

**IN FOCUS**

BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL ANNUAL  
2024 - 2025



**THE SUNDAY TIMES**

**SCHOOLS GUIDE**  
2025

**INDEPENDENT SECONDARY**  
**SCHOOL OF THE YEAR**  
**NORTH WEST**



# Welcome



**It is a pleasure to welcome you, once again, to this year's InFocus magazine.**

Within the 100 or so pages, we seek to capture what is special about a Birkenhead School education, an inspiring approach to education that we were delighted was recognised during this academic year by the Sunday Times Award: Independent Secondary School of the Year 2025 in the North-West.

We are not a School that chases awards, but such an accolade validates the type of education that we seek to provide on a daily basis: talented, committed staff, with great support from families, inspiring their children and students through a great breadth of opportunities both inside and

outside the classroom. Given such foundations, underpinned by core values so important to all that we do, it is no surprise that they go on to achieve great things – and importantly, within a happy and inclusive environment.

The 2024-25 academic year was, behind the scenes, characterised by almost unprecedented political interference in the sector, but our commitment to academic excellence for all and an outstanding co-curricular programme, both pillars of our award win, continued unabated, and will always underpin our approach here on Wirral. We celebrate the achievements of all our students, founded on the support of the wider School community – staff, families and our global network of hugely supportive Old Birkonians.

We look ahead to an exciting 2025-26 academic year, and I trust you will enjoy looking back at some of the highlights of this past year.

Beati Mundo Corde.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Vicars'.

**Paul Vicars, Headmaster**



**I'm a great believer in breadth of opportunity, and I have thoroughly enjoyed reading this year's In Focus, which showcases the incredible opportunities at Birkenhead School across the full age range during the 2024-25 academic year.**

I'm delighted our pupils involve themselves so fully in the life of the School from such a young age. Our vast range of co-curricular activities builds skills and confidence, as well as providing countless opportunities for fun with friends. We have a truly happy school, where children thrive, where hard work is balanced with meaningful opportunities outside of the classroom, and where staff give tirelessly of themselves to provide the best possible learning journey from Early Years to Sixth Form.

I encourage you to sit back and reflect on the wonderful academic year that 2024-25 was, and to enjoy the many highlights included in the pages ahead. From the Little School 'Enrich and Explore Programme' to the Year 6 production of Aladdin, from the Year 2 Barnstondale Adventure to the Iceland Trip for Geography students, from the Year 6 London Football Tour to the Seniors' Rugby Canada Tour, what an incredible year it was, and I now look forward to this new academic year and the many wonderful opportunities it too will bring.

Happy reading and all good wishes for the year ahead!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harry FitzHerbert'.

**Harry FitzHerbert, Head of Prep**

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## Our Values



# Early Years & Pre-Prep

## A Wonderful Year in Nursery

Exploration, discovery and a love of learning from the very start.

This year in Nursery has been full of adventure, curiosity, and joyful learning as our youngest children embraced a variety of exciting experiences across the School.

In the Baby Room, we celebrated VE Day in style with a red, white and blue picnic lunch. It was a lovely moment to join in with the wider School community in marking the occasion — and our littlest learners certainly enjoyed the treats! Beyond the classroom, the babies explored the world around them through regular visits to the School’s allotment, where they had the opportunity to plant seeds, water them, and learn how to care for their growing plants. These outdoor adventures continue to be a favourite, as the children regularly explore Forest School, the pond, and take walks across the School grounds, making the most of the beautiful surroundings.

Over in the Toddler Room, we made the most of the warm weather by taking learning outdoors. Outdoor play is a cornerstone of our approach and offers countless benefits — from developing physical skills and enhancing mental wellbeing, to supporting communication and social development. The toddlers have particularly loved their visits to Forest School, where they went on bug hunts and explored the features of different insects, learning about the importance of respecting and caring for

nature. Another highlight was our colourful flower hunt, which encouraged children to look closely at the natural world while building their vocabulary and confidence in communicating what they saw.

In Rising 3s, our theme this term has been insects and caring for living things. The children have been fascinated by the lifecycles of animals — from watching tadpoles grow into frogs at the pond, to nurturing caterpillars in the classroom and releasing butterflies once they were ready to spread their wings. These experiences have helped build empathy, responsibility, and wonder for the world around them. To round off the term, the children took part in a joyful Bug Ball during National Insect Week, dressing up as their favourite creepy crawlies!

As the Rising 3s prepare for their transition to Pre-Prep, we’ve also been encouraging independence through imaginative play, including exploring school uniforms in the home corner. Developing independence at this stage is a key part of the journey, and we’d like to thank our families for their support in helping children practise skills like putting on shoes, using the potty or toilet with confidence, and handwashing.

It has been a truly wonderful year across Nursery — full of smiles, milestones, and magical moments. We are so proud of everything our children have achieved and look forward to watching them continue to grow as they move into the next phase of their Birkenhead School adventure.

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## Bug Ball

The children in Nursery had a bug-tastic time at their Bug Ball back in June!

Our brilliant Early Years team really pulled out all the stops for a day that was crawling with fun. From bug-hunting in the sand and finger-painting insects, to spotting spots on ladybirds and getting stuck into all kinds of messy play — the children loved every moment.

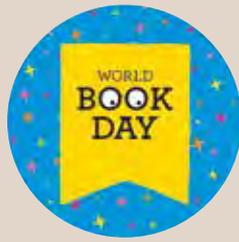
The little explorers also headed into Forest School for a buzzing bug hunt before enjoying their very own ‘Bug Ball’ picnic tea. They even made their own mini beasts out of play dough!

A huge thank you to our incredible Nursery staff who hosted a day that was truly the bee’s knees.



## World Book Day

World book day brings lots of excitement to Pre-Prep; dressing up as our favourite characters is good fun! Even better, when you get to share the experience with siblings.



This year Pre-Prep children had a visit from Year 2! The love of reading spread through the Pre-Prep. It was a delight to see older siblings reading to their brothers or sisters.



## Oral Hygiene

Oral Hygiene is a key element to the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, and what better way to encourage Oral Health than a visit from a dentist.



For some children these experiences can be daunting, not when you have a friendly face in Mr Gella-Rodriguez. Mr Gella-Rodriguez made going to the dentist a wonderful experience for the children, talking them through the importance of brushing their teeth, the procedure of a check-up and providing some hands-on resources for the children to explore. Each child took home a toothbrush, clinical glove, sticker and toothpaste.

## It's a Mystery!

It's always the highlight of Pre-Prep's day when there is a mystery reader, and boy, have we had our fair share. From Mr FitzHerbert and Mr Vicars, parents, carers and other staff members from School. A highlight for the Rhino group was when the musically talented Mr Ryan visited with his guitar.



The children sat in awe as Mr Ryan strummed on his guitar, taking on the role of the busker from Julia Donaldson's story 'Tabby McTat'.

## Five Little frogs sat on a Log!

Did you know that rhyming is a key skill to support early reading?



Our younger cohort have been developing rhyming through songs and rhymes. We had an impromptu visit to the pond and stumbled across some Frogspawn-returning to Pre-Prep we extended learning into maths and problem solving. Counting down from 5 can be really tricky.

## Five Senses around Food

We had a special visitor from Chartwell's. When Iona came into Pre-Prep, to talk to the children about healthy eating and how we use our five senses to explore food!



The interactive session encouraged the children to think about how their senses (taste, touch, sight, smell, and hearing) play an important role in the way we enjoy and experience food. The children explored lemons, strawberries, curry powder, mint and spinach using different senses.

## Hide-and-Seek, Remembering your Inner Child...



When Pre-Prep recently visited the pond, Mrs Curry spotted them and asked if they would like to join her Year 10 Drama students. Her students were trying to relive their experiences of Hide and Seek as a young child and she thought it would be the perfect opportunity for them to ask our children questions. The children did a fabulous job sharing their feelings whilst playing Hide and Seek, such as feeling 'happy', 'excited' and even 'scared'.

The children also shared their favourite places to hide such as 'behind a tree', 'behind a bush' and 'under a blanket'.

# Little School Highlights

## Reception's visit to Mr Vicars

**November is the time of year when Mr Vicars' usually quiet and serene office, with its lovely view of the campus, comes alive with the excited chatter of Reception children armed with hula hoops and apple juice!**

This cherished annual tradition, where Reception pupils visit the Headmaster, is a highlight of Mr Vicars' calendar. The children were full of curiosity, asking questions like his favourite colour (red – just like Nottingham Forest FC), whether he has pets (his children have a guinea pig), and his favourite flavour of crisps (salt & vinegar)!

Over snacks of crisps and juice, they shared a lively discussion before treating Mr Vicars, along with our Bursar and Receptionist, to a delightful rendition of a song from their upcoming Christmas performance. It was a lovely afternoon, filled with smiles, laughter, and a sense of community.

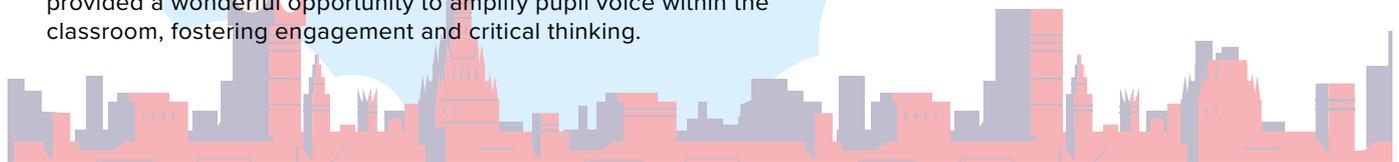


## UK Parliament Week

**In November, the children in Little School enthusiastically took part in UK Parliament Week.**

They explored what it means to be part of a democracy, the importance of exercising our right to vote, and learned about the role of the Prime Minister and how decisions are made in Parliament to shape the rules of our country.

These valuable lessons are key to empowering our children to make independent, informed choices in the future. The week also provided a wonderful opportunity to amplify pupil voice within the classroom, fostering engagement and critical thinking.



## Year 2 Christmas Decorations in DT

**Year 2 had a special treat in December, making their very own Christmas decorations and learning all about how the special laser cutter works, with Mr Parry up in Senior School.**



## Year 2 Knowsley Safari

**Year 2 had a sensational sunny safari back in April.**

They began their day with a 5 mile guided coach tour learning about all the different animals across the continents. From camels to yaks and rhinos to lions, they saw it all. They were even fortunate to see a day old deer. An outdoor picnic lunch was then devoured, followed by the sea lion show which was thoroughly enjoyed. They ended their day with a safari walk and an animal detective workshop experience. A fabulous time was had by all!



## Summer School Summer Concert

The sun was shining, the stage was set, and our Little School pupils lit up the Outdoor Classroom with their Summer Concert in July.

Families gathered to enjoy toe-tapping tunes, fantastic choreography, and joyful performances. From grooving to Uptown Funk to heartfelt renditions of original group poems written by our talented Year 1 and 2 children, the afternoon was bursting with creativity and talent.

A special highlight was the choir's beautiful performance of Twist and Shout, accompanied by Mr Ryan on guitar – a real crowd-pleaser!

A huge well done to all our performers and a big thank you to everyone who joined us. It was a truly magical afternoon of music, sunshine and smiles!



## Victorian Day

Year 2 took a step back in time when they came to School dressed in traditional Victorian clothing in December.

The day helped bring to life what they had been learning in the classroom about Victorian life. They got to write on slates, completed arithmetic and copied lines in full cursive style.



## Year 2's Titanic Day Out!

Year 2 had an unforgettable day exploring the fascinating history of the Titanic and its deep connections to our incredible city.

The adventure began with a scenic walk along the waterfront, where the children spotted key landmarks, including 30 James Street—the building where the Titanic was registered. The excitement continued with an engaging storytelling workshop, bringing to life the journey of a family who sailed aboard the iconic ship.

Dressing up and role-playing made the experience even more magical, allowing the children to step back in time and immerse themselves in history. A fantastic day of learning and fun!



# My Future Self Day

From astronauts to vets, ballerinas to artists—our Little School Future Self Day was bursting with big dreams and even bigger imaginations back in April!

The children came dressed as their future selves and fully embraced their chosen roles. From passionate Q&As in Year 2 to sharing what inspired their career choices, it was a day full of confidence, creativity, and ambition.

We loved seeing such a wonderful mix of aspirations and couldn't be prouder of our young dreamers. The future is definitely in safe hands!



## Year 1 Explorers Day

**What an exciting day it was for our Year 1 pupils as they stepped into the shoes of history's greatest explorers in June!**

Dressed in full explorer gear, the children were thrilled to meet Commander Armstrong, who led an interactive workshop packed with stories, challenges, and teamwork. From learning about the daring journeys of Amelia Earhart and Ernest Shackleton, to working in teams to research, create fact files, and present their findings — our young adventurers showed brilliant curiosity, collaboration, and confidence.

A huge well done to our Year 1 explorers — a day of imagination, discovery, and adventure!



## NATURE EXPLORERS

Children from Reception to Juniors enjoy Nature Explorer sessions throughout the year.

By Mr Smith, Prep Teacher

Year 1 had a fabulous Nature Explorers session in Forest School back in February. They read the story of *Stick Man* by Julia Donaldson and used the book as inspiration to make their own stick people. Mr Davies, our Forest School Leader, taught the children how to tie a square lashing knot to keep the sticks together in a cross shape.

The children had a great time and loved exploring the Forest School- they showed some excellent team work making a water game up using equipment and things they could find. They loved seeing how Forest School had changed since their last visit, looking for signs of winter. Everyone's favourite part just had to be having a nice, yummy hot chocolate at the end to warm them up! Nature Explorers is our bespoke outdoor learning programme at Birkenhead School, running from Reception to Year 4. The children complete a new level each year taking them from Little Acorns to Park Keepers, completing a log book and earning a certificate for every level.



# Enrich & Explore

## Days of Discovery and Adventure in Little School

At the end of every half term, our Little School pupils step away from their usual timetable to immerse themselves in our Enrich & Explore programme, with plenty of time dedicated to our much-loved Nature Explorers programme too.

The Enrich & Explore programme is designed to go beyond what other schools may offer covering subjects such as STEM, Community, Creative Arts, Diversity & British Values and Mindfulness and Wellbeing. Outdoor learning is at the heart of our curriculum, and Nature Explorers, our innovative in-house programme, helps children connect with, appreciate, and understand the natural world around them.





# Birkenhead School Civic Award Ceremony

**Congratulations to all of this year's recipients!**

In May, children in Prep were honoured at a very special Civic Award Ceremony, joined by the Wirral Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mary Jordan.

Unique to our School, the Civic Award recognises children's achievements both in and out of school - celebrating personal growth, community spirit, self-reliance, and a commitment to making a positive difference.

It was a heart-warming evening filled with pride, as families came together to celebrate their children's successes and watch them receive their awards from the Deputy Mayor.



## Little School Sports Day

**The School field was brimming with joy and energy back in May as we welcomed families to our Little School Sports Day.**

Children enthusiastically took part in a range of traditional favourites—including sprints, the bean bag balance, house relays, and themed assault courses—all of which were met with huge smiles and cheers from the crowd.

A special thank you to our wonderful Parents' Association, who kindly provided refreshing ice creams and lollies for the children to enjoy after their events. They were the perfect treat and very much appreciated!



## Chess

By Mr Corran- Prep Teacher

This year has been another good year for chess at Birkenhead. Both the u9 and u11 teams qualified for the semi finals of the National Primary Schools competition in Nottingham to battle it out with the best schools in the North and the Midlands. Special mention should go to newcomers Ro Ford and Jaylun Wu, both of Year 3, who won all their games in the qualifying tournament despite being a year younger than the majority of their opponents.

Locally, the u9s narrowly missed out on the medals in the Wirral league finishing a very respectable 4th. But the u11s, despite a depleted side due to summer holiday absence, won their final three matches to clinch 2nd position and silver medals in an extremely tight and exciting final evening's round of chess matches. The Merseyside branch of the CSC (Chess in Schools and Communities) organisation held their annual championships in St George's Hall in early July. Again, despite a depleted side due to summer holiday commitments, Birkenhead School more than held our own in a very competitive environment with over 25 schools from all over Merseyside participating. The

Year 4 team finished 4th, only one victory point away from 3rd place and bronze medals. The Year 6 team won 19 of their 25 matches and finished an extremely creditable and well deserved 2nd place just missing out on top spot. Well done to all team members of both teams! Within our own school set up, congratulations should go to the Club Champion of 2025 Xabi Janikiewicz and the runner up Oliver Box. In the year group House Chess Championships, winners of the salvers went to Austin Chapman, Year 6 champion for Kingsmead, Artur Karpov, Year 5 champion for Shrewsbury, Rhys Berman, Year 4 champion for Beresford and Jaylun Wu, Year 3 champion for Bidston.



## A Magical and Memorable Weekend in London

By Mrs Thuraisingam

**Twenty one Year 6 children enjoyed a spectacular cultural trip to London in June, packed with excitement, learning, and unforgettable memories.**

The adventure began on Friday with a visit to the spellbinding Harry Potter Studio Tour, where pupils were able to explore the iconic sets, props and behind-the-scenes magic of the much-loved films. The fun continued into the evening with bowling, arcades, and a delicious meal, giving everyone a chance to relax and have fun together.



On Saturday, the group took a scenic boat trip along the Thames to Greenwich, spotting famous landmarks as they cruised. After docking, they enjoyed a walk through historic Greenwich Park and even spotted the Prime Meridian Line, standing where east meets west! In the afternoon, the children were dazzled by the vibrant and energetic production of The Lion King in London's West End – a highlight of the weekend for many. The day ended with a magical walk along the South Bank, where they watched street entertainers before returning to the hotel.

On Sunday morning, the excitement continued with a visit to a fun pool featuring waves and a thrilling slide. The group returned home late that afternoon, tired but full of stories and smiles. It truly was a fun-packed weekend, filled with culture, friendship, and laughter – one that will be remembered for years to come.



# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Council

By Mr Ryan

**I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Council at Birkenhead School.**

This dedicated group of pupils has worked tirelessly to promote a school environment where every individual feels seen, valued, and respected.

One of the Council's most notable contributions this year has been helping to put together our vibrant Celebration of Culture Day. This special event gave pupils the opportunity to share and take pride in their own cultures, heritage, and identities.

It was a powerful and joyful day that highlighted the rich diversity within our school community and reminded us all of the importance of recognising and celebrating what makes each of us unique.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the EDI Council for their creativity, energy, and commitment to making Birkenhead School a more inclusive and welcoming place. From planning inclusive activities to leading thought-provoking assemblies, the Council has been instrumental in spreading a message of acceptance and understanding across our school.

Thanks to their efforts, we are reminded daily that our differences are something to be proud of. Their work ensures that our school continues to be a place where everyone is unique, everyone is valued, and everyone is seen.

Well done to every member of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Council — your voice matters, and your impact is truly making a difference.



DIVERSITY • INCLUSIVENESS • EQUALITY



# A Right Royal Time!

By Mr FitzHerbert

On a snowy January morning, it was a privilege for Years 5 and 6 to welcome the Lord-Lieutenant of Merseyside, Mr Mark Blundell, and Deputy Lieutenant, Mrs Sue Higginson, OBE, to their Boumphrey Lecture Series.

