, strings and pianists, some solo, some as duets, but all played with style and confidence. Well done, and 'Thank You', players.

Congratulations to Ted L who has achieved a place in the National Children's Orchestra this year. Ted started learning the French Horn last year in Year 4 and has made remarkable progress. Well done, Ted, we are all proud of your achievement. PM

### MUSIC EXAM RESULTS

Congratulations to the following musicians who have taken grade exams this term:  
Initial - Angus C (Piano\*\*)  
Grade 1 - Will H (Piano)  
Grade 3 - Mollie R (Flute\*\*)  
Grade 3 - Ted L (French Horn\*\*)  
Grade 3 - Tom C-G (Drum Kit\*\*)  
Grade 4: Ted Lunt (Piano\*\*)

\*Denotes pass with merit  
\*\*Denotes pass with distinction







## WE'RE GOING ON A BABY HUNT

Early Years performed their Christmas Nativity beautifully for their parents! The children told the story, 'We're Going on a Baby Hunt', with wise men, shepherds, angels, stars (and stars in training) all helping the children to track down the new-born king! All the children acted with great conviction, and it was a wonderful highlight of our festive season. Mrs Sallis provided the wonderful musical accompaniment to the concert along with percussion from Reception. It was a fantastic show, and we are very proud of all the children for their achievements. HR-WV

## CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

Pre-Prep's musical extravaganza took the audience on a tour around the world. From Poland's Little Star, accompanied by bells and triangles, to the drum beats of Africa, Christmas traditions were explored and explained. A pit-stop at the other side of the world offered Christmas Day on the Beach - a jolly Australian Christmas tradition! The finale saw 'Children of the World' come together in one huge musical celebration. A great start for a very Happy Christmas! Thank you to the very talented Mrs Sallis for putting all of this together! AS





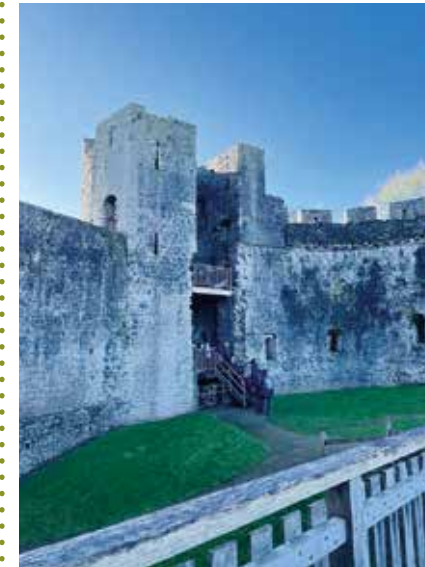
# ...OFF WE GO...

LEARNING BROUGHT TO LIFE FOR  
OUR INQUISITIVE PUPILS



## CAROL SERVICE

There was a particular thrill about this year's Carol Service, not only because it was our first 'live' Carol Service in three years, but also because the snow caused many plans to be postponed at the last minute. The children were tremendous and really rose to the occasion, accepting the changes to plans calmly and giving their best in rehearsals. Year 6 led a wonderful candlelit procession which began the service in a magical way. All the children from Years 3-6 sang the traditional and modern carols, raising their voices in harmony through a succession of lively and more gentle items, some with beautiful instrumental accompaniments. These were interspersed with readings performed expressively by all the Year 6 pupils. The choirs performed confidently as they told the story and reflected on the precious meaning of Christmas. PM



## CHEPSTOW CASTLE

The Year 4s travelled to Wales on the most beautiful crisp and sunny day to visit Chepstow Castle. We enjoyed a tour of the castle, learning about the architecture and its development over the years. We examined the castle defences and saw how challenging it would be to try to take such a structure.

The afternoon saw us try on different types of armour and see in action longbows, crossbows, swords, daggers and spears. The children particularly enjoyed this part and were left in no doubt how dangerous these weapons were.

This visit really enhanced the children's learning about Medieval times, and they were excited to see the scale of the castle, as well as handle some of the artefacts. P McC



## STEAM MUSEUM

As part of our studies on World War II, the Year 6s donned their evacuee clothing and headed to the Steam Museum in Swindon for the day. The children looked the part and it gave them a window into what life would have been like for an evacuee.

Our first workshop gave the children the opportunity to sit in an old railway carriage and experience the journey. The children were also able to handle a variety of artefacts including the contents of an evacuee's suitcase. They were then taken off the train by the billeting officer, who tried to allocate them to families. Some had success and some did not, and this brought home the emotions that children would have gone through.

Our second activity was about the role of women in the War. There were some role play activities, giving some children the chance to wear 1940s costumes and experience the various key roles that the women of Britain took on and the impact it had on the war effort.