School Governor and Deputy Lieutenant, Mrs Sue Higginson, gave the morning's lecture on the work of His Majesty the King, the Royal Family and the Lord-Lieutenants. The children learned about the Lieutenant's community and charity work, and the role the Lord-Lieutenant plays in keeping His Majesty up to date with the various projects happening across Merseyside.

Towards the end of Mrs Higginson's excellent lecture, Mr Blundell arrived in full uniform with his ceremonial sword. Head Boy and Head Girl, Seb and Eliza, handed Mr Blundell get well cards which Year 6 had prepared for the His Majesty the King and Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, and he promised to ensure safe delivery of the cards. Mr Blundell looked at and commented on every card, thanking each pupil for their efforts and commending them on their lovely designs and thoughtful messages. I included with this special delivery a letter I had written to His Majesty to explain our involvement with the Lieutenant and the background to the cards the children had designed. Mr Blundell was then taken on a tour of Prep and the School Chapel by our Senior Head Students, both of whom joined the School in Prep.

We were most grateful to the Lord-Lieutenant and his Deputy for the time they gave us, for the fascinating insights into the workings of the monarchy, and for their 'business as usual' approach despite the snowy travel conditions!

A few weeks later, I received a letter from the Palace, sent on behalf of His Majesty, delighting in the School's involvement with the Merseyside Lieutenantcy, thanking the children for their 'splendid handmade cards' and extending His Majesty's 'warmest good wishes' to the whole School.

As if this was not honour enough, a couple of months later, Mr and Mrs Vicars and Mrs FitzHerbert and I received invitations to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, to celebrate and recognise those working in Education and Skills. It was an amazing event with 7,000 people attending on a very warm and sunny May afternoon. Incredibly, everyone was served with afternoon tea! Their Majesties The King and Queen were in attendance, as were the Yeoman of the Guard and two military bands. It was certainly a day to remember!



On behalf of the whole School, I would like to say a special thank you to Mrs Higginson for the wonderful opportunities she has given us as a Deputy Lieutenant for Merseyside, and to say how fitting it was that she was our guest of honour and prize-giver at this year's Prep Prize-giving.



## Rome in a Day!

Year 3 enjoyed an immersive Roman-themed day, packed with hands-on activities and learning back in February.

Pupils explored the layout and features of Roman villas, discovering what life was like in a traditional Roman home — from its rooms to the elaborate decorations.

Dressed in authentic-style togas, the children truly looked the part of Roman citizens! They also had the chance to learn Latin phrases with Mrs Washington, Head of Classics in the Seniors, practising greetings such as salve (hello) and vale (goodbye).

To complete the experience, pupils sampled typical Roman foods including olives, bread with honey, and even a taste of "red wine" (grape juice!). A fantastic day was had by all — a wonderful way to bring history to life.



## A Neolithic Axe

It's not every day that Prep pupils—or their teachers—get to see a genuine Neolithic axe! Year 6 pupil, William, showed great curiosity when his builder shared an incredible discovery: an ancient axe unearthed during construction work in Irby.

Following its discovery, the axe was sent to experts at National Museums Liverpool for analysis. Their findings suggest it could date as far back as 4000 BC and was likely a ceremonial piece, given its exceptional condition. The axe would have been carefully polished, probably by rubbing it against a larger, slightly gritty rock. Experts also believe the stone itself may have originated from the Lake District.



## House Championship

By Mr Corran

**The Junior Prep House Championship continued to gather momentum.**

Throughout the year, points aplenty were eagerly competed for in a wide range of activities including Football, Cross Country, Rounders, Cricket, Boccia, Chess, Sports Day and many more as well as the culmination of individual house points gained throughout the year.

After a closely fought competition, going down to the wire with the first placed House changing three times in the final week of term due to the completion of the House Quiz competition, the House Boccia competition and the addition of the Housepoints, the overall winners who enjoyed a morning at the cinema and a free afternoon of fun up at Mac Field, together with some treats, were Kingsmead.

## Bake Off Bliss in Year 6

By Mrs Phythian

**Houses Bidston and Beresford put their baking skills to the test in the Birkenhead School Bake Off in February, showcasing everything they've learned in their Cookery Carousel.**

And wow—what a feast! From Biscoff Cheesecake and Brownies to Red Velvet Cake and Ginger Treacle Cake, the standard was incredible. A huge well done to our talented young bakers—Mrs Phythian and Mrs Baker were bursting with pride... and cake!





## A Gorilla...in Prep!

Year 5 got to 'hang out' with a very special visitor in January when Teach Rex visited the school and introduced Thomas the gorilla.

The year 5 pupils were immersed into the story of Thomas' life and treated to a thought-provoking talk on deforestation and how many animal habitats are destroyed as a result. The children discussed the importance of sustainability and how to raise awareness of our human footprint on the world around us.

We'd like to thank Teach Rex for coming in, Year 5 really appreciated your visit!

## Celebrating Our School Values: The Success of Values Champions

By Mr Brand

At the heart of our School community are our Birkonian Values, guiding our actions, shaping our decisions and helping us grow into kind, respectful and responsible individuals. Now in its second successful year, the Values Champions initiative continues to thrive in Prep as a powerful way to celebrate and promote our values across the School.

Launched to recognise the pupils who consistently demonstrate our core values in their everyday behaviour, Values Champions has quickly become a cherished part of Prep life. Whether it's showing kindness to a classmate, demonstrating resilience during a challenging task, being humble in victory or going the extra mile to help others, our Values Champions are role models for us all.

At the end of each term, pupils who have gone above and beyond to embody the School Values are nominated by teachers for this award. These pupils are celebrated in assembly, awarded a badge and their names proudly displayed on our Celebration board. Not only this, but perhaps the highlight for the children is the invitation to a special treat lunch in the Headmaster's Dining Room!

This recognition not only boosts pupils' confidence and motivation, but also encourages others to reflect on how they too can live out our Values.

One of the most inspiring outcomes of the initiative is how it has grown. Pupils actively look out for and celebrate positive behaviours in one another. There's a real sense of pride and unity as we strive together to make our School an even more respectful, caring and supportive environment to learn and grow.

As we near the end of the second year of Values Champions, the impact is clear: stronger relationships, a deeper understanding of our Values and a culture that truly celebrates the best in all of us. And as we embark on the next academic year, we look forward to seeing many more Values Champions in Prep, showing us that living our Values makes a difference, not just in School, but in all that we do.



## Golf

Year 3 pupil Jaylun W has earned his place among the country's most promising junior golfers after qualifying for the Faldo Futures Final, to be played at the world famous Belfry in August – on the eve of the DP World Tour's British Masters hosted by Sir Nick Faldo.

The road to The Belfry began during the Easter break when Jaylun travelled to Disley Golf Club in Cheshire for a Faldo Futures qualifier and stormed to victory in the Boys 7-8 age group. He continued his fine form over May half term at the Regional Final at Worsley Park, Manchester, carding an impressive 43 strokes across 10 holes to finish runner up and secure one of only a handful of national final spots.



## Prep Court – Speeding Drivers Face our Pupils

**Back in June, our Junior pupils stepped into a very important role – confronting speeding drivers outside our School as part of “Kid’s Court.”**

Instead of accepting a fine and points on their licence, speeding drivers were given the option to face a panel of our pupils and explain their actions.

Led by Wirral Council’s Road Safety Team in partnership with Merseyside Police, this powerful initiative gave our young “Travel Ambassadors” the chance to question drivers directly – holding them accountable and raising awareness about the dangers of speeding, especially near schools.

The aim? To help drivers understand just how serious 20mph restrictions are in keeping everyone safe. Many drivers left looking sheepish, with a fresh copy of the Highway Code in hand and plenty to think about!

Our pupils were outstanding – confident, direct, and composed as they tackled tough conversations and made a real impact. We’re incredibly proud of how they represented our School and stood up for safety in their community.

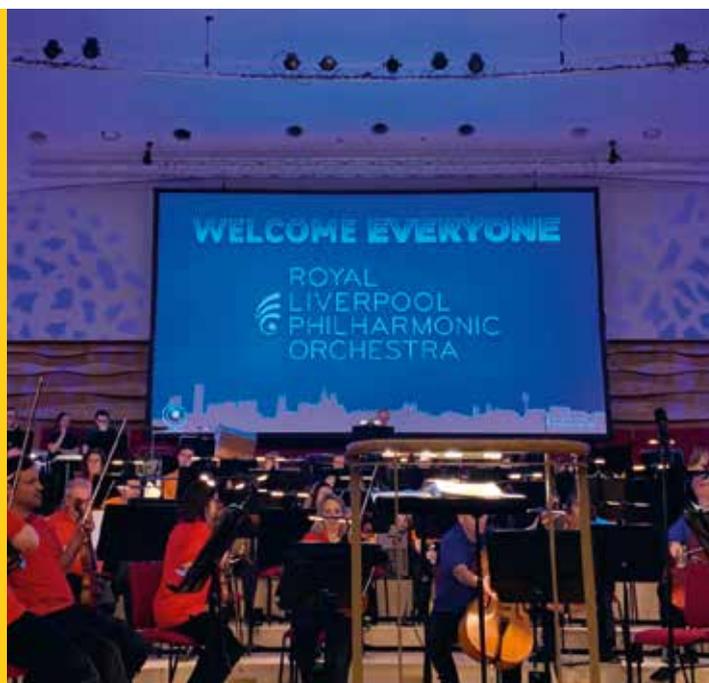


## Liverpool Philharmonic Schools’ Concert

**As part of this year’s Cultural Trip, pupils in Years 3 to 6 attended a Schools’ Concert entitled ‘The World In One City: A Musical Journey’ at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall in March.**

The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra used music to help pupils discover the history and traditions of communities around the world, as well as those a little closer to home in Liverpool. Exploring geography and identity, pupils learnt about the important role music plays in shaping a sense of home and self for individuals around the globe.

Also, they sang their hearts out singing the song ‘All Our Different Voices’ accompanied by the orchestra. A great experience for all!



## Year 5 Maths Challenge

**Year 5 took part in a Maths challenges morning back in February, run by our Senior Maths Department.**

Throughout the morning, children worked in teams to find clues and solve a series of challenges, all using their skills of reasoning and problem solving. It was a fun and rewarding morning for all involved and well done to the winning team of Sam, Connor, Jacob and Charlie.



# Prep Sports

## Girls' Sport

**It's been a fantastic year for Prep Netball, with every girl from Years 3 to 6 having the opportunity to represent the School in both home and away fixtures.**

Year 4 enjoyed an unbeaten season and capped it off with an impressive 2nd place finish in the AJIS competition. Year 5 also shone, performing strongly throughout and securing the Plate competition title. Year 6 started the season on a high, recording notable wins against schools such as King's Chester, King's Macclesfield, and Bolton. Although a tough draw meant they didn't quite meet their expectations in the AJIS competition, their efforts were commendable, and the team should be extremely proud—the future certainly looks bright!

This season, every girl in Prep has had the fantastic opportunity to take part in competitive fixtures—both at home and away—across a wide range of sports including Lacrosse, Netball, Rounders, Athletics, Cross Country, Gymnastics, Football, and Cricket.

Lacrosse, a relatively new addition to the Prep's sports programme, has quickly become a standout success. Our girls have embraced the sport with enthusiasm and skill, winning all their matches comfortably — including impressive victories over Moreton Hall and Bolton.

Another highlight this year has been the growing passion for Football and Cricket among the girls. Inter-house football matches were played with great energy and competitiveness, and weekly clubs have been consistently well attended. The Year 5/6 girls also represented the school superbly at the AJIS tournament at Platt Lane, Manchester, finishing as runners-up out of 16 teams — narrowly losing in the final to a strong Grange School side.

On the cricket field, our Year 5 and 6 girls have thoroughly enjoyed their dedicated cricket clubs, showing real enthusiasm and development. Unfortunately, despite the good summer weather, several tournaments were cancelled, which was disappointing for the teams. However, the Year 6 girls did have the opportunity to compete in the Wirral Schools Festival, where they performed brilliantly—winning all four matches to qualify for the Merseyside Games at Warrington Cricket Club on 16th July. Despite a few holiday absences, we are optimistic about putting in a strong performance on the day.

This inclusive approach to Girls' sport that we have at Birkenhead School ensures that all pupils can develop their skills, grow in confidence, and experience the excitement and camaraderie of team sports. We are immensely proud of every girl who has taken part this season. Keep up the amazing work, girls!

## Prep Girls Train with Natasha Dowie

**We were thrilled to welcome legendary footballer Natasha Dowie in April to deliver a special training session to our Prep girls.**

As the first female player to be officially named a Legend of the Women's Super League, Natasha brought an incredible energy and wealth of experience to the pitch. The girls had a fantastic time learning new skills, hearing about her career, and asking their brilliant questions. A huge thank you to Natasha for inspiring our young players — it was an unforgettable experience!



## Going for Gold in Prep

**Congratulations to our Prep athletes who competed in the AJIS Indoor Athletics in Wigan.**

We came away with several individual medals including 3 bronze, 2 silver and a gold in the Year 6 Javelin for Lachlan Muir who broke a long standing AJIS record – great work Team Birkenhead! We're so proud of you all.

## Junior Sports Day

**What an amazing day of sunshine, smiles, and sportsmanship at this year's Junior Prep Sports Day!**

Our brilliant pupils gave it their all across a wide range of events — from high jumps and skipping to sprints, relays, and the ever-popular Tug of War!

The sun shone as families set up picnic blankets and deckchairs, creating a relaxed atmosphere across the school field.

On the track, competition was fierce with every point counting. At the end of an exhausting day and with all the points totalled, Bidston House managed to come out as victors in both the Year 3 and 4 event and the Year 5 and 6 event!

And to top it all off? An ice lolly treat for every pupil kindly gifted by our wonderful Parents' Association - the perfect way to end a fantastic day.



## Prep Cross Country

**Through wind, rain, and even bursts of sunshine, the children in Years 4 to 6 have shown tremendous determination and spirit in cross-country this year.**

Despite lost shoes, tumbles, and testing conditions, they turned up time and again with grit and good humour. Their resilience has been impressive, and each runner should be proud of their efforts and perseverance throughout the season.

Several individuals achieved top-ten finishes, with a number of team podium placements too, but it was the collective effort that stood out most. Several cups were won for first place in team competitions with everyone, regardless of position, contributing to the success. Everyone always gave their best and supported one another, proving that success in cross country is measured just as much by camaraderie as by medals.



# Prep Sports continued

## Prep Sports Captains Thank you to our 2024/25 Prep Sports Captains



### A weekend of Football Fun for our Year 6 Football team

The Year 6 football team had an action-packed and hugely successful tour to London back in March, securing victories against Davenies School and Berkhamsted.

Beyond the pitch, the team soaked up an unforgettable football experience— watching Luton Town take on Middlesbrough, witnessing Fulham vs. Tottenham from the stunning new Riverside Stand, and exploring Tottenham’s world-class stadium.

The excitement didn’t stop there, with bowling and swimming adding to an incredible weekend of sport, teamwork, and fun!



# Prep & Highlights

## Butterfly Friendly School

By Mr Smith

Little School's Nature Club were thrilled to receive Alder Buckthorn trees from Wirral Council's Tree Team and the Wirral Tree Initiative in March to help us make sure school is a butterfly friendly habitat, joining in a scheme to create a habitat for butterflies across the Wirral. Alder Buckthorns are the perfect tree to help attract more Brimstone Butterflies as they are their favourite habitat and food while caterpillars.

The children in Nature Club had a good explore around school to find the best locations for our Alder Buckthorn trees, they looked around our allotment area, Little School and Junior playgrounds, visited the pond in Senior School and everywhere in between. Then they got their hands dirty, working together they planted the saplings in their chosen locations. The children know they need to take good care of them as they start to grow bigger and bigger and they can't wait to see if they can spot any butterflies visiting them very soon.



## Children in Need

You may have SPOTTED a furry ear or two in our Nursery, Pre Prep and Prep in November as the children sported their spotty attire all in aid of Children in Need.

The children have had a wonderful time donning their spotty clothes and raising vital funds for such an important cause. To add to the excitement, Prep held a charity bake sale which was a raving success so you may even spot a sweet treat...or two!



## Clubs, Clubs and More Clubs

Throughout the past year, activities outside of the regular school timetable continue to flourish. From Aspiring Leaders to Ballet, Art to Knitting, Rugby to Table Tennis, an extensive range of clubs are on offer ensuring there's sure to be something to engage and entertain all pupils.

We look forward to next term when we hope to introduce further clubs including 'Stamp Collection and Sorting' for our Junior pupils which will be run by Mr Cox, father of our School nurse.



# Prep & Highlights continued

## World Book Day 2025

Our Pre Prep and Prep pupils stepped straight out of the pages of their favourite stories for World Book Day in March, arriving dressed as beloved book characters and bringing their treasured books along too! From wizards and warriors to princesses and pirates, the creativity on display was incredible!

Throughout the day, classrooms were buzzing with book-themed activities, from writing fantastic book reviews to sharing their favourite stories and discussing why they love them. It was a wonderful celebration of the joy of reading!



## My Happy Mind

**We are proud to announce that we are a myHappyMind Bronze Accredited school!**

This means that as a School we consider the mental health and wellbeing of our children as one of our top priorities. We have created a whole school culture that helps build our children's resilience, confidence and self-esteem as well as teaching them how to self-regulate in those stressful times.

This Accreditation badge has been awarded thanks to all the effort our staff, children, governors and parents have put in to bring the lessons of myHappyMind to life all around our School!



## Happiness Heroes

**This academic year launched a new initiative in Prep called 'My Happy Mind' which runs from Pre-Prep through to the end of Year 6 and is focused on children's mental health, well-being and resilience.**

Each week the children take part in a 30 minute session learning about a wide variety of skills to support them in their learning. The modules are:- Meet the Brain, Celebrate, Appreciate, Relate and Engage. As part of this wonderful initiative 'Happiness Heroes' were elected for each class from Reception upwards. The children attended meetings to discuss how things are going and what we could do to make our school an even happier place. These children were also involved in running wellbeing activities and helping out with assemblies throughout the year.

Well done to all those selected.



## Odd Socks Day 2024

**Odd Socks Day took place during our Anti Bullying Week in November with lots of activities planned to raise awareness amongst the School community and beyond.**

The pupils took part in activities in lessons which focused on the topic of anti bullying and why kindness is key.

The idea behind Odd Socks Day is allowing pupils to express their individuality and we think the children have done a brilliant job!

'If you can be anything, be kind.'



# Outdoor Adventures in Prep

## Barnstondale Adventures!

**Our Year 2 and Year 3 pupils headed off on their residential trips to Barnstondale in May — and what an adventure they had!**

For our 37 brave Year 2 children, it was their first overnight stay and they were incredible! With activities like den building, fire lighting, night line, archery, and a cosy campfire, they truly shone as confident, independent ambassadors for our School.

Year 3 also had an action-packed visit taking on climbing, abseiling, more shelter building and fire lighting, and of course, enjoying marshmallows and songs around the campfire under dry skies (until the very end!).

A huge thank you to our brilliant staff and the amazing pupils who made it such a memorable couple of days!

## Year 4's Unforgettable Residential at the Anderton Centre!

**Year 4 had an incredible time on their residential trip to the Anderton Centre in Chorley! Glorious sunshine set the scene for an action-packed adventure, starting with a splash on the water. The children paddled around the reservoir in rafted canoes and giant paddleboards, playing fun games and, for some, taking a brave dip in the lake!**

After a busy afternoon, we tucked into a delicious evening meal before heading into the forest for games and toasted marshmallows around the campfire - a magical way to end the day before settling into our rooms for the night.

Day two was just as exciting, with activities including archery, low ropes, tree climbing, and team-building challenges. The children showed amazing resilience, teamwork, and enthusiasm throughout.

It was a truly memorable experience filled with fun, laughter and friendship -one we'll all remember for a long time!



## Year 5's Patterdale Adventure

The Year 5 pupils had a wonderful time in Patterdale in March.

They enjoyed gorge walking, den building, fire making, canoeing, archery and low ropes.

It's a wonderful opportunity for the pupils to spend some quality time with their friends and make some core memories which will last a lifetime. We're sure everyone returned full of stories of their adventures.



## Year 6's Visit to PGL

Year 6 children enjoyed our annual PGL Residential trip to Boreatton Park in Shropshire in May.

Four sunny days full of action packed activities from dawn to dusk ranging from Kayaking to Laser Quest to High Ropes ensured everyone returned home full of memories - if a little exhausted!



# Inspiring Talks Series



Our Inspiring Talks Series sees leading professionals within their respective fields visit the School to talk to students and the wider community.

## A. F. Steadman

The students in Years 5 to 7 were delighted when global best-selling Author of the Skandar series, A. F. Steadman, came into school back in November to discuss her latest book in the series, *Skandar and the Skeleton Curse*, in association with Lingham's Booksellers

There were lots of questions from the children after the talk which Annabel kindly answered. There was also the option to purchase the book and have it signed.

It was a fantastic opportunity for our students, and there were even a few star-struck fans in the room who could hardly believe they were meeting the author of their favourite book! Thank you A F Steadman for visiting our school.



## Sue Hoffmann

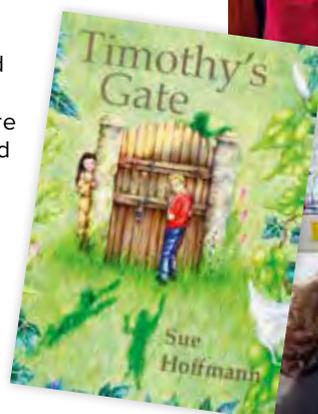
**Releasing Creativity in Year 4!**

Our Year 4 pupils were thrilled to welcome fantasy novelist, Sue Hoffmann, for an inspiring writing workshop in March that sparked their imaginations!

Sue captivated the children by reading an excerpt from her novel, 'Timothy's Gate'—a story where a young boy stumbles upon a mysterious gate in a pub garden and finds the key to open it...but where does it lead?

With their creativity in full flow, the pupils dreamed up incredible destinations, from faraway fantasy realms with green skies and blue grass to enchanted worlds filled with untold wonders. They then selected a picture of a gate that best suited their own imagined adventures, crafted miniature gates from sticks, and even chose a real key to unlock their stories. At every opportunity the children were asked why they had made their decisions to encourage their creative thinking process.

A huge thank you to Sue for sharing her expertise and inspiring our young writers. It was a truly wonderful experience, and we can't wait to see where their creativity takes them next!



## Lisa J Allen

We were delighted to welcome children's author, Lisa J Allen, to Prep in April for an inspiring assembly all about becoming an author! Lisa shared her journey to our pupils in Years 4-6, offering valuable insights into the writing process and what it takes to bring a story to life.

Pupils were lucky to take part in exclusive writing workshops, where they explored character creation and picked up top writing tips. The excitement and creativity in the room was amazing—our young writers were truly inspired!

A huge thank you to Lisa for sharing her passion for storytelling with us. We can't wait to read her upcoming book, *Undercover Angel: Crash Landing*.

We look forward to welcoming her back again soon.

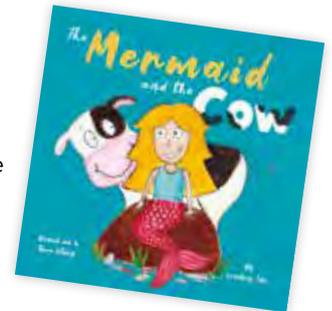


## Lindsey Cole

### A Splashing Good Time in Little School!

Back in February, our Little School pupils were diving into excitement when children's author — and real-life mermaid — Lindsey Cole made a magical visit!

Lindsey captivated the children with a reading of her book, *The Mermaid, the Otter and the Big Poo*, inspired by her incredible mermaid swim down the Bristol Avon to investigate river pollution and its impact on wildlife.



Bringing the story to life, Lindsey had everyone hooked with singing, dancing, and even dressing up our teachers as characters from the book (sorry, Mrs Richmond... you really took one for the team there!).

The fun didn't stop there! Each year group enjoyed an engaging workshop filled with laughter, creativity, and plenty of enthusiasm. And, of course, the excitement continued in the Outdoor Classroom, where children had their books personally signed by Lindsey herself!

A huge thank you to Lindsey for making such a splash with our pupils — an unforgettable visit full of fun, learning, and a very important environmental message!



## Boumphrey Lecture Series

Ian Boumphrey, OB, delivered a fascinating lecture to Years 5 and 6 in November on *The History of Prep*, taking the children through the story of Prep since it opened in 1889.

Pictured are Head Boy and Head Girl, Seb and Eliza, who were honoured to meet Ian and be given a copy of the book, *Birkenhead School, Pictorial History Part 2 1960-2010*.

Our Boumphrey Lecture Series was named after Ian who delivered the inaugural lecture to our Prep pupils back in 2018. We'd like to thank Ian for taking the time to come in and deliver his fascinating talks. See write up overleaf.



# The History of The Prep

By Mr FitzHerbert

**On 19th November, Ian Boumphrey delivered a fascinating lecture to Years 5 and 6 on 'The History of The Prep', taking the children through the story of Prep since it opened in 1889.**

They learned that in 135 years, there have only been six Heads of Prep, the first being Miss Cox who was head for 43 years! The Prep moved to number 43 Beresford Road in 1893, and Miss Cox lived on the top 2 floors. Ten years later, the School bought the next door building to allow for the Prep's continued growth.

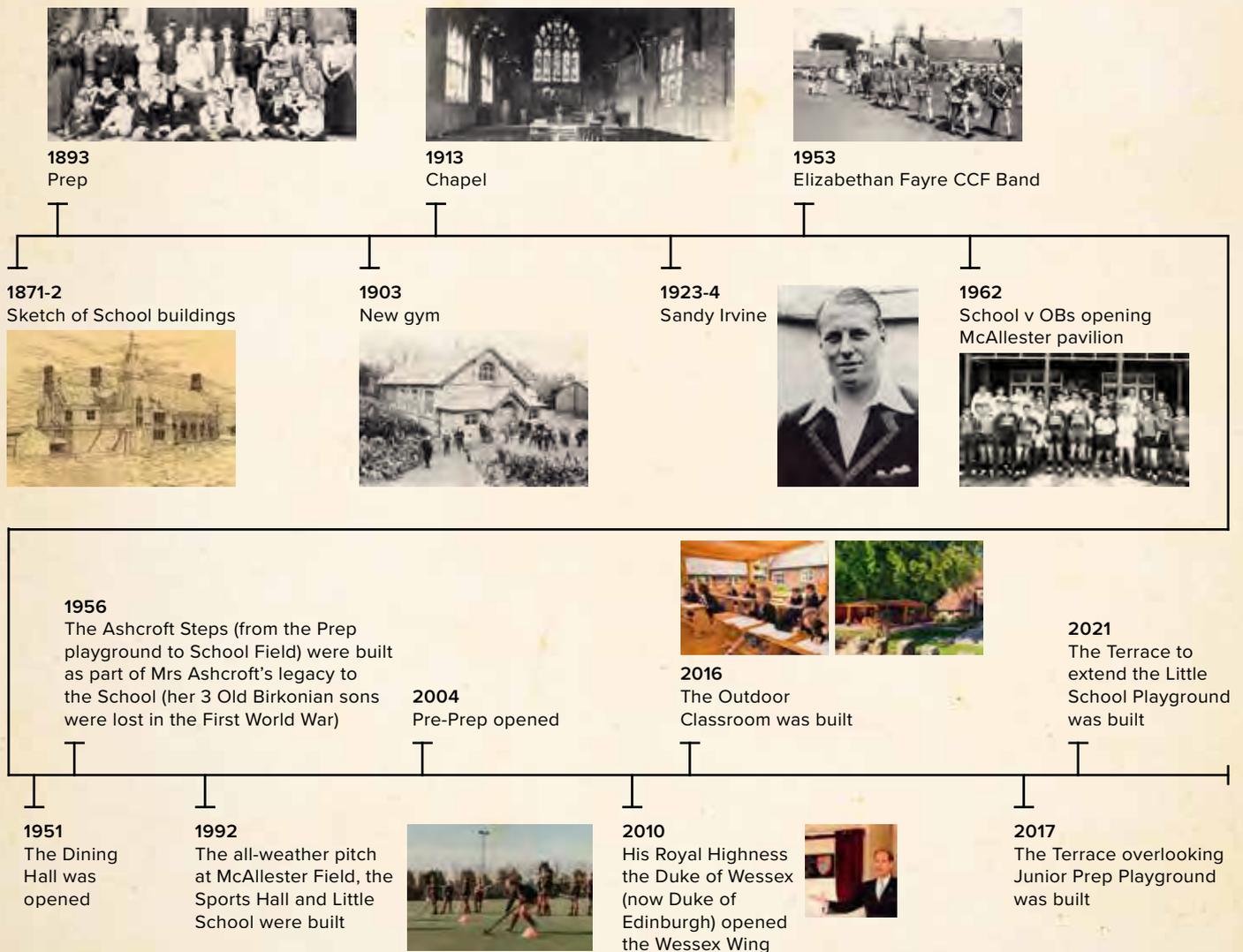
Among other key facts, the children were fascinated to learn that School Field used to have a steep slope but it was

levelled in 1899, that the Gym was built in 1903, that Prep Hall and the four classrooms below it all used to be one big hall until it was 'bisected' in 1908, and that the iconic Cricket Pavilion was built in 1911. They also learned about some famous OBs, for example Sandy Irvine who attended the School from 1910 to 1916 and was lost during his ill-fated Everest expedition with George Mallory in 1924.

Ian gave a fascinating explanation of life during World War II, when the Prep was evacuated to Whitchurch in 1939 and then returned to Overdale a year later. For a short time, nine girls joined the Prep, 68 years before the School's permanent change to co-education.

Ian is an Old Birkonian himself, and he proudly showed us his Prep cap, as well as a somewhat dishevelled School photo from 1949 – dishevelled because he had actually cut his own hair!

For those history enthusiasts amongst our In Focus readership, here are some more key dates for you:



The children all thoroughly enjoyed finding out so much about their School and were very grateful to Ian for his time and interesting insights.

## Wirral on the Home Front

By Mr FitzHerbert

Ian Bournemouth returned on 20th May for his second lecture of the academic year, 'Wirral on the Home Front'.

Years 5 and 6 were initially reminded of their lecture on 'The History of The Prep', when they learned that the Prep had been evacuated to Whitchurch in September 1939, returning to Overdale 6 months later. The National Fire Service took over the Prep classrooms, and the cellars of what is now the Music School were used as the School's 'safe zone', with the ground floor windows being reinforced with sandbags.

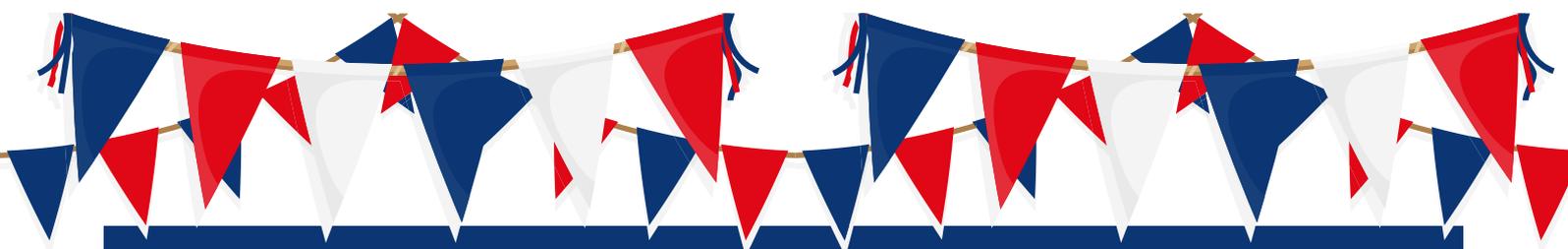
He explained that Merseyside was under threat due to its docks, shipyards, oil refineries and airport. The risk of bombs going astray was high as wind conditions often meant targets were missed, so residential areas were very much at risk. The first bombs to land in Merseyside were in August 1940 in Prenton – Waterpark Road, Prenton Lane, Prospect Road and Acrefield Road were all hit. This was from a test raid by a Stuka Dive Bomber, but 6 weeks later 160 bombers raided. Woodchurch Road Primary School, Wallasey High School for Girls and Wirral Grammar School for Boys all received direct hits. Birkenhead School escaped mildly when a bomb landed on the 13th/14th March 1941 at the site of what is now the Caernarvon Castle Pub; the blast from this bomb shattered some of the stained-glass windows in the Chapel and knocked the stone cross off the roof.

Ian showed photos of Woodchurch Road Children's Hospital with four-metre-high mountains of sandbags protecting it. He played the air raid sirens, explaining to the children that these were used in densely populated areas to warn of imminent attacks. The School had its own air raid siren installed on the wall of the Prep Gym.

Ian's fascinating and thorough talk explained the widespread issuing of gas masks, the building of Anderson Shelters and Morrison Shelters, barrage balloons, the rationing of food and clothing, the government's promotions to 'dig for victory' and to 'make do and mend'. He explained that gardens in Port Sunlight were used extensively for vegetable growing and also that Port Sunlight has the largest war memorial in the country outside of London.

Ian concluded his fascinating talk by linking it to the recent VE Day 80th Anniversary Celebrations. Our Year 3 Choir had sung at Birkenhead's Ceremony in Hamilton Square and Ian described what the original 1945 celebration in the very same square had been like – he had brought along bunting and memorabilia from the original VE Day Celebrations and the children were amazed it was still intact 80 years later!

Special thanks to Ian for another fascinating lecture. He remains an enthusiastic and highly resourceful member of the Birkenhead School Archives Team, who meet every Monday morning in the Archives Centre, above the Sixth Form Centre, where they continue to catalogue the School's long history.



## VE Day in Hamilton Square

Our Year 3 pupils were invited by the Mayor to sing at the VE Day 80th Anniversary Commemorations in Hamilton Square in May.

Led by Mrs Keating, the children performed a beautiful rendition of 'Peace Prayer' to a very appreciative audience.

It was a wonderful opportunity for our young singers to take part in commemorating such an important moment in history. Well done, Year 3!



# Christmas Highlights

## Chapel Services

**In December, our Junior pupils in years 3 to 6 came together to host their annual Christmas Chapel Services for families and friends.**

These joyous celebrations filled Chapel with the sound of both traditional and contemporary carols. Each class performed a festive poem, impressing everyone with their confident voices and synchronised recitations that brought smiles all around.

These cherished services are just one of the many festive traditions that make the build-up to Christmas at our school so special.

A huge thank you to everyone who attended—we hope you enjoyed this festive highlight as much as we did!



## The Ordinary Ox

Little School took to the stage and delivered a fantastic performance of *The Ordinary Ox* to an audience of friends and family in December.

From heartfelt singing and perfectly remembered actions and lines to joyful dancing across the stage, the children gave their all, creating a truly magical show that left everyone smiling.

We hope all our families enjoyed the performance as much as we did! A huge thank you to the Little School staff for their hard work and dedication in bringing this wonderful production to life.



## Christmas Jumper Day

Our Prep pupils had a fantastic time getting into the festive spirit, proudly showing off their favourite Christmas jumpers before the end of term.

From classic designs featuring snowmen and Father Christmas to more creative options like Star Wars and dinosaur-themed jumpers, there was something for everyone to enjoy!

We hope everyone had a wonderful time staying cosy and festive in their holiday knits.





## Denise Charles

Mrs Charles retired in July after two and a half years as a part-time administrator and receptionist in Prep Office, having joined us from the Hammond School where she was full-time registrar for many years. She absolutely loved her role in Prep, often commenting on how lovely the children are and what a privilege it had been to work at the School where her own sons were educated. Mrs Charles can now look forward to time with her young grandchildren and travelling to see family as far afield as Canada and Hong Kong, so we wish her every happiness in her retirement.



## Jo FitzHerbert

Mrs FitzHerbert leaves after twelve years to return to university and study for a Masters in Art Psychotherapy. Her passion for Art has inspired many pupils and it has been wonderful to see how much the children have enjoyed her lessons, clubs... and her many stories! We wish her all the best with this exciting new venture, and I am sure we will continue to see her from time to time, given her connections to the School!



## Sue Mills

Mrs Mills leaves after thirty-four years of dedication to the School, during which time there have been four Headmasters and two Heads of Prep. I was reflecting with her that over her time here she has seen great developments, like the opening of the Little School building, the construction of both the Astroturf Hockey Pitch and the Sports Hall and the grand opening of the Wessex Wing by HRH Duke of Wessex (now Duke of Edinburgh). She has had a variety of additional roles in her time, for example hockey coach in Seniors and serving as a member of the Prep Senior Management Team for a while. She has taught in all year groups from 1 to 5 and, on top of her many commitments as a Form Teacher, she has been an enormous help to her colleagues, ordering the Junior Prep educational resources each year. Not wishing to leave us in the lurch, she's done all the ordering for next academic year, but I'm a bit worried about what we'll do for September 2026! Mrs Mills' long-serving contribution to the School received special recognition at last year's Prize-giving, and it's amazing to think she's been with us for more than a hundred terms. She can now look forward to a more relaxed pace of life, and we wish her every happiness for the future.



## Katie Tyrie

Sadly, our Head of Early Years, Mrs Tyrie, left at Easter due to health issues. She joined us in August 2022 and we were incredibly grateful for her dedication, commitment and passion for our Early Years. Her vast knowledge and experience were invaluable at a challenging time for Early Years settings across the country. With her passion for inspiring young learners, she refreshed our curriculum, invested in resources, strengthened partnerships with parents and provided new professional development opportunities for the staff. I thoroughly enjoyed her engaging presentations at parents' evenings and staff meetings, and also her weekly updates, where she would appraise me of the latest challenge and her proposed solution, and then move seamlessly into pitching for my approval of exciting new ideas and resources! I am sure the whole community would wish to join me in thanking Mrs Tyrie for all she did for our Early Years community, and in wishing her good health and happiness for the future.



## Hayley Sewell

Mrs Sewell leaves after sixteen years for an exciting new opportunity at St John's Catholic Primary School, where she'll be the lead teacher for Years 5 and 6 and a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Her tireless contribution as English Coordinator and Girls' Games Coordinator has ensured a wonderful array of developments and opportunities over the years, and she leaves a significant legacy behind, for which we are truly grateful. We wish her every happiness and success in her new role.