The children embraced the day and threw themselves into all of the activities. They were an absolute delight to take and I had many positive comments about them from both museum staff and members of the public. Well done to all the Year 6s. P McC



## THE LIVING RAINFOREST

As we entered the rainforest glasshouses, the heat and humidity hit us and then whilst watching the green iguana the water spray to maintain the humidity came on, so it really was like being in the rainforest! Both classes listened intently to our tour guides as we learnt how the plants and animals have adapted to the climate of the rainforests and they asked lots of probing questions – most impressive. Cinnamon the sloth was clearly visible in the trees, but the firm favourite this year was Harry the six-banded armadillo. Often hiding underground, this year he was really active scurrying around his pen and showing off to his audience. The Year 5s were superb and a credit to the school. Well done! LW







U8 | HOCKEY

The girls have made great progress during their first ever term of hockey. During the term, they have worked on passing and finding space to receive these in the best possible position. During the course of our games, the girls have used these skills as well as their great attitude and determination to win the majority of games. We have also learnt about specific positions on the hockey pitch and ensured that they have had a go at all of them. Well done girls on a superb term! IP & CK

**U8 Team:** Nancy A, Eden B, Isabella B, Alanah F, Anna H, Hermione H, Jemima H-S, Amelia I, Eleanor K, Iris M, Chloe R



U9 | 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 all of the remaining games!! 11 wins in total for all 3 of the teams. The pinnacle of the season, however, was the A-Team winning the U9 Hockey Tournament at Rendcomb (winning 7 of the 8 matches played) and the B-Team performing excellently in their group with 6 of their matches won. The girls have made drastic improvements to their skills and game-play over the season and will be a force to be reckoned with in the coming years. I have been very impressed indeed! CMcC

**U9 Team:** Annabelle A, Rose B, Polly B, Isabella B, Lara C, Harriet C-W, Rosie E, Amelia E, Melba F, Eliza L, Olivia M, Matilda M, Megan P, Florence P-T, Hannah P, Isla R, Allegra S, Diana S, Emily O'K, Evie W, Yaz Y



U10 | HOCKEY

It has been a good season, with some super wins and some frustrating draws and losses. All the girls have improved upon their positional play and have begun to use the space effectively when driving onto the goal. I have been really pleased to see several girls volunteering for a stint in goal, and even enjoying it, sometimes! Our teamwork has improved with every game. There have been some memorable matches where teamwork was great, RPS being one such game. Well done girls, you have all improved your positional understanding and I look forward to seeing you each individually improve further next year. CK

**U10 Team:** Hattie E, Eulalie G, Eva H, Kitty H, Ella H, Charlotte J, Ara K, Estella L, Frankie M, Coco P, Millie R, Mollie R, Georgiana S, Olivia W  
**Colours awarded to:** Ella H



U11 | HOCKEY

What a year, it has been a pleasure to experience some great hockey this year and even better teamwork in some matches. I have been blown away by the grit and determination of some of the girls. All girls have listened well this year and tried so hard to improve their individual skills. The under 11 teams played with huge determination and endeavour and deserved better results at times. As the season progressed, we were finding the back of the net more regularly and it was well deserved. The games that stood out the most this year were the Hatherop, Elms and Malvern St James matches; they were fast and forceful matches, the girls never gave up and held their own against really strong teams. Many girls volunteered to play in goal throughout the season, with many great saves. All girls should be proud of what they have achieved this term, regardless of the final results. I have been proud of the resilience you have displayed. Well done to all and good luck next year in your new schools. CK  
**U11 Team:** Emily B, Sophia B, Emma C, Nina C, Esi D, Esha D, Georgia E, Emilia F, Alina G, Arwen H, Frankie H, Carly H, Chloe H, Tatty H, Amelia J, Yvie L, Chloe M, Alba N, Erin P, Erin R, Alexa S  
**Colours awarded to:** Sophia B, Esi D, Frankie H, Tatty H, Chloe H, Yvie L, Alexa S  
**Outstanding players awards:** Frankie H, Chloe H



U8 | TAG RUGBY

Between the two teams of Buffaloes and Bisons, we had a very successful season. Our only losses came at the very beginning of term when we were still learning about our positions on pitch and what was expected of us. As the term progressed, it was obvious to see all the boys that improved their game. They all know where they are expected to be, whether in defence or attack; they can receive the ball, have a run (forwards preferably!) and pass the ball on to supporting players. Next year, the boys will progress on to full contact and I wish them all the best. Well played, everyone. TM