## Claire Pye

Mrs Pye is moving on after seventeen years to Well Lane Primary School, where she will be their new SENDCo and a member of the Senior Management Team. Her dedication here in Prep, both as SENDCo and class teacher, has impacted so positively on countless children over the years. Her tireless efforts to ensure the best possible support, and her knowledge, tenacity and enthusiasm, will no doubt bring about positive change in her new school. We wish her all the very best for the future.

By Mr FitzHerbert

# The Social Series

By Mr FitzHerbert

I have been delighted by the engagement of so many parents in our new series of social events for families with children aged 2 - 7.

One of the key aspects of Birkenhead School is its strong sense of community, so for families who are early on in their journey through the School, what better way to build links and friendships than by coming along to these Saturday 'brunch' events? Children and adults alike had a great time at our first two events, the first of which was held at the end of March. The Pre-Prep and Little School area of the campus was the venue for this fun family festival with craft stalls, spring activities, food and drink stalls and music from DJ Mark Armstrong to keep us all entertained! Lots of staff attended to support, and with parents, pupils and staff all enjoying themselves, it was a wonderful inaugural event.

Encouraged by this initial response, our ever-enthusiastic marketing team, Karen Alcock and Jen Jones, aimed bigger and better for the next event, which took place on the 21st June when we had even more activities for the children to try. For me it was a welcome break from report-writing, and I had a lovely time watching children riding on scooters, taking part in Yoga sessions, listening to a charismatic storyteller in the Willow Dome or being creative at the craft table. I even had a go at giant bubble making! It was a real pleasure to chat with parents over a coffee, whilst watching their children take part in fun activities, and I had what can only be described as an exquisite taco for my brunch!

So, if you have children aged 2 - 7, I encourage you to look out for the next event.



# Aladdin

By Mrs Delaney, Director

A firm favourite with many, this year, far away Arabian lands called to Mrs Keating and I. The alternative version 'A-la-la-la-laddin' that we found, offered us a new and exciting twist to the original. The toe-tapping songs and strong, underlying message throughout of freedom of choice was too good to resist!

Before I hand over to a student perspective on our Production from a very talented writer, Bryn Thomas (Sultan), we want to say huge congratulations to the Year 6 cast of 2025. We wish you all the very best with the next chapter of your life. May the memories of your time rehearsing for this show, your wonderful performances of 'Aladdin' and the friendships you have made in Prep live long in your hearts and your memories.





By Bryn Thomas

**Our adaptation of Aladdin maintains a close connection to the original saga, yet making relevant connections to the real world, so, for two nights, we put on the show of our lives, leaving the audience in awe of 'A-la-la-la-laddin'.**

I know this sounds like a cliché, but the cast, or year group rather, has come closer together, to form a large family with teachers and pupils alike. Mrs Delaney and Mrs Keating stayed true to the ambition of creating a stunning performance, and I am glad to say that we more than met that goal. An experience like this comes with trials and lessons, shenanigans and firm words, and we have all learned something along the way, whether it be moral, or remembering which side is stage- left! Mistakes were made, but that made the process even more rewarding.

This experience started with the announcement that our production for 2025 would be Aladdin. From then onwards, efforts sky-rocketed with auditions and the painting of the backdrop (thank you Jake!) The audition process was split in two, with singing and acting auditions being taken separately.

At this point, the production was small, but as we all learnt, it grew at a blistering pace. Next came our roles, a moment we all had anticipated. I was the Sultan, Eva was Jasmine, and Sid was Aladdin. Sorry to everyone else, but if I listed everyone, I would take over the entirety of the In Focus magazine!

We were then split into groups, those being Gems (Jasmine's friends) Silkies, Alliance (Aladdin's friends) Merchants and Guards. Individuals included Jafar (Gabriel), Grand Vizier (Will D), Jasmine, Aladdin and me. Rehearsals then started with us familiarising ourselves with the storyline and the basic mechanics of a production of this scale. And, as they say, the rest is history!

I would like to give my thanks to certain individuals who gave up their own time to help us. Mrs Lynch, for all of our lovely costumes, Mr Brand for sourcing and making all of the props, the Year 8 backstage team, for keeping us on track, Bertie and Tristan for manning our puppet, Iago, Crystal Lighting and Sound Services, Jake Gourley, for our amazing backdrop, all of our teachers for being patient with us, and of course, Mrs Delaney and Mrs Keating for making all of this possible. It is challenging to summarize this production, so I will conclude with a line from the song "The Glorious Tales of Old": "And endings surprise us as they unfold."

# TREASURE ISLAND

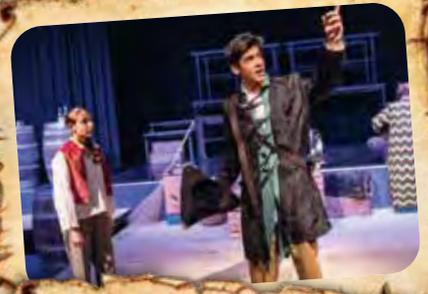
small bay

**In a thrilling voyage of swashbuckling adventure, Birkenhead School's production of Treasure Island transported audiences to the high seas with a dynamic cast of talented over 50 young performers, under the direction of Mrs Groves.**

Following months of dedicated rehearsals, students brought Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale to life with energy, imagination, and heart. From the brave Jim Hawkins to the enigmatic Long John Silver and a crew of vibrant pirates, every role was embraced with enthusiasm and skill.

Behind the scenes, a hardworking team of musicians, creatives, and backstage crew played a vital role in

shaping the immersive world on stage. The production stood as a true celebration of the School's creative spirit and the power of collaboration—showcasing not just performance, but personal growth and artistic achievement.





By James, Upper Sixth student

**Treasure Island was nothing short of sensational; this year the production of Treasure Island brought excitement, fun and unmatched entertainment to all involved and I was lucky enough to be apart of such an amazing cast and team.**

I have made so many memories that will stay with me forever. Some favourites have to be the countless fight scenes, learning how to walk, fight and sit down with one leg (believe me it's harder than you think) and applying so much makeup and fake hair that I had subject teachers asking why I wasn't on stage that night.

It was a privilege to play Long John Silver. I couldn't have asked for a better way to end my school acting career. I

have to say a huge thank you to everyone who came to watch and supported the amazing production: you were an incredible audience! I would also like to thank the truly talented and loving cast, you are like a family to me and I couldn't have done it without the help of my trusty parrots and the incredible acting of my crew-mates! Thank you to Mr Robinson for the fantastic music, to Mrs Eassie for the outstanding costumes and of course, a huge thank you to Mrs Groves who has personally helped me develop both as an actor and a person. You are an incredibly selfless and kind person who always looks out for others and that has meant the world to me and so many more. Thank you for all you have done through my time at Birkenhead. I can't wait to see many more amazing productions!

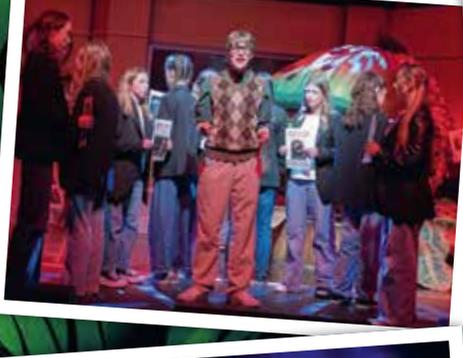
# Little Shop of Horrors

**In March, Birkenhead School brought the cult classic Little Shop of Horrors to life with a spectacular two-week run that showcased the incredible talent and dedication of its students.**

Featuring two rotating casts and understudies, the production involved over 50 students both on stage and behind the scenes, including the backstage and

tech crew. Performances included evening shows, a Sunday matinee, and special school performances for local primary schools and the School's Prep pupils. The production marked a special milestone as it was the final show under the direction of Kirsten Pankhurst, Deputy Head, and Philip Robinson, Director of Music, who have led the School's productions with passion and creativity for the past ten years. See Mr Robinson's write up on page 69.





# Community & Charity

## Chapel

By Mrs Hobbs, School Chaplain

As this academic year draws to a close, it is a joy to look back and reflect on all that has taken place within our school Chapel community. The Chapel continues to be a place of gathering, reflection, and service at the heart of our school life.

Each week, we gather in Chapel - from Little School through to Sixth Form, and every service offers a valuable moment to pause, reflect, and grow together as a community. These times are filled with warmth, good spirit, and a sense of shared purpose that is enjoyed by all ages. Whether through prayer, music, storytelling, or celebration, these gatherings help to form and strengthen the bonds of our school family.

We began the year in September by welcoming students and staff back after the summer break, setting the tone for a year ahead full of opportunity, growth, and togetherness.

In the autumn term, we marked Harvest with celebrations that reminded us of the importance of gratitude and generosity. Students generously brought in food items and canned goods which were donated to a local homeless shelter. Our Harvest Eucharist at Sunday Evensong offered a reflective space to give thanks for the abundance we can so often take for granted.

In November, the whole School came together for a moving Remembrance Day service, honouring those who have served and sacrificed, with moments of silence and reflection.

The Christmas season was celebrated with much joy and reverence. From our Prep Carol Services to the Advent

Sunday Evensong Service, and culminating in the beautiful Nine Lessons and Carols and Christmas Eve Midnight Mass. These services offered both a deep sense of tradition and a space to encounter the hope and light of the Christmas message.

The new year began with a renewed sense of purpose. A particular highlight was welcoming the Bishop of Birkenhead to lead us in Sunday Evensong - a special occasion for both pupils and staff. Later in the term, the Bishop of Chester visited to conduct our Confirmation service, during which nine of our Senior pupils affirmed their faith - a truly joyful and memorable moment in our Chapel calendar.

During Lent, the School once again demonstrated its spirit of community by collecting Easter eggs for a local family and youth centre.

We also celebrated the induction of new Chapel Choristers, recognising the dedication and musical contribution of our young singers - an event always marked with great pride and encouragement.

Throughout the year, we have also welcomed a number of visiting speakers from local churches, organisations and charities to speak at Weekday Chapel and Evensong services, enriching our experience and broadening the perspectives offered to our students in Chapel.

As I reflect on the year, I am deeply grateful for the continued engagement of our students, the support of staff, and the wider involvement of families and friends. Chapel remains a place where faith, service, tradition, and community intersect, and it is a privilege to witness how these values shape our school life.

I look forward with hope and anticipation to all that the coming year will bring.



## Charity Fundraising

By Mrs Hobbs

Throughout this academic year, our School community has demonstrated a spirit of generosity, kindness and service through a number of charitable initiatives. It has been heartening to see pupils of all ages engaging with causes beyond our school gates and contributing to something bigger than themselves.

This year we have introduced Student 'Charity Leaders' where a group of students who have a passion for fundraising and organising events have been at the forefront of our charitable giving endeavours. Through themed days,

bake sales, and student-led initiatives, we have raised funds for a variety of local and national charities. Whether collecting donations for the homeless, raising funds through Waffle Wednesdays, or sharing with families in need during Lent, each effort has helped to build a culture of compassion across our School.

Across all charity events this year, the enthusiasm, generosity and involvement of our pupils has been truly inspiring. Fundraising has not only provided vital support to those in need, but has also helped nurture empathy, teamwork and leadership within our school community.

Thank you to every student, parent and member of staff who has played a part in this year's fundraising efforts. Together, we have made a difference.

## Chester Christmas Tree Festival

Our Little School children had a wonderful time creating decorations for this year's Chester Cathedral Christmas Tree Festival.

From baubles filled with heartfelt Christmas wishes to spiral trees and beautifully painted wood slices, their creativity shone brightly. Well done, Little School!



## Change a Child's Life

By Mr FitzHerbert

Another year of Prep fundraising has seen Natalia Muthoni, a 9-year-old girl from the slums of Nairobi, continuing to thrive. This little girl's life has been transformed over the last five and a half years since we began sponsoring her.

She attends Maria Immaculata School as a boarder thanks to the funds our School community continues to raise. She is a highly motivated pupil and wants to become a teacher when she grows up. As well as covering her School fees and basic needs, our fundraising provides food parcels for the holidays when she has to return to the slums.

Sadly, her home of many years (a make-shift shelter on the unfinished floor of an apartment block) was recently pulled down by the landlord in order to carry out further building works, and the family had to relocate. Thanks to 'Change a Child's Life', the family was safely moved to a rented room nearby, so Natalia still has somewhere to go in the School holidays.

Just as an example of this community's generosity and the power of joining together when we fundraise, our end of term non-uniform day and Student Council Bake Sale raised over £1200, so a big thank you to all Prep families for their continued support.

Natalia is pictured here at the start of the 2025 school year with her new books and a ready smile for another year of learning thanks to 'Change a Child's Life'.



# 20th Birkenhead Scout Group Report



By Kelvin Britton

After being supported by the School for the last 100 years, what is Scouting and what does it offer for current pupils? Well, let's start with a sense of belonging.

The School Group offers four age sections; Squirrels (4-6), Beavers (6-8), Cubs (8-10.5) and Scouts (10.5-14). Within each age group, there is a Top Award badge to aim for, the Chief Scout's Acorn, Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards respectively. In order to gain these Awards, the young person must achieve all of the Challenge badges available within each section.

The Squirrels have four Challenge Badges to obtain; All About Adventure which starts to prepare them for outdoor activities, All About Me to help them find their own likes and dislikes as well as those of their friends, All Around Us where they interact with wider communities and All Together where they explore teamwork.

At Beavers these Challenge badges are renamed and subdivided. Adventure continues as a named theme, while Teamwork replaces All Together. All About Me splits into Personal and Skills, and Around Us splits into Outdoors and World. Cubs adds a seventh Challenge, Team Leader; and Scouts adds Creative and Expedition.

So how does this work out in practice? Let's look at a couple of examples. At Squirrels when they are having a party, they will choose their sandwich fillings and then make their own. By the time they reach Scouts, they will be taking part in the District Backwoods Cooking Competition, lighting a fire

and making a two-course meal from supplied ingredients. This year, one of our teams won the District Competition, so qualified for the County event: they were more enamoured of chili flakes than the judges were!

Or let's look at Nights Away; our Squirrels (and Beavers) have visited the Cubs at camp at Thurstaston for a Teddy Bears' Picnic, while the Beavers also had an indoor camp at McAllester Field followed by activities at Tam O Shanter Farm. At Scout level we are challenging our oldest Scouts to a Survival Camp where they will build their own shelters and sleep in them, cooking food that they could have foraged (nettles are tastier than you would imagine)! By the end of this, one of these young people will have achieved 49 nights away with us.

Scouting doesn't finish here; the District runs 2 Explorer Units for 14-18 year olds, and we are extremely pleased that our older Scouts are both moving on to these units and helping with our younger sections as Young Leaders. Just to underline how we do not operate in a vacuum, over February half term Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Leaders performed in the Gladstone Theatre as part of the cast of Birkenhead Gang Show,

As for adults, thank you to our Leadership team, our Board of Trustees and our Parent Helpers; we cannot function without you all. We can find a suitable role for any volunteer, no matter how little time you can spare; we are a friendly group!



## Choir's Visit to Clatterbridge

In December, our Year 2 and 3 choir had the pleasure of singing Christmas songs for the wonderful staff at Clatterbridge Hospital.

Mr Ryan and Mrs Thomas led the children in a festive singalong that we hope warmed everybody's spirits.



## Festive Joy at the Mayor's Christmas Market

Our Year 6 Choir, directed by Prep Music Teacher, Mrs Keating, and accompanied by Director of Music, Mr Robinson, delighted visitors at the Mayor's Christmas Market at Leasowe Castle in November with two wonderful renditions of a variety of Christmas songs.

Wirral Mayor, Councillor Cherry Povall JP, complimented the children on their wonderful singing and presented them with a framed certificate. A hearty thanks to Year 6 for bringing in the joy of Christmas so early this year and thanks to all who attended, helping to raise money for the Mayor's charities: IncuBabies, the premature baby unit at Arrowe Park Hospital, and North Blind Sailing School based in Rock Ferry.



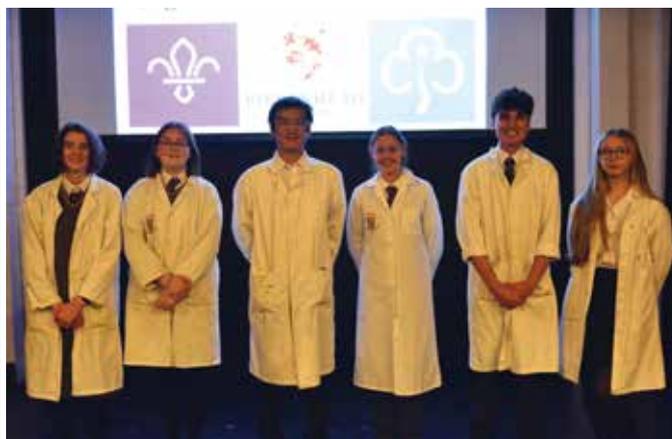
## Science Nights Spark Curiosity at Birkenhead School

One of our highly anticipated events is our Science Nights at Birkenhead School, where local Cub and Brownie groups are welcomed into Bushell Hall for an evening of explosive fun and hands-on discovery.

Led by our Science Leaders, the evening is packed with exciting experiments and interactive demonstrations. Firm favourites include bubble-making, circuit building, and firing pneumatic targets — all designed to ignite a love of science in young minds.

The night culminates in a spectacular 'Flash Bang' lecture by Chemistry teacher and Head of Overdale, Mrs Tharme, who never fails to wow the audience with jaw-dropping demonstrations — including the crowd-pleasing (and safely executed!) moment when she sets our older Science Leaders' arms ablaze using methane and bubbles!

We are incredibly proud of this annual community partnership and love seeing the children leave inspired, smiling, and with a newfound enthusiasm for the world of science.



# PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

By Lorraine Taylor, Chair

As my first year as Chair of the Parents' Association comes to a close, I've had the pleasure of seeing first-hand just how much heart, commitment and generosity our School community brings to everything we do.

To every parent, carer, teacher, support and office staff, student helpers and member of the estates team who has supported, attended, or volunteered at our events and activities this year—thank you. Your time and energy are what make the PA thrive.

While respecting the traditions that have shaped the PA, this year has also been about evolving—building stronger connections with parents, collaborating more closely with the School, and developing links with local businesses to reflect the energy and diversity of our current school community.

Among our many highlights the ever-popular Annual Fireworks event lit up the skies, and the Christmas Bazaar and Raffle were a fantastic success. Our Pre-Loved Uniform sales continue to grow in popularity thanks to the professionalism and vision of our Vice-Chair, **Sabina Molyneux**. Sabina brings care and precision to every detail, from carefully selected stock to the use of clothes rails and card terminals, ensuring a smooth and welcoming shopping experience.



And behind every found blazer or returned PE kit is the incredible **Cheryl O'Malley**, who has taken the lead on our new Lost Property collaboration. Cheryl dedicates countless hours to collecting, identifying, and returning items—if you're missing anything, she's your go-to at [lostproperty@birkenheadschool.co.uk](mailto:lostproperty@birkenheadschool.co.uk). Sabina and Cheryl, you are both amazing. Thank you.

A huge thank you also to the wonderful **Chantal Broadhurst**, our Treasurer, for her calm diligence and patience throughout the year (especially when I'm asking can we buy another 7ft inflatable Father Christmas for the Bazaar!) It really does make a difference having a committee united by one goal: adding value to school life for our children.

Each year, the PA receives requests from across the School for support with 'wish list' items—and thanks to your continued support, we were delighted to contribute to a wide range of projects this year, including:

- Speakers and microphones for use across the whole school
- Lacrosse team tops for Nationals
- Kit for the Seniors Rugby Tour to Canada
- A contribution to the Little School Library
- Ice cream treats for Year 6 Leavers
- Sports Day ices (with a big thank you to Cool Delights Desserts for supporting the PA!)
- Aprons and easels for the Senior Art Department
- A match-funded table tennis table for the Junior playground
- A contribution to the new Early Years outdoor area
- Sixth Form Leavers' event support
- Thesauruses and dictionaries to complement the new Prep English programme
- Debatemate (agreed last year, funded this year)

This year, we also say farewell to **Lynn Pownall** and **Andrea Morrell-Foulkes**—two PA stalwarts who've given so much over the years. Lynn, thank you for your guidance as you handed over the baton of Chair. Andrea, your tireless work on PA communications, the Gift Hall, and the fireworks marshalling will be missed more than words can say. You've both left big shoes to fill—thank you, sincerely.



Lynn Pownall

Looking ahead, we already have some exciting events in the diary: the Fireworks on **5th November**, the **Christmas Bazaar and Grand Raffle** on **6th December**, and—by popular demand—a **Summer Event in 2026**, including a Colour Run! Stay tuned via our social channels and What's App updates. We would love to hear from new committee members as well as those who can spare an hour to help, before, during or after an event.



Lorraine Taylor, Chair and Andrea Morrell-Foulkes

Thank you again to everyone who makes the PA such a special part of Birkenhead School life. Here's to another brilliant year ahead!

**Stay Connected with the Parents' Association**

**Instagram**

Follow us on Instagram for updates, event highlights, and behind-the-scenes moments:

@birkenhead\_sch\_parents\_assoc

Scan the QR code: (Insert Instagram QR code image here)

**Facebook**

Join our Facebook community for event news, reminders, and ways to get involved:

facebook.com/birkenheadschoolPA

Scan the QR code: (Insert Facebook QR code image here)

**Lost Property**

Missing an item? Cheryl O'Malley is here to help!

Email: [lostproperty@birkenheadschool.co.uk](mailto:lostproperty@birkenheadschool.co.uk)

**General Enquiries**

Got an idea, suggestion, or want to get involved? We'd love to hear from you.

Email: [birkenheadparentsassociation@gmail.com](mailto:birkenheadparentsassociation@gmail.com)



## Ro Buys a Ping Pong Table

Ro, a pupil in 3M, and his family and friends [plus Buddy the dog] walked up Moel Famau to raise money for the new Ping Pong table.

The PA matched the amount raised too. It is in constant use by the Prep pupils every break time and even before and after school time! They are all very thankful for Ro's efforts and the PA matched donation of the table.





# An Unforgettable Italian Adventure

**Our Year 9 Geography students travelled to Italy in the Easter holidays for an action-packed, awe-inspiring trip to Italy — an unforgettable experience that brought their classroom learning to life through breathtaking landscapes, ancient wonders, and real-world geology.**

The journey began in the early hours as students set off from Manchester and touched down in Catania, Sicily. Their first stop was the Neapolis Archaeological Park in Siracusa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site teeming with ancient history. Here, they explored iconic landmarks including the renowned Ear of Dionysius — a limestone cave famous for its acoustics — the grand Teatro Greco dating back to the 5th century BC, and the Roman Amphitheatre that once hosted dramatic gladiatorial battles.

Later, the group wandered through the charming streets of Ortigia Island, soaking up the Sicilian atmosphere in the stunning Piazza del Duomo. Some visited the Cathedral of Syracuse, while others treated themselves to a refreshing gelato.

On Day 2, students visited the spectacular Gole Alcantara – Botanical and Geological Park. Nestled in the foothills of Mount Etna, this site offered a dramatic demonstration of nature's force, with icy waters cutting through lava-formed canyon walls up to 50 metres high. The afternoon was spent in the picturesque hilltop town of Taormina, where students had time to explore before visiting the ancient Teatro Antico di Taormina, a Greek amphitheatre with sweeping views of the coast and Mount Etna. The day ended with some well-deserved relaxation and ball games on the beach near their hotel.

Day 3 was a true highlight: a hike up Mount Etna — one of the world's most active volcanoes — just a day after fresh volcanic activity had made the news. In the morning students explored the Colata Lavica 1991/1993 near Zafferana, tracing the lava flow and learning how emergency interventions successfully protected local communities.

A visit to a local honey farm followed, where students sampled Sicilian honey and olive oil before continuing their journey. Later that day, wrapped up warm, they ascended Mount Etna by cable car to the snow-capped summit. With subtle tremors still detectable beneath their feet, it was a thrilling and educational experience they'll never forget.

After an overnight ferry from Palermo to Naples, Day 4 began with a guided hike up Mount Vesuvius. Students learned about the volcano's geological significance and its infamous eruptions while enjoying breathtaking views across Naples and the Pre-Apennines — a true outdoor classroom experience.

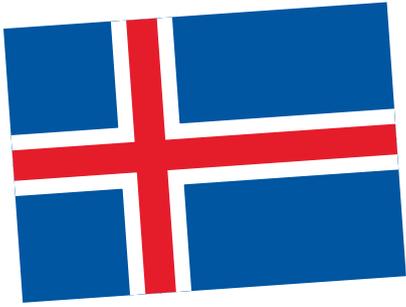
In the afternoon, the group travelled to Pompeii. With a guided tour through the once-buried Roman city, students explored remarkably preserved ruins that offered a powerful window into daily life nearly 2,000 years ago — all in the shadow of the volcano that changed history.

To close the trip, students enjoyed one final beach break, watching the sun set over the sea — a perfect and peaceful end to a truly memorable adventure.

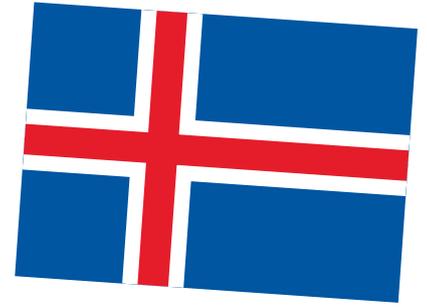
Grazie per i ricordi – thank you for the memories!

Huge thanks to all of the staff involved in organising such a rich, rewarding and unforgettable experience for our students.





# Iceland Trip 2025



By Mr Roberts, Head of Geography

During February half term, 80 GCSE Geography students, accompanied by 9 members of staff, embarked on an unforgettable trip to Iceland. This adventure offered a unique opportunity to experience first-hand the awe-inspiring natural features and processes that they have studied in class. From volcanic landscapes to glaciers, the group explored some of the most dramatic scenery on Earth, returning with memories that will last a lifetime.

The group arrived at a time of heightened tectonic activity on the Reykjanes peninsula. While this added an extra layer of excitement (and caution) to the trip, we were fortunate to time our visit between explosive episodes. One of the highlights was a visit to the famous Blue Lagoon, which had recently been fortified in response to the increased volcanic threat. Bathing in the steamy, mineral-rich waters was an incredible experience in itself — made even more memorable by the unusual but reassuring safety briefing on what to do in the event of an eruption while in the pool! It was the first time in 20 years of leading trips to Iceland that Mr Roberts could remember such a precaution being necessary.

The itinerary was packed with activities designed to bring classroom learning to life. As well as the Blue Lagoon, students visited the stunning Sky Lagoon, hiked on a glacier, and took part in the thrilling FlyOver Iceland experience — a virtual flight that provided breathtaking views of the country's diverse landscapes. Another highlight was a visit to an extraordinary indoor tomato farm, where students learned about Iceland's innovative use of geothermal energy to grow fresh produce in the harsh northern climate.

Of course, no trip to southwest Iceland would be complete without taking in its must-see natural wonders. The group explored thundering waterfalls, geysers, black sand beaches, and the dramatic rift valley at Thingvellir National Park, where the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates meet.

Throughout the week, students showed enthusiasm, curiosity, and resilience as they navigated both the Icelandic weather and the busy schedule. The trip was not only an enriching academic experience but also a chance to develop independence and strengthen friendships. We are incredibly proud of how our students represented the school and grateful to the staff who made the trip possible. It was a truly unforgettable adventure!



# Rugby Canada Tour

By Mr Rule

I've long considered what the recipe is for a successful sports tour. The destination is clearly a key part. There can be no doubt that the mind-blowing beauty of British Columbia (B.C.) delivered in that area. Even a short comfort break just off their equivalent of the M5 led us to a gorge so impressive that it would have been a national landmark in any other country. The snowcapped mountains, lakes and rugged landscape were an ever-present backdrop throughout the tour and never failed to take our breath away.

The culture was important too. Everywhere we travelled in Canada, we were greeted by people with an incredible capacity for kindness and generosity. We wanted for nothing, and nothing was too much trouble for our hosts. Even when a team let us down at short notice, another club—basically strangers at this point—put on a brand-new fixture, dragging in players from miles around and hosting us after. It was impossible not to reciprocate and become the best versions of ourselves in the company of these great people—many of whom became our firm friends. Return trips to the Wirral were soon being planned.

Food is often a feature. How could it not be when travelling with 30 teenage boys? Yes, there were burgers, and ribs, and steaks, and chips, and slice after slice of pizza. But there were also seafood dinners in Victoria Harbour, clam chowder at a shack on Jericho Beach, and endless amounts of sushi consumed at all hours of the day. We never went hungry, that's for certain—but we also ate well.

What about entertainment and activities? Too many to list here, I'm afraid, but maybe just a taste: touch rugby on the beach, high-ropes and zip-lining, volleyball (almost everywhere, to the point it might as well have been a volleyball tour!), swimming in the sea, in lakes and in rivers, white-water rafting, camping out in the wilderness,

spotting bears, driving golf buggies, throwing American footballs, floating down a river on a giant inflatable polar bear, singing with Louis on the guitarlele, telling bad 'dad jokes', doing punishment burpees, the Tiki Tiki Tonga. Too much? Perhaps. But for those who were there, it was an endless stream of experiences, broken up only occasionally with a much-needed bus journey—allowing sleep for the boys and a planning meeting or two for the staff. Plus, a chance for a warm hello with Sai, our trustworthy and ever-present driver.

The standard of sport and competition is often presented as something that defines a tour. I'm not sure I'd go that far, but a real test of your rugby—one in which you come out on top—can turn a good tour into something truly special. After two comfortable victories and a lot of R&R, we rolled into Kamloops, a desert mining town. We'd had word that our reputation preceded us, and the Kamloops Raiders were pulling state players in from as far as eight hours away. They had no intention of letting us breeze through. Mr Pillow addressed the boys pre-match: "There's a good chance that this is going to hurt, chaps. They grow them big out here. But the only way we're really going to see our own standard is by playing their best." Stirring stuff indeed—and with a narrow 5-point victory in the final minutes, it did the trick. Canada had delivered on the rugby—and then some—and the post-match camaraderie told its own tale.

So, what do I really think makes a sports tour? Hands down, it's the company. A tour is only as good as the tourists, and I couldn't have asked for 33 better people to spend it with. We asked so much of the boys—from early starts and busy days to singalongs and self-reflection. They gave us their enthusiasm, their energy, their uncompromising desire to win, and their trust. And, I hope, in turn, we gave them a tour to remember.

My thanks to Mrs Jones for her never-ending positivity, Mr Taylor for his steady presence, and to Mr Pillow for his constant support. I wish our departing players the best of luck for the future, and I look forward—with optimism—to the season ahead.





# A Year of Sport

## Rugby

By Mr Taylor, Director of Sport

The 2024-25 rugby season has been a fantastic success for the 1st XV, finishing with an impressive 75% win rate. This places the School in the top 50 for win rates across the country. Throughout the season, we achieved notable victories against some of the country's most respected rugby schools, including Stockport Grammar, Manchester Grammar, and Wirral Grammar.

The 1st XV squad was driven by a talented group of 13 Upper Sixth players, with excellent contributions from Year 12, also a strong year group. This strong mix provided real depth to the team, ensuring that injuries were covered and that every 1st XV shirt had to be earned. The team was well led by Captain Ben Baker, who brought real flair to the scrum-half position. The season culminated with our traditional Friday night lights match against Stonyhurst at Chester RUFC, who were fantastic hosts. I'll leave the rest of the 1st XV report to Mr Rule's Birkonian article, including the tour to Canada and the USA!

Building on last season's success, the U17/2nd XV also had an excellent campaign, losing only one of their 11 matches. Led by Mr Pillow, the team—affectionately known as "Pillow's Band of Brothers"—achieved impressive victories over teams such as St. Anselm's, Wirral, and MTS. The U16s, also coached by Mr Pillow, went on to win the Cheshire Plate, completing a hat-trick of wins for the school in this event. Their dominant performance against Wellington School, hosted again by Chester RUFC, was a real display of skill and ruthlessness in the final.

It was also a pleasure to see several of our players represent at the regional and county level. Oscar Song and Lewis Hayes-Green earned places in the Cheshire U17s, while Ben and Josh Morris represented the North Wales U16s (RGC). Kai Jackson, Harry Ballantyne, and Dan Garrett also played for Cheshire U16s. This is a clear indication of the growing strength in depth across the School, making next season's 1st XV team an exciting prospect.

### Junior Rugby

Our junior teams also had fantastic seasons, with regular wins being the norm and losses few and far between. The dedication of the players and staff in creating a culture of training, improvement, and excellence was evident throughout.

### U15s

The U15s had their best season to date, capping it off with a tour to Bath, where they were flag bearers at the England U20s vs France U20s game. A standout moment for the team was their thrilling win over Wirral Grammar. Congratulations to Harry Armstrong, Harry Garavello, and Fin Jones for earning selection to Sale U15s DPP. This group will form the backbone of the 2nd XV next season and their exposure to senior rugby will undoubtedly fuel their development.

### U14s

The U14s enjoyed a highly successful season, winning the majority of their matches. After a rare loss in their first game, they bounced back strongly, securing vengeance in the National Cup with a win over St. Anselm's. The team was well captained by Henry Oakden and Oscar Wilcocks. Their spirit and commitment every Saturday set the standard for the school, with excellent wins over MGS, Hutton, Liverpool College, and Calday. Tom Huxley finished as leading try-scorer, and Byron Jones controlled the game at fly-half.

The U13s, after losing their first game, went on an unbeaten run for the remainder of the season, aside from a draw with St. Mary's. Their cohesive, tenacious play made them a formidable side, with standout performances from Leo Vaynas in attack and defense, Sonny for his powerful ball carrying, and Alfie Ogden, who scored over 20 tries. A special thank you to Mr. Lytollis for his expert coaching and valuable contributions in his final season at the school.

The U12s fielded both an A team and a development side, with 29 out of 40 players in the year group participating in rugby. This level of engagement is one of the key positives of the season. The competition between the A and Development sides allowed players to gain valuable experience, with players like Bon Laing and Ed Cunningham starting in the development team and progressing to key contributors in the A team. Ollie Higgins-So deserves a special mention for his dynamic play at fly-half, while Harry Grey was a consistently classy performer in multiple positions. A big thank you to Mr Turner for his coaching and dedication during his final year at the school.

### Rugby Sevens

The rugby 7s season was a tremendous success across all age groups, reflecting the School's growing efforts in developing this aspect of the game. The 1st 7s team came agonizingly close to advancing from their group at the prestigious Rosslyn Park National 7s, losing in the final play of their last game. They went on to win the Cheshire Plate (finishing 3rd overall), followed by a strong performance at the Stonyhurst 7s.

The U14s had an outstanding 7s season, finishing 2nd at the Cheshire 7s, narrowly losing to WGS in the final by just two points. They also made it to the second day of competition at Rosslyn Park, a remarkable achievement that hasn't happened in several years for a Birkenhead school team. Playing teams like Whitgift and Ipswich on day two speaks volumes about the quality of the team.

The U13s claimed victory in the Birkenhead School 7s, beating St Mary's College 7s in a thrilling last play. The team also won the Plate at Stonyhurst, marking an excellent season. Additionally, the U12s won the St. Mary's 7s event, the U16s took the Plate at the Birkenhead U16 7s. The U15s triumphed in the AKS Plate, ensuring that all 7s teams brought home silverware. It was also fantastic to see Jasper O'Malley return to the pitch after recovering from an ankle injury earlier in the season for the U15s.

### Representative Honours

Cheshire U17s – Oscar Song and Louis Hayes Green  
 Cheshire / Sale DPP U16 - Kai Jackson, Dan Garrett, Harry Ballantyne,  
 North Wales U16 RGC, Josh Morris and Ben Morris  
 Sale DPP U15 Harry Armstrong, Finn Jones, Harry Garavello

### Team Honours

U16 15 a Side Cheshire Plate Winners  
 First XI Cheshire Plate Winners  
 U16 Birkenhead 7s Plate Winners,  
 U15 AKS Plate Winners  
 U14s Group Winners at National 7s Day 1. Qualification to Day 2  
 U13 Birkenhead 7s Winners, Stonyhurst 7s Plate Winners.  
 U12 St. Mary's 7s Winners



U12 Boys Rugby



U13 A Rugby



U13 B Rugby



U14 Rugby



U15 Rugby



2nd XV Rugby



U16 Rugby

## 1st XV Rugby

By Mr Rule

This season represented another advancement in the standard of rugby across the school, and the performances of the 1st XV were no exception. Led by the indefatigable, Ben Baker and containing a significant number of his Upper Sixth brethren, the Senior team's effort, ambition and results have set a remarkable standard for future years to follow.

Losing narrowly to an impressive St. Anselm's side and rolling over an underprepared Runshaw College, meant a positive start to the season, even if the team were relying more on their defensive shape than their confidence with ball in hand. This lack of cohesion in possession was almost the side's undoing against Hutton Grammar, who were young and quick, scoring freely and disrupting well in defense. But good teams will often win, even when not playing well and this was the case for Birkenhead, scoring in the last play of the game to deny the home team the win.

One of the finest moments of the season came in the home fixture against St Mary's College, whose 'one out rugby' strategy was equalled by the red wall of the Birkenhead defence. The emphasis placed during training on counter attacking and strategic kicking delivered emphatically. The home side walked away with a 34-12 win and confidence. However, the highs of this victory were quickly cancelled out by a narrow loss to Lymm in the cup, leaving a number of senior players considering how much their own leadership and values could impact the team.

Driven by a desire to better themselves and right the wrongs of the previous fixture, the 1st XV went on to soundly beat a strong Stockport Grammar away from home and refused to allow the home side even one point in return. Strengthened by the Morris brothers from the U16 side, this felt like a tipping point in the

season and, sure enough, the team went on to lose only one more fixture in the remainder of the season, beating Newcastle-Under-Lyme, King William's, Wirral Grammar, Manchester Grammar and Stonyhurst College. With a 75% win ratio and points difference of 132, it's safe to say the boys delivered.