**Bisons:** Ioan C, Quinn H, Arthur H, Barnaby K, Seth L, Toby M, Edward S, Oliver S, Eddie S  
**Buffaloes:** Jacob H, Eddie H, Max L G, George L, Ellis M, Milo R, Ethan S, Harvey W, Dion W



U9 | RUGBY

Both sides have worked hard all season in training and this showed in the matches played; there was a steady improvement in their skills and confidence. Captaincy was shared weekly with all boys working together as a unit and always supporting each other. Early season wins at St Edward's and at the Beaudesert Festival contributed to the boys development as a strong team, playing games at a high tempo and scoring tries from several phases of play. Retaining possession at the breakdown improved as did their passing and tackling. Our best results came towards the latter half of the term with three good wins at the Dean Close Festival and then further wins after half term at RPS, Beaudesert, Dean Close and King's, Gloucester.  
The Bs once again proved an old adage that the strength of every good A team lies in the strength of your B team and the Bs certainly had players that showed they have the potential to challenge for places. Wins at Beaudesert, RPS, and Dean Close proved that this was a side that possessed players that could pass well, tackle and score tries. They often played entertaining rugby, developing and strengthening their skills

throughout the season. Both the As and the Bs should be pleased with their excellent results this term.  
A special thanks to all the parents who supported us this term and a very big thank you to the PTA who donated money to buy three tackle bag doughnuts which not only provided a valuable rugby teaching aid, but gave endless amounts fun for the boys. SM  
**U9A Team:** Hughie B, Oliver B, Lucas D CV, Angus C, Jack H, Miles H, Toby R, Charlie W, Jasper W  
**U9B Team:** Leo C, Jacob D, Charlie F, Jack F, Charles H, Tharusha J, Atlas M, Archie M, Rishik R



U10 | RUGBY

This proved a promising term of rugby union. A few losses by narrow margins might seem to take the shine off the season but all matches were close and very competitive. Much progress was made with the boys' tackling and, by December, the lads were defending with much more confidence. In attack, the boys were able to find teammates on the wing successfully and found space well. The highlight of the season was an exciting afternoon at the Dean Close Festival where the team took on St. John's, Clifton and Dean Close and emerged with two fine wins and a narrow defeat. All the boys can feel proud of their prowess and determination. DB  
**U10 Team:** George E, Jack F, Tommy G, Hugo H, George J, Edward L, Freddie L, Alastair M, Luis M-R, Wilfred M, Owen P, Zac P, Sidney R, Ben R, Isaac R, Josiah R, Tom R, Ben S, Ben W



U11 | RUGBY

This season has been all about teamwork. With only a small number of boys in Year 6, how they pulled together was going to be key. In true Berky fashion, they did indeed do just this. Although there were challenges along the way, the boys grew as a unit and improved both their skills and cohesiveness, to play many fine matches.  
Amongst the highs were victories against Rendcomb, Dean Close, Hatherop and Cricklade and draws against Beaudesert and St Edward's. Just as pleasing was what the boys learned from the defeats and the attitude that they showed when the chips were down. The final game of the season against King's, Gloucester exemplified this. Depleted by illness and down by five tries at half time, the boys could have easily thrown in the towel. However, they just worked even harder and showed tremendous resilience to edge the second half. This summed up the attitude of the boys. Well done to all of the team. P McC  
**U11 Teams and colours awarded to:** Ben A, Lawson B, Freddy B, Victor B, Seb C, Ben S, Tom C-G, Will H, Harry H, Bertie L, Floyd R, Gideon T, Joe W  
**Outstanding players awards:** Victor B, Seb C, Tom C-G, Harry H, Joe W





Mr Cole (far left) with the junior school chess team



## MAKING ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

Chess continues to prove a most popular pastime for Berkhamstead pupils. In the Prep, roughly half the pupils attend one of the chess clubs, while a large proportion of Y2 children attend their club every summer. Sadly, the number of chess matches against other schools has decreased due to Covid but, in the past, Berky has won more District League and Knockout trophies than any other local school. Hopefully, in time, league chess will return to Cheltenham schools.

Like many of the Berky pupils, I caught the chess bug at primary school. I loved the cut and thrust of battle and enjoyed the element of problem solving – after your opponent has made a move, you have a fresh problem to consider before making your next contribution. Seeing devious plans come to fruition on the board - a subtle mating combination or a successful capture of a key piece - proved enormously satisfying. And playing for my school team was tremendously exciting.

Studies have shown that chess should improve concentration and memory, can help enhance maths and even reading skills, fosters logic and creativity and rewards hard work as the more you play and study, the better you will get. But ultimately, it's a wonderful social activity as friends come together to hurl armies at each other - without any bloodshed and with a smile and a handshake at the end of 'hostilities'. *Martin Cole*



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