Demonstrating the breadth of talent across the squad and their versatility, the majority of the XV's side went on to play during the VII's season. This was also successful, with highlights being the winning of the Cheshire Plate competition and being a 2-point conversion from going unbeaten in the Rosslyn Park group stages and progressing on to the next stage of the competition.

With too many players to mention by name, credit should go to the amazing effort and culture of the Upper Sixth boys, many of whom have played together for the best part of a decade. Their service to School rugby has been phenomenal.



1st XV Boys Rugby

# Netball

By Mrs Jones

This season has been an exceptional one for our netball teams, with every age group showing incredible commitment, skill and determination. From promising starts to national competitions and representative honours, there is so much to be proud of!

A promising start for the U12, who have had a solid first season. Lots of success in Saturday fixtures and coming Runners-up in the Wirral Schools championship being a particular highlight. Captained by Pippa Hardy, they developed well throughout the season and we look forward to seeing them progress further next year.

Our U13 team continued with their success by showing great depth and some outstanding results. This age group continue to impress me with their commitment with regularly having enough girls to enter A, B and C teams. They dominated their Saturday fixtures, and a very impressive win in the Wirral Schools Championship showed their talent and strength. In this competition, our B team also reached semi-finals. A fantastic achievement against A teams from many other schools.

This was a landmark year for the U14s with their first opportunity to compete in the National Schools Tournament. A fantastic second in the Merseyside round saw them progress into the Regional Finals where they performed brilliantly coming 7th in the North-West. A year of huge progress for this team, capped off with a fun and competitive tour to Conover Hall for both A and B teams.

The U15s can look back proudly on a memorable cup run, which saw them reach the semi-finals of the Sisters in Sport National Plate, narrowly losing to Rugby School in a closely fought contest. Their resilience and team spirit, led by Miss Gilbride, was second to none. This team continued to impress throughout the season, losing only one Saturday fixture throughout the whole year.

It has been a demanding but rewarding season for the U16s, many of whom balanced playing for the 1st and 2nd team as well as their own age team. Hit by injuries, this was going to be a challenging season for this team, however this talented group of girls once again won the

county round of the National Schools, reaching the Regional Finals for the 3rd year in a row. They competed strongly against the top schools from across the region.

Our 1st team had another commanding season, dominating their Wednesday afternoon fixtures with some outstanding performances. With their Wirral Schools and Merseyside championships not taking place this year there was not the usual opportunity to shine locally, but with friendly fixture wins again Scarisbrick Hall, Manchester High, St. Marys, The Grange, NULS, Stockport Grammar, Kings Chester, Merchant Taylors and Kings Macclesfield, along with a solid performance in the National Schools, yet again reaching Regional Finals, this talented team showed their strength and dominance. With the majority of the team in Year 12, I look forward with excitement to what this team can achieve next season.

## Netball Individual Achievements

U12 Merseyside – Sisi Quinn, Nyla Hardy-Hunte (Year 6)

Harriet Cooper (Year 6)

U13 Merseyside – Izzy Halpin, Zaila Jackson,

U14 Merseyside – Lydia Bates

U14 Wales Regional Squad / North East Wales County –  
Maisie Hilton

U14 Franchise – Loughborough Lightning PDP – Esme Bell

U15 Merseyside – Sophia Singer.

U16 Wales Regional Squad – Nieve McCulloch

U16 Franchise – Leeds Rhinos - Isabelle Pickering

U16 Franchise – Birmingham Panthers PDP – Faith Johnson,  
Jess Talbot

*A special mention also to Year 11 student Isabelle who has achieved international honours this year. Isabelle has been selected for Scotland U17s and played for them in the European Netball Championships this year. Well done Isabelle on this outstanding accomplishment.*



## A Brilliant Weekend at Conover Hall

From 27th – 29th June, our Year 6 and Year 9 netball teams had an unforgettable weekend at Conover Hall.

The Year 9 Black team had an outstanding run, losing only 1 game out of 10 and being crowned runners up overall. The Year 9 Red team competed superbly well to win 3 out of 6 on the Saturday, showing great teamwork and determination and progressing through to the cup competition. The competitive spirit and skill shown by both teams throughout was fantastic.

The Year 6 team also made us proud, finishing 3rd overall. Their enthusiasm and grit shone through and they enjoyed every moment on court.

But it wasn't all netball ..... the girls took part in exciting activities between matches, including tunnelling, high ropes, abseiling, archery, team-building activities to strengthen bonds and build confidence, making the experience even more memorable.

The weather was beautiful throughout, with bright sunshine adding to the positive atmosphere. All girls worked really hard and represented the school with pride.

Huge congratulations to all the players and thank you to Mrs Jones, Miss Purvis, Mrs Hilton and Mrs Brand. We look forward to more weekends like this in the future.



## Flying the Flag for Wales – My European Championship Journey

By Mrs Alford-Swift

Twelve months ago, I was honoured to be selected to represent Wales in the World Masters Hockey European Championships. What followed was a whirlwind year of training through the infamous Welsh wind and rain in Cardiff and Swansea, topped off with a “warm weather” training camp in Gibraltar that, ironically, turned out to be colder than home!

This June, our squad of 18 women finally took to the European stage in Valencia. Our group featured Scotland, Italy, the Czech Republic, and Ireland — not an easy draw. As this was my first season with the Welsh squad, I came in with no preconceptions, just excitement, determination, and a mindset to treat every opponent as beatable.

We started strong with a 3–1 win over Scotland, followed by a 5–0 victory over Italy — a match I'll never forget, as I scored my first two international goals for Wales. Then came a dramatic, last-minute win over the Czech Republic, putting us in a strong position going into the final group match against Ireland — a team that had historically been a stumbling block for Wales. Despite a gutsy performance, we lost 1–0 in the dying minutes, finishing third in the group and setting up a quarter-final clash with Germany.

Training in 40°C heat was brutal, but it paid off. We beat Germany 4–0 in what was arguably our most cohesive and complete performance as a team. That win gave us real momentum heading into the semi-final — a rematch against Ireland. With belief sky-high, we overcame our old nemesis with a convincing 3–0 win, securing a place in the final and making history as the first Welsh side to reach a major European final.

The joy of that win was only matched by what came next — as the final whistle blew, I looked up to see my three children running onto the pitch. My husband had secretly flown them out to surprise me. That pitch invasion, with their arms around my waist, was the most emotional and unforgettable moment of my life.

In the final, we faced England — strong favourites. But we played with heart, freedom, and the pride of knowing we had already

secured a medal. Though we lost 1–0, we walked off the pitch with heads held high and silver medals around our necks — the best result Wales has ever achieved on the European stage.

This has been a dream comeback season for me, after several years out with serious injuries. To return to international competition and achieve this in my first year back — while balancing life as a parent and teacher — feels like a fairytale. It proves that the journey doesn't end when you reach a certain age — it simply evolves. I prefer to think of it as reaching new heights in the prime of my experience.

The word that has defined the past four years for me is resilience. I hope that our pupils at Birkenhead School can take something from this journey — whether it's the power of teamwork, the magic of working towards a shared goal, or the sheer joy of pursuing your passion.

I'm incredibly proud to now call myself a European silver medallist, and even prouder to have done so with the support of the Birkenhead School community. Here's to the next generation — may you chase your dreams with courage, commitment, and heart.



# Girls' Hockey

By Mrs Alford-Swift

It's been another brilliant season for girls' hockey – and perhaps our best yet. With an impressive overall win ratio of 65%, our teams have done themselves proud across all age groups. The commitment, team spirit, and determination shown has made this a year to remember.

Leading the charge were the U12 A team, who achieved what no team has done before – an unbeaten 100% record, winning all eight of their fixtures, scoring 23 goals and conceding only four. A phenomenal effort from a group of girls, many of whom had never picked up a stick before September. Their third-place finish at the Cheshire County Finals capped off a truly historic debut season.

The combined U14/15 team also enjoyed a stellar run, posting a 71.4% win rate from nine matches. These girls brought real flair and consistency to the pitch, helping lift our overall stats and building a strong foundation for the senior squads.

The First XI kicked off the year with a confident 3–0 win over Newcastle-under-Lyme. We entered the National Cup for the first time, where we met a strong Shrewsbury side and bowed out early, but not without learning valuable lessons. We followed with another 3–0 win over Merchant Taylors and moved on to the County Cup, where we had two draws – including a hard-fought match against Wilmslow, who have historically had the upper hand – and a win over Abbey Gate, sending us through to the County Finals.

In the County Finals, where Cheshire's standard of hockey remains unforgivingly high, the girls performed admirably. We finished third, bettering last year's result, with wins over Alderley Edge, a draw with

The Grange, and losses to Kings Chester and Kings Macclesfield. A strong finish, and plenty to build on.

Elsewhere, we enjoyed clean sweeps against Rydal Penrhos, Queens Chester, and St Bede's Manchester, across multiple age groups. The U13s made their debut in the National Cup and stormed into the Plate competition after a narrow second-round loss. They reached Round 3 of the Plate (just one shy of the quarter-finals) – the furthest any of our teams have gone in this competition. And yes, somehow we managed to draw every game at home – a scheduling miracle (and quite frankly, I wasn't keen on driving to Hull in the rain anyway).

But beyond the stats and silverware, what makes this season so memorable is the atmosphere: the Astro buzzing with life on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, no matter the weather. Come rain, wind, or even hail, the girls turned up in numbers, sticks in hand, smiles on faces, ready to give it their all.

After 15 years of running girls' hockey here, I can say this season ranks among the very best. To the players – my loyal "Hockey Army" – thank you for your energy, dedication, and sense of humour. It's been a joy.

### Notable achievements:

1st XI-Mim Sedgwick & Holly Jones playing North Prem Hockey with Neston ladies 1st XI

U14- Elsie Cairns playing Cheshire hockey

U13- Katie Banks, Rosie Pugh, Aela Nixon, Beattie Woof, Zaila Jackson all representing Cheshire.

U12- Izzy Alford-Swift & Jess Armstrong representing Cheshire.



# Rounders

By Mrs Alford-Swift

Rounders really gained momentum in the second half of the summer term, with fantastic numbers attending clubs across all year groups. This strong participation highlights the inclusive nature of rounders—where girls of all abilities can enjoy the game and contribute to their teams.

On the competitive front, we had an excellent run of Saturday fixtures, winning all matches against the likes of Alderley Edge School for Girls and King's Chester. Although the weather caused a few cancellations, it didn't dampen the spirit or success of the season. The Wirral Schools Rounders Tournament was once again a hotly contested event—traditionally a close affair between ourselves and Wirral Grammar. This year proved no different:

- Year 7 reached the semi-finals, narrowly losing out to Wirral and finishing third overall.
- Year 8 had a clean sweep, defeating every opponent to win the tournament outright.
- Year 9 were part of a three-way tie at the top of the table. Although not undefeated, they were crowned tournament winners on countback, having scored the highest number of rounders overall.
- Year 10 also enjoyed a strong tournament, with victories over teams including West Kirby Grammar, Upton Hall, and Wirral Grammar, finishing as tournament champions.

It was an exceptionally successful rounders season, and the girls should be incredibly proud of their teamwork, determination, and consistent performances.



# Boys' Hockey

By Mr Taylor, Director of Sport

The 2024-25 boys' hockey season saw continued progress in both the quality and variety of fixtures offered to the players. With more matches, additional teams, and greater participation, including the introduction of the Independent Schools Cup for both the U13s and U18s, the season represented a significant step forward for the program.

## 1st XI

The 1st XI enjoyed another successful season, securing 7 victories—marking a second consecutive strong season for the team. Much of this success can be attributed to Captain Tom Lindberg, whose leadership on the field was positive. Key players such as Tom O'Brien and Callum Wilson consistently delivered high-level performances, while Dan Sweetman's goals ensured the team remained competitive throughout the season.

Despite strong performances, there is still room for improvement, particularly in terms of composure during attacking short corners. Notable victories this season included wins over MTS, St. Anselm's (twice), and NULS. The team qualified once again for the North West Finals, showcasing the progress made by the senior hockey sides in a relatively short period of time. A special thanks to Mr Roberts for coaching the 1st XI. With much of the squad returning next year, there is plenty of potential for further development under the leadership of co-captains Rohan Kapoor and Tom O'Brien.

## 2nd XI

The 2nd XI, primarily made up of Year 11 players with a few Year 12s, focused on providing valuable opportunities for players to develop and serve as a feeder team for the 1st XI. While the team's results weren't always reflective of their improvement, their competitive spirit was always evident. Under the captaincy of Murray Cowan, and with Ting Zhou embodying the team's resilience, the 2nd XI showed great determination, even in the face of tough challenges.

## Junior Sides

The junior hockey teams continued to build on the increased fixtures and playing experience from the previous season. For the first time, we fielded both U13 A and B teams, significantly expanding the fixture list. The players also embraced training, with good participation numbers throughout the season.

## U15s

The U15 team had a strong start, recording wins over Rydal, Bolton, and a few other solid performances. However, a mid-season dip in form was followed by a strong finish, with victories over St. Bede's and Rydal. Ultimately, the team finished with a record of 5 wins and 7 losses, which reflects their ongoing development. Captain Peter Morris led the team well, contributing some crucial goals. Other standout performances came from Dan O'Dowd in goal, as well as defenders Alistair Burgess and Rayhan Ahmed, who formed a reliable pairing. Many of these players will move up to the 2nd XI next season, with a few also making the step up to the 1st XI.

## U14s

The U14s demonstrated impressive commitment to training and made significant strides in skill development and tactical understanding. However, the small player pool in this year group made the transition from 7-a-side to 11-a-side challenging. Although the team achieved a positive start, including a first win against Bolton, their confidence dipped as they faced stronger opponents. The challenge for next season is to start competitively and build on the lessons learned. Captain Toby Rashid, along with Brae Williamson and Nate Glascott-Tull, were integral in leading the side through a tough season.

## U13s

The U13s had a highly successful season, winning 13 games between their A and B teams. Notable victories included wins over St. Bede's, Calday (twice), MTS, and Rossall. I am incredibly optimistic about the future of this group, as they demonstrated excellent spirit, a strong work ethic, and a willingness to improve. Their performance in the Cheshire Tier 1 event was impressive, and they made an excellent run in the Independent Schools Cup, reaching the Plate semi-finals. The highlight of their season came with an epic away victory against Scarborough College. Unfortunately, they fell just short in the semi-finals, losing 3-2 to a strong Grange side. The season concluded with a well-deserved win over Kings Macclesfield, a team they had struggled against in previous encounters. The team was ably led by Will Baxter and Ethan Poynton, with other standout performances from Josh Pugh, Cayden Barker, and Seb Whalley. This team has set a high standard for the future.

A big thank you to Mr. Oake and Mrs. Armstrong for their dedication in coaching the U12s, U13s, U14s, and U15s throughout the season. We wish Mr. Oake the best of luck as he departs for Vietnam!



U12 Boys Hockey



U13 Boys' Hockey



U14 Boys' Hockey



1st XI Boys' Hockey



2nd XI Boys Hockey

## Honours

West Cheshire Junior Academy Centre  
U18 – Dan Moreton, Tom O'Brien  
West Cheshire U13s – Seb Whalley,  
Josh Pugh  
Temsworth U13 Academy – Toby Flor

# Cricket

By Mr Jackson

## 1st XI

The 1st XI enjoyed a season of genuine progression, building on previous years and delivering some memorable performances. The undoubted highlight was a dramatic victory over a strong Bolton School side, chasing down their total nine wickets down off the very last ball—a testament to the team’s grit and determination. This thrilling win was richly deserved and reflected the boys’ hard work throughout the season.

Other notable performances came against Manchester Grammar School and the MCC, where, despite being on the wrong side of the results, the team showed real promise. Wins against Oswestry School, The Grange, and St Anselm’s were particularly pleasing, with contributions coming from throughout the squad.

A disappointment this season was the number of schools withdrawing from fixtures, a reflection of the growing tension between academic commitments and sporting opportunities, especially for Year 11 and Upper Sixth students. This is a challenge for all independent schools to consider moving forward.

The season concluded with the annual festival, hosted this year by George Watson’s College, Edinburgh. The boys competed well, with Ben Morris’s explosive 65 off 50 balls a standout in a 50-over defeat to Gresham’s School. The team bounced back to beat Gresham’s in a 10-over contest later that day, and put in a strong bowling display against USC before rain curtailed the final day’s game against the hosts.

Shiv Malhotra, a Year 10 player, was the leading wicket-taker with 22 wickets at an incredible average of 14, impressing with his left-arm spin. His elder brother Krish Malhotra scored over 300 runs throughout the season, including a superb 70 against the MCC. Kai Jackson also had a consistently impressive season, contributing with both bat and ball. Notable mentions to Josh Morris and Teddy Groves who opened the bowling throughout the season and put early pressure on numerous opening pairs. Ben Morris showed huge improvements, ending as the third top run scorer and taking lots of victims with his ever-developing wicket keeping. With a young squad, the future looks bright for the 1st XI.

## Under 15’s

The Under 15s were the school’s most successful side, winning 11 out of 15 matches, including a clean sweep on their pre-season tour to Bradfield College. They also had a successful cup run, which ended narrowly in the final, but the team can be proud of their achievements. Amay Diwan captained the team admirably throughout the season. Aaron Checkley and Rishi Singh scored the bulk of the runs, combining powerful hitting with excellent running between the wickets. Shiv Malhotra took over 30 wickets, including a remarkable seven-wicket haul against Bradfield College. Noah Travers consistently led the bowling attack and contributed valuable lower-order runs. Overall, it was a fantastic season for the Under 15s.

## Under 14’s

After a slow start, the Under 14s rallied impressively, finishing with a 50% win record. Their highlight was a memorable away win at Cheadle Hulme. Captain James Barlow impressed with both bat and ball, while Tobi Rashid showed great temperament and regularly bowled important spells. Oscar Wilcocks was reliable behind the stumps and added valuable runs, whilst Byron Jones impressed at the top of the order, ending up as the leading run-scorer.

## Under 13’s

Bouncing back from a disappointing previous season, the Under 13s showed clear improvement, winning more games than they lost and regularly posting triple figure totals. Saturday victories against Rossall School and Kirkham Grammar were particular highlights. Cayden Barker and Sebastian Whalley, who captained the side with maturity and enthusiasm, performed consistently well. Tharmilaan Gnaachchandaran made significant strides with the ball, taking plenty of wickets. Josh Pugh earned the coaches’ award for his key contributions with both bat and ball.

## Under 12’s

For the Under 12s, this was very much a development season, with many players new to cricket. By consistently bowling 10 players each game, everyone had plenty of opportunities to improve. Tommy Kerrs and Luca Doyle both showed marked improvement as the season progressed. Henry Oliver led the bowling attack and scored valuable runs, while captain Oliver Higgins-So regularly demonstrated his talent, particularly with the bat, finishing as the team’s leading run-scorer. Although the results were mixed, there are many positives to build on for next season.



U12 Boy's Cricket



U13 Boy's Cricket



U14 Boys Cricket



U15 Boy's Cricket



1st XII Boy's Cricket

# Athletics

By Mr Taylor

The athletic season of 2025 comprised the English Schools' Cup for U15 and U13 age groups over two rounds and the Wirral Schools' Championships for Years 7–9. There was also the early season opener with the Dave Jeffs Track and Field Meeting at the Oval, Bebington, and the season concluded with a Year 7 meeting.

The recent developments in athletics are showing, as pupils and teams perform better each year with increased experience. Training has been positive, and performances have been strong.

The English Schools' Cup is a team competition in which 12 or 14 athletes make up a team and score points based on times and distances, rather than places. Therefore, it involved a large number of pupils, many of whom were new to athletics. After a day of hard competition at the Oval, many athletes produced fine performances in glorious sunny conditions. The U15 Boys' team was weakened after withdrawals on the day; however, we were proud of their efforts and awaited the news of regional qualification. It was a creditable achievement to get three teams through to the North West B Final at Ellesmere Port.

It was great to see the Junior Boys' and Girls' teams (Years 7 and 8) produce excellent performances at the Regional B Final. Both teams led at the halfway point before switching from track to field events. Eventually, the Junior Boys came 2nd and the Junior Girls 3rd in the B Final. Agonisingly, the girls missed out on first place by just 3 points!

It was a fine team effort, and everyone did well. Notable performances included Ben Chinnaraja in the 1500m, Leo Vaynas in the shot put and 200m, and Alfie Ogden in the 100m. For the girls, Tilly Phythian in the 300m and Zaila Jackson in the discus and 100m led the way. This, alongside a strong all-round team performance that included some promising Year 7 contributions, allowed us to beat several strong Independent and Grammar Schools.

At the Wirral Schools' Championships, all teams performed well, with top-three finishes for the Inter Girls and Junior Boys, 2nd place for the Junior Girls, and a win for the Inter Boys! Again, this shows that the school can compete with the large intakes of the Grammar and local comprehensive schools.

### Summary

All in all, a successful year with strong team and individual performances as #TeamBirkenhead continues to develop its athletics squads and training.

### Individual Highlights

Nathanial in Year 9 deserves a special mention for qualifying for the European Biathle Championships in Madeira and being selected for the GB Pentathlon Performance Pathway. To cap a fine season, he also won the National Year 9 Schools' Laser Run Championship in Liverpool in July—an excellent achievement.



Scarlet in Year 10 had a dream season, qualifying for the English Schools' Individual Championships in both High Jump and Heptathlon—the pinnacle of schools' athletics. She also won the Merseyside Schools U17 Junior Girls' High Jump, the National Indoor U17 HJ title, and the Northern Indoor U17 HJ title. Then, within the space of eight days in July, she won the National Schools' U17 HJ title and represented England in the Four Nations International—winning the high jump there as well. All of these achievements came as an U16 athlete competing in U17 events! She still has another year to defend her titles.



### Honours

#### Scarlet G

- English Schools' qualification – Heptathlon
- Northern Schools U17 High Jump Indoor Champion
- National Indoor U17 High Jump Champion
- National ESSA U17 High Jump Champion
- Gold Medal – Four Nations International (High Jump)

#### Nathanial GT

- GB Pentathlon – GB Biathle (European Championships, Madeira)
- National Year 9 Schools' Laser Run Champion

### Team Honours

- Junior Boys – 2nd, North West B Final, English Schools' Cup
- Junior Girls – 3rd, North West B Final, English Schools' Cup
- Intermediate Boys – Winners, Wirral Schools' Championships
- U12 Girls – 2nd, Wirral Schools' Championships
- U12 Boys – 3rd, Wirral Schools' Championships
- Intermediate Girls – 3rd, Wirral Schools' Championships



U12 Athletics



U13 Athletics



U15 Athletics

# Lacrosse

By Mrs Dunn

Birkenhead School lacrosse has been exciting this school year both in exceptional team success, combined with some outstanding personal achievement for our players at representative level.

The season started in early September with our annual pre-season trip to Moreton Hall school for training and matches playing. Moreton hall and two other invited teams in a fun friendly day.

The first team had great success at North Schools Tournament held at Queen Margarets School in York. After outstanding performances in the early rounds Birkenhead found themselves in the Final V Bolton School. The game was a hard-fought battle, with the match all tied at 4 goals each at full time. Extra time ensued followed by a Golden Goal situation that we unfortunately lost as Bolton found the net first. Silver medals for us, but a great day and a very strong performance was had by the team led by Captain Scarlett Quinn.

The first team had a strong season after kicking on from their epic performance at Northerns. A Loss to Withington in October with the result reversed by a great win later in the season in the cold month of January. The season was mixed results wise with wins against Harrogate, Withington and a draw with Bolton and whilst we fought hard against Moreton Hall School, we were unable to beat them, but we found the matches invaluable preparation for the Pinnacle of the season at National Schools.

In Aldershot, we were lucky with the weather and had a good day on Saturday with us qualifying for the Division 1 knockout competition on the Sunday. We were finally knocked out in the quarter finals by a strong Putney Team in a close fought 2-1 defeat.

The final event of the season for the school lacrosse First team finished with a great performance with Birkenhead getting the silver medal in the Summer Sixes Lax Tournament held in Shropshire in June. Well done to the team for some outstanding lacrosse. Good luck to our departing Sixth Formers, Scarlett Quinn and Emme Ashfield and suffice to say we look forward to seeing them both playing for their university lacrosse teams and enjoying life in the BUCS competitions.

Our U15's had an incredible season this year with exceptional performances in all competitions. The team was only beaten once this season and had wins against Harrogate, Withington, Bolton and QM and a draw and a loss against Moreton Hall.

The pinnacle of the season was at National Schools in Aldershot. With outstanding results in the qualifying rounds, Birkenhead were one to watch finishing top of their group which put them straight in the Championship. They were through to the knockouts. Birkenhead quickly despatched St Helen's & St Cats 6-0 and into the last 16. Another win beating Claremont Fan 4-2, so quarter finals beckoned with us set to play our Northern friends and rivals Moreton Hall School. What a game, we came out of the blocks on fire! A quick 3 goals with no reply and the pressure was palpable, Moreton came back with a brace, but we galvanised and scored 3 more with us as VICTORS with a 6-3 win. The girls were overjoyed, and a pinch me moment was had by all as the realisation that we were in the semi-final of the Championship.

An intense match commenced playing Putney High School, we scored first, then Putney made it 1-1, 2-2 then a few missed shots

by Birkenhead left Putney able to put one in at the death, 2-3 was the Final Score. The team was rightly gutted to not clinch a place in the final, but TOP FOUR in the Country for Birkenhead was very special. Our little school was mighty and whilst we didn't win the coveted trophy, we surpassed all expectations and were the talk of the tournament. Well done captain Scarlet Grundy and her team for such a great achievement for Birkenhead School Lacrosse

Our U14's had a tough season, with a fair few fixtures cancelled. The pinnacle was North Schools with a very young U14 Birkenhead team finishing Second after some brilliant lacrosse played. They were outstanding, beating Withington, Bolton, Harrogate, QM, and only lost out to Moreton Hall in a tense Final. Silver medals all round!

Birkenhead School U13's lacrosse team are a force to be reckoned with. Talent in abundance is the order of the day with this culminating in them recording some great results through the season. The first major event for our intrepid U13's was North Schools Tournament up in York. We had U13's and U15's both competing and Mr Taylor very quickly realised that he was involved in something special, when he volunteered to run the bench for the U13's, whilst Mrs Dunn fulfilled umpiring duties. This team were sensational. They smashed it out of the park, won every game and were untouchable. What a squad full of unreal talent throughout. Trophy in the cabinet ... next stop National Schools.

Aldershot beckoned and the excitement spilled over when the girls arrived at Aldershot Garrison Sports Fields.

A tough draw saw the U13's saw Birkenhead playing many of the top lacrosse schools and they were undefeated with wins against LEH, Walthamstow, St Swithuns and more in the early rounds finishing top of group and straight to the Championship knockouts.

First up was a tough game against St Swithuns, 6-1 victory, then the quarters with a tough win against Putney 2-1. The girls were flying, tired but adrenalin pumping they were in the semi-final. A hard-fought game against a very strong Berkhamstead School finally saw the team beaten by the eventual winners. Top FOUR in the Country again for our wonderful school. Congratulations to our U13's for an excellent tournament.

U12's had a great introduction to school lacrosse with tough fixture against Moreton Hall with a close fought 4-5 loss, they reversed this on their next encounter with a 7-2 victory. North Schools was a great day with outstanding performances from Captain Grace Barton and teammate Brea Harrison, finishing a credible third place.

Our U11's had an amazing season winning all 4 of their fixtures in emphatic style! Roll on Year 7 for this talented bunch.

Finally, I would like to thank our Director of Sport Mr Taylor for a great season and for all his support and hard work. Thanks also to Miss Gilbride for all her assistance and support, to Mrs Vicars for her assistance and support and special mention to Mrs Grundy for her amazing support and assistance with the U15's at National Schools.

Good luck to all our players who are leaving us for university, and we will follow your progress in your BUCS lacrosse competitions.

Next season beckons and we all hope that we step up another level after so much success. One of the best ever seasons of lacrosse for Birkenhead School.



**Honours & Achievements**

Many of Birkenhead players achieved individual elite recognition by playing for their County or Regional Teams, with several players being accepted on the England Lacrosse Aspire talent pathway at North Regional Academy. Honours include the following:

**U13 County A's:** Holly Finnegan, Beattie Woof, Isabel Halpin, Rosie Pugh, Jess Kelly

**U13 County B's:** Caitlyn Brookes-Fazakerley, Lily Hardy, Annabel Snelson, Aela Nixon

We have also had several young U13 players trial for England Regional Academy and the following girls were successful:

**Regional Academy England Talent Pathway Aspire:** Rosie Pugh, Jess Kelly, Beattie Woof, Isabel Halpin, Esme Bell, Tilly Phythian, Holly Finnegan

**U15 County A:** Darcy Golborne, Scarlett Lloyd, Scarlet Grundy, Layla Jones, Olanna Quinn, Grace Reynolds, Polly Vicars

**U15 County B:** Charlotte Fogg, Ava Formela, Arabella Jones, Sophia Singer, Victoria Taylor

**U15 North Regional A Squad:** Darcy Golborne, Scarlet Grundy, Layla Jones

**U15 North Regional B. Squad:** Arabella Jones, Grace Reynolds, Victoria Taylor, Polly Vicars

**U18 North Regional Squad:** Alice Jones

**England Aspire National Academy U19's:** Eve Sewell

**Wales International U20's Team:** Alice Jones

## Sports Personality Dinner 2025 with Dean Richards

We were thrilled to welcome former England and British & Irish Lions rugby player Dean Richards to Birkenhead School as the guest speaker at our annual Sports Personality Dinner in May.

Held as a black-tie event, the evening brought together over 220 guests for a night of fantastic food, entertainment, and celebration of sport. Dean entertained the audience with stories from his distinguished playing and coaching career, before comedian Lea Roberts took to the stage to round off the evening.

Thanks to the generosity of our guests, sponsors, and prize donors, the event was a tremendous success, raising vital funds for the Rugby Tour to Canada in July. During the tour, the squad took on teams whilst visiting places including Vancouver, Victoria and Whistler, and enjoy unforgettable experiences — including whale watching!

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to making the night so memorable.



# Girls' Tennis

By Mrs Alford-Swift

For the second consecutive year, we entered the LTA Schools' Tennis Competition for Years 7 & 8—and for the first time, we extended our participation to include Years 9 & 10. This expansion meant a packed calendar of fixtures throughout the summer term, giving more girls the opportunity to compete and develop their game.

The season has been full of highlights. Our girls have consistently shown commitment, competing in both weekday and Saturday matches. We performed admirably throughout, with a standout victory over Wirral Grammar—a great achievement and a true scalp! A particularly close match against

Lymm High School demonstrated our growing competitiveness, while encounters with strong sides like West Kirby Grammar and Queen's School proved challenging. Ultimately, we finished third in Cheshire for Years 9 & 10 and fourth for Years 7 & 8—a proud result in a tough field.

Saturday fixtures were opened up to more age groups, allowing even more pupils to get involved. Notably, we recorded resounding victories over King's Chester and Merchant Taylors' School. Our Tuesday Tennis Club was a real hub of activity this year, often attracting 40 to 50 girls enjoying the game in a fun and social environment. In contrast, Thursday sessions focused on team tennis and provided a space for more skill-focused development. There was truly something for everyone this season.



U12 Girls Tennis



U13 Girls Tennis



U14 Girls Tennis



U15 Girls Tennis

# Golf

By Mr Pillow

Led impressively by Captain Z Webster, the golf team enjoyed a strong season, reaching the ISGA regional final after impressive wins against Cheadle Hulme and Sedbergh, ultimately falling to a formidable Rossall side. The Swift Foursomes provided further competitive experience, with the team splitting matches against Rossall and comfortably defeating King's Macclesfield.

Birkenhead proudly hosted the annual 'Matthew Jordan Wirral School's Championship' at Royal Liverpool, Hoylake, securing a commendable second place against tough local rivals. The season concluded on a high note with another victory over Sedbergh. Key players included A Ogden, P Morris, M Sedgwick, H Grey, and T O'Brien & H Oakden.



# Birkonian Golf Day

By Mr Pillow

The annual Birkonian Golf Day was once again a resounding success in June, bringing together 34 players for an enjoyable afternoon of greensomes golf. Participants ranged from Year 3 students to Sixth Formers, alongside parents, teachers, and Old Birkonians, all contributing to a vibrant atmosphere.

It was a tightly contested event, with F. Molyneux and A. Cotgrave ultimately clinching the victory – huge congratulations to them!

A special shout-out goes to Jaylun W. from Year 3, our youngest player. Jaylun displayed incredible talent, even teaching Mr. Pillow a thing or two about chipping. This golf enthusiast has already qualified for The Faldo Masters this summer after a series of impressive qualifying rounds.



# Lewis Jackson

Mr Jackson joined the School on 1st September 2022 as a PE teacher leading our cricket programme. Arriving with an impressive playing CV, he quickly established an excellent rapport with the students, developing their skills and the School's cricket programme, including leading a tour to Sri Lanka, during his 3 years' stay at Birkenhead School. As he moves to teach in Dubai with his young family, we wish him well, and thank him for the excellent cricketing legacy he has left behind.



# Sport News

## Seniors Sports Captains Thank you to our 2024/25 Senior Sports Captains



LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS

Positions of Responsibility Pathway

## Bridging Finance Solutions: Proud Supporters of Birkenhead School Sport

Once again, Bridging Finance Solutions has been a tremendous supporter of sport at Birkenhead School throughout the 2024–25 academic year. Their generous sponsorship has enabled us to further enhance our outstanding sports provision—purchasing vital equipment and high-quality teamwear to strengthen our proud sporting tradition and reputation as a leading institution for school sport.

Thanks to their continued support, we've invested in cutting-edge technology such as VEO and Frogbox video cameras. These tools have allowed us to live stream cricket matches and carry out detailed analyses of our key team games, helping players and coaches gain valuable insights.

Our partnership with Gilbert/Gray-Nicolls has also ensured that pupils benefit from professional-grade teamwear, giving them confidence and pride when representing the School in fixtures. This year, the Prep School received new rugby and netball kits for Years 5 and 6.

We also invested in cricket development this year, purchasing a new Junior BOLA Bowling Machine and ball-feeding systems aimed at improving batting skills in the lower school. These additions have already made a notable impact, contributing to a successful cricket season in the summer term.

Our netball teams received updated Gilbert match post protectors and custom match balls featuring the Birkenhead School and Bridging Finance logos—helping elevate the standard and profile of our competitive fixtures.

Bridging Finance also sponsored the U18 and U16 Birkenhead 7s tournaments, supplying branded rugby balls, flag protectors, and touchline flags, all bearing their logo—further showcasing their commitment to school sport.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Mr Steve Barber and the entire team at Bridging Finance for their outstanding support from all the sports teams at Birkenhead School.



# Music

By Mr Robinson, Director of Music



## This year's achievements across the creative and performing arts have been nothing short of inspiring.

Our musicians continue to thrive and flourish, led by the magnificent Chapel Choir, which has grown in both strength and confidence this year, singing Evensong to an appreciative congregation every Sunday as well as the traditional candlelit Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols and Christmas Eucharist. It was a particularly challenging, yet immensely rewarding experience for the Choir to be invited to sing at the Funeral of our beloved former Chaplain, 'Father' Mark Turner, and then to hold a special service in Chapel to celebrate his life and ministry—and I can say with some certainty that Mark would have completely approved of Sarah's and James's request that we finish the service (in May) by singing Ding dong, merrily on high! As part of the annual Festival of Arts, A Level musicians from West Kirby Grammar School joined our GCSE and A Level musicians to listen to a lecture recital on the Romantic Piano strand of the AQA A Level course and once again gave the community the opportunity to 'Come and Sing Evensong'! Solo opportunities for musicians of all abilities were held on numerous occasions, and the highlight for me was the Lent Term Chamber Music Concert, organised by Mrs Coleman, which was held in Chapel and featured a superb range of Baroque music performed by a number of our most experienced young musicians from both Prep and Seniors... though I am still disappointed that she wouldn't let me advertise it as Baroque-and-Roll!

All of these achievements remind us just how vital the arts are—not only in this school but in this troubled world that we live in.

And I must say this clearly: the arts do not flourish by accident. They require commitment, passion—and, yes, proper investment. At a time when the financial pressures on the independent sector are greater than ever, it is crucial that we, as a School, fund the arts properly.

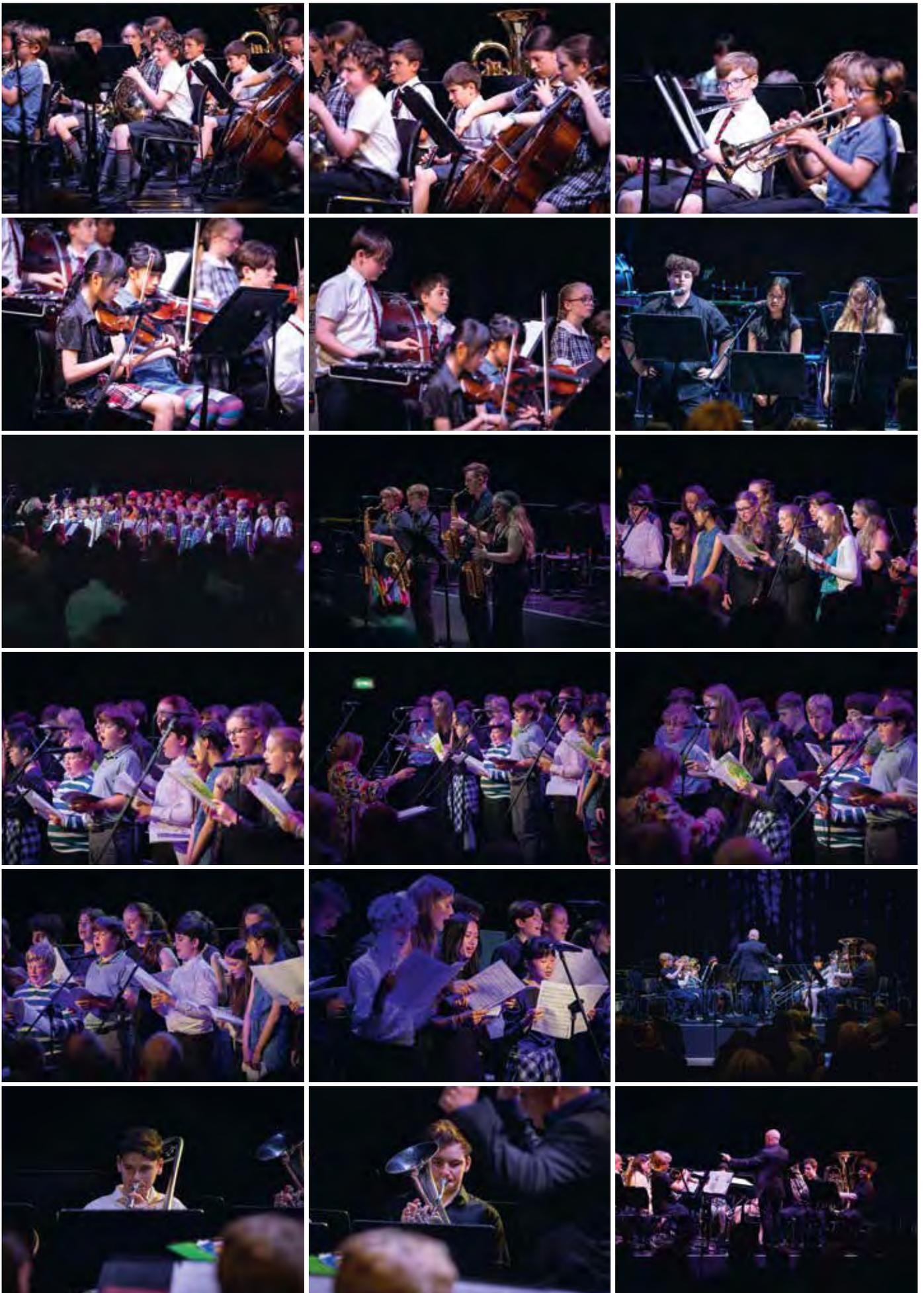
The opportunities offered here at Birkenhead School are truly exceptional. Where else could students experience the magic of a fully robed Chapel Choir singing Evensong every Sunday? Or take part in candlelit Christmas services that rival those at Chester or Liverpool Cathedrals? Where else do you see school theatre productions delivered with such professionalism, ambition, and sheer quality? These things do not happen without commitment—not just from the staff, not just from the students, but from the school itself.

This is what gives our School its soul. This is what offers prospective families something far beyond what is available at even the very best local grammar schools. This is why the arts must continue to be central to the life of this community, and funded appropriately.

Writing this is a particularly poignant moment for me given that, after nearly thirteen wonderful years, I step down from my role as Director of Music. During that time, the School has changed enormously—under different headmasters, adapting to new challenges while remaining true to its core values. What has never changed is the joy of working with creative, passionate young people who bring life to this place through their music, their art, their writing, and their acting.

A school must be more than a place of academic excellence. It must be a place of joy, creativity, imagination, and community. It must be a place where the arts are not an optional extra, but a beating heart.

So, as I said at the Arts Awards evening: it is through the arts that we all love so much that we lift each other up, we nurture the soul of this place, and we remind the wider school community of the immense value of everything that Birkenhead School students do so very, very well. Auf wiedersehen. À bientôt. Good night!



# Music

continued

## A tribute to the Chapel Choir

By Mr Philip Robinson, Director of Music

**As I pack my bags and prepare to step down after thirteen transformative years, it feels fitting to reflect on the extraordinary journey of the Birkenhead School Chapel Choir during my time at the school. More than simply a group of singers, the choir has become a defining aspect of school life—a place of artistry, tradition, discipline, community and fun.**

At the heart of the choir’s weekly rhythm lies Choral Evensong, a tradition rooted in the Book of Common Prayer. Though liturgical in origin, its appeal reaches far beyond religious affiliation. For many pupils and staff, these services offered a rare moment of stillness, reflection, and musical beauty in an otherwise busy school week. Singing in this context provides students with a profound sense of belonging and connection—not only to one another, but to a centuries-old choral heritage.

The benefits of participating in the choir have extended far beyond the musical. Singing together fosters deep social bonds and offers a uniquely powerful sense of shared purpose. Choristers develop not only vocal technique and musical literacy, but also resilience, empathy, discipline, and poise. The act of learning and performing complex repertoire—often in foreign languages and historical styles—demands intellectual rigour and emotional intelligence. For many pupils, the choir has become a formative part of their personal development.

The achievements of the Chapel Choir over the last 13 years are too numerous to list here. Services and concerts have been delivered to an exceptional standard, both within school and at external venues across the UK and Europe. The repertoire has been rich and varied, ranging from Renaissance polyphony to contemporary works. Many leavers have gone on to secure choral scholarships at leading universities and cathedrals, and a remarkable number of former choristers are now working as professional singers with world-renowned ensembles, including Liverpool Cathedral Choir and a cappella group, The Swingles. This speaks not only to the musical calibre of the choir, but to the depth of inspiration and training offered throughout their time at school.

This choir also belongs to a long-standing tradition of British choral excellence. It is no coincidence that so many prominent figures began their lives as cathedral choristers. Sir Alistair Cook, the former England cricket captain, Dudley Moore, the actor and jazz pianist, Simon Russell Beale, the actor, and even pop stars such as Ed Sheeran, Britney Spears and Diana Ross, all began as choristers. Others, such as composer Harry Gregson-Williams, countertenor Iestyn Davies, and baritone Simon Keenlyside, also owe their early formation to choir stalls. Their stories reflect the powerful foundation that choral singing can provide—a foundation built just as meaningfully in our own chapel.

The Birkenhead School Chapel Choir remains an extraordinary part of the school’s life and legacy. Though its leadership will change, its voice will continue. The values it embodies—commitment, collaboration, tradition, and excellence—will go on shaping the lives of all who take part in it, just as they have done so powerfully over the past thirteen years.



## A Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols

**A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols is a cherished highlight of our School's festive calendar.**

This academic year, the Chapel Choir delivered two unforgettable services in the School Chapel, creating a truly magical atmosphere. We were delighted to welcome back Old Birkenheadians—both young and old—who joined us as performers and members of the congregation.

This traditional service, celebrated on or near Christmas Eve, beautifully narrates the story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus. Through nine poignant Bible readings from Genesis, the prophetic books, and the Gospels, interwoven with stunning carols, hymns, and choir anthems, the spirit of Christmas truly came alive.

A heartfelt thank you to all who participated and attended—what a wondrous way to come together as a community!



## Christmas Concert 2024

Our Christmas Concert was a joyful celebration of music, marking the perfect end to the Michaelmas term. Performances included the Prep Orchestra, Senior Choir, Year 6 Choir, and many more talented ensembles!

The evening saw pupils from Year 3 to Sixth Form—and even staff—take to the stage in Bushell Hall, captivating a full audience with their incredible performances.

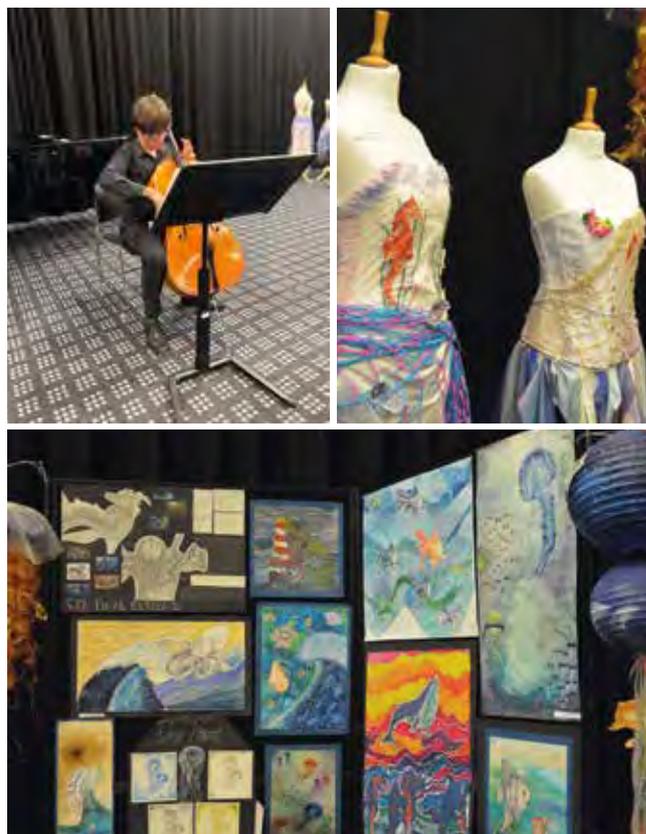
A huge thank you to our Music department for their hard work and creativity throughout a term packed with opportunities for students to shine, from the Festival of Arts to our production of Treasure Island.

There truly is something special about this School.



## An Evening of Art and Music

Bushell Hall was transformed into an art gallery and performance space during our Festival of Arts in November. Parents were treated to some amazing performances from our senior musicians and a beautiful display of artwork by our talented art students.



## Baroque Chamber Concert

Our Baroque Chamber Concert was a truly magical evening back in March, with a fantastic audience turnout. Set in the stunning surroundings of our Chapel, guests were treated to exquisite performances by our talented Senior musicians alongside the renowned Polyphonica Recorder Trio.

The programme showcased a stunning selection of 17th and 18th century masterpieces, featuring works by Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, Purcell, and more. It was a rare and wonderful opportunity to experience both professional artistry and the exceptional talent of our students, making for an unforgettable evening of Baroque brilliance.

Well done to all our talented performers.



## Prep's Spring Serenade

A record number of pupils signed up to perform in this year's Spring Serenade and what a pleasure it was to hear from so many young musicians! Our 'Serenade' series has grown and grown over the years and become a staple in the Prep calendar. A huge thank you to Mrs Keating for making it happen!



By Mr Philip Robinson, Director of Music

When former Headmaster John Clark lured me away from King's Chester back in 2012, there were two main priorities: to maintain the wonderful tradition of Choral Evensong whilst establishing a biannual school musical. There aren't many Headmasters who would relish the job of directing a musical, but John and I began by staging a production of Les Misérables (the first Senior School musical since the late 1990s!) and this was followed by a terrific Hamlet, directed by English teacher, Chris Smale. Rather inconveniently, both John and Chris then decided to retire, but thankfully the theatrical baton was picked up with both hands by the newly-arrived Deputy Head, Kirsten Pankhurst. Since Les Mis had been a show I'd produced many times before, we decided that it was only fair that Kirsten chose our first collaboration and so, as a result, we all got to meet Audrey II for the first time. After six months of rehearsals, we were ready to feed most of Year 6 to the plant and hit the stage.

In the absence of any other colleagues willing to direct a play, Little Shop was quickly followed the next year by another musical - Kander and Ebb's dark journey through 1930s Berlin... and another, as we said a fond farewell to Anatevka (though with slightly more sensible shoes and fewer frills than in the Kit Kat Club!) before then crossing the Atlantic to spend time with Tony, Maria, and their respective gangs.

By this stage, the now annual musical had become a genuine highlight for so many of our school community and we decided that, seven years after John's version, it was time for little Gavroche to become Jean Valjean, Little Cosette to morph into Eponine, and it was perhaps Mrs Pankhurst's finest achievement to be able to demonstrate the sheer strength and tenacity not to let something like a global pandemic get in the way of the arts! When we had to cancel our production just one week before opening night, most people would have given up and moved on, but not Mrs Pankhurst! As the months passed, and the world got back on its feet after COVID, a cunning plan began to form... and so it came to pass... two casts, both rehearsing and performing at the same time (sound familiar?!) and once more Les Mis hit the Bushell Hall stage.

Again, most people would need a rest after such an epic project, but not Mrs Pankhurst (aka KP)... as we decided to tackle not one, but two musicals the following year! Birkenhead School turned into Rydell High and then we travelled back in time to visit Ancient Egypt, and before you could say "Those Canaan Days", two productions per year had become the new normal! Two years ago we returned to Kander and Ebb and met Velma and Roxie before Mrs Groves made her directorial debut with Tim Minchin's excellent take on Matilda. Last year then saw the welcome return of non-musical theatre before Mrs Pankhurst and I tackled Lionel Bart's reworking of Dickens as we walked the streets of Victorian London with Fagin, Nancy and the gang.

Once we knew that this was to be our final production here at Birkenhead, there was really only one way to bring our theatrical partnership to an end - for now, at least - and almost a decade after that first trip to Skid Row, we find ourselves back in the sinister world of that evil, flesh-eating flytrap! This year's production of Little Shop was truly superb, and with the most complicated list of cast rotations ever conceived, it was a genuine surprise each performance to see who walked onstage to play each part... and which Old Birkonian would turn up to do the narration during the Prologue! Huge congratulations to all who were involved, both on the stage and behind the scenes, but particular mention to the following:

- Carmen Wu, Reeve Pankhurst & Sophia Rowland (Audrey)
- Will Gibson & Jake Amirthalingam (Seymour)
- Harrison Brown (Seymour & Dentist)
- Michael Mehment (Audrey II & Mushnik)
- Harry Holden (Audrey II, Mushnik & Dentist)
- Oscar Sandow (Dentist)
- Em Keating, Greta Jones, Amelia Bantock, Lloyd Owen-Jones, Zoe Janikiewicz, Jemima Blair, Sophia Rowland, Elsie Cairns, Ellie Alcock & Hannah MacPhail (Narrators... not all at the same time though!)

So thank you KP, not only for the ten simply magnificent productions that you have put on this stage, but for the incredible support you have shown me over the years, for your endless wisdom, excellent humour, countless lifts to and from school, and most importantly for being such a dependable and trustworthy friend. We will all miss you, but I am sure that it isn't goodbye, and I am certain that this won't be the last Pankhurst/Robinson collaboration! Au revoir, KP!



# Birkenhead School Named Independent Secondary School of the Year in the North West

In December 2024, we were named Independent Secondary School of the Year in the North West by The Sunday Times in the 32nd edition of its Parent Power Guide 2025. The prestigious guide highlights the highest-achieving schools nationwide, assessing them on a range of criteria, including GCSE and A-Level performance.

Widely regarded as the authoritative survey of the UK's top schools, Parent Power serves as the definitive ranking of primary and secondary state and independent schools. Birkenhead School achieved an outstanding position, ranking 81st among the top independent schools nationally, with 67th place for GCSE results and 101st for A-Level performance.

Headmaster Paul Vicars thanked staff, students and families upon announcement of the award and commented:

*"We are delighted that The Sunday Times has recognised Birkenhead School as Independent Secondary School of the Year in the North West. This accolade reflects not only our exceptional academic achievements in GCSE and A-Level results but also our commitment to providing outstanding co-curricular opportunities that enhance the educational experience for all students. We are immensely proud of the*

*dedication and hard work of our students, parents, and the wider School community in earning this recognition."*

Helen Davies, editor of Parent Power, commended the resilience and innovation shown by schools across the UK: *"The educational landscape is challenging – teacher shortages, rising student mental health issues and special educational needs and the VAT rise – but there is also so much to celebrate from the hard work of passionate and committed teachers who are finding ever more innovative and impactful ways to boost their students and give them the very best start in life."*

*"As well as celebrating the academic excellence of the top schools it is fantastic to see how they are shaping their students to be ready for the 21st century."*

The fully searchable national database of over 2,000 schools - organised by name, local authority, town, and postcode—is available online at [www.thetimes.com/best-schools-league-table](http://www.thetimes.com/best-schools-league-table).



*"This accolade reflects not only our exceptional academic achievements in GCSE and A-Level results but also our commitment to providing outstanding co-curricular opportunities that enhance the educational experience for all students."*

Paul Vicars, Headmaster



## Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award

By Mrs Fountain

Fresh from their Training Day, 40 members of Year 10 set out from School on Tuesday 2nd June for a two day Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Expedition.

Starting in Llangollen they walked to Llandegla on Day 1. Despite some very tired legs, students were in good mood in camp with everyone managing to use the stoves to cook a meal and not set anything else on fire! Day 2 involved a tougher day with more hills to navigate to reach the end at Bwlch Penbarras. All students should be proud of their achievement and hopefully a number of the students will carry on to Gold Duke of Edinburgh.



## Bon Voyage, Bon Courage Mr Hill!

This year's Duke of Edinburgh expeditions finished with a second practice expedition for our Gold participants.

This was necessary due to the appalling weather in North Wales that curtailed the first one! It was also Mr Hill's final expedition as he ends 16 years of running the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme at Birkenhead School. The experience was a great one for Mr Hill as all the students showed the tenacity and resilience that is needed to complete their Gold Award. How many students have been on expeditions with Mr Hill over the years and gained a love of the outdoors? I hope that when this last group of students are at Buckingham Palace celebrating gaining their Gold Award, they give a thought to Mr Hill who gave them the opportunity to do the award through school. In Mr Hill's own words, we wish him 'Bon Voyage, Bon Courage'





## International Women's Day

International Women's Day is a time to recognise and celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. Although the 8th of March fell on a Saturday this year, our celebrations were only delayed, not dampened!

The 2025 theme, 'Accelerate Action', called on everyone to increase the urgency and momentum in addressing systemic biases against women. Throughout the week, we marked the occasion with lessons, Chapel services, and assemblies that explored how we can contribute to building a more gender-equal world—beginning right here at Birkenhead School.



## Photography Success

Congratulations to Year 9 student, Ollie M, whose photograph was selected for the Global Photography Project 2024.

In this project, 513 photographers from 52 countries submitted photos taken around the world on the same day, the anniversary of photography's invention (19th August).

Ollie's photo was chosen by the organisers, and it has now been published in the project's book! Ollie was the youngest photographer to have his work selected and published, which is a fantastic achievement – well done Ollie, we can't wait to see more of your work!



## MINECRAFT

- CLUB -

By Miss Purvis, Teacher of IT

With our second year running Minecraft Club, students from Year 7 to Year 9 have been developing their building, teamwork and problem-solving skills each week.

Led by students themselves, the club has taken on ambitious quests and creative challenges each week.

Our main world – the legendary Birkenhead Island – has become the heart of our adventure. What started as a simple spawn point has evolved into a bustling hub full of excitement and imagination. Surrounding the island, you'll find hand-built villages for Birkenhead School's House System, sparkling Christmas trees, towering rockets, and even several 5 Star luxury resorts. Students also participate in Minecraft Hunger Games; focusing on speed and survival! Students have researched mods to bring in complex redstone contraptions, discover new dimensions, and uncover fresh challenges. It is a place where imagination meets innovation, allowing a great environment for new friendships to develop. We can't wait to see what is next for Minecraft Club!



# LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS at Birkenhead School

## Positions of Responsibility

These opportunities were never more in abundance than they are today and, year after year, students leave our doors instilled with the values necessary to be successful in their chosen field and with the skills to lead those around them.

We would like to thank our Prefect and Head of School teams for their contributions during 2024/25. They are integral to the smooth running of day to day life at School.

They organise internal events and speak at a range of public events. It is an honour and privilege to be elected as a Prefect or Head of School and students who do so will have a record of service and commitment to the School.



Head Students



Overdale Head Boy & Girl



Deputy Head Student Team



Overdale Head Team



Prefects



Overdale Prefects

# Leadership Training Day

By Sophia C, Upper Sixth Student and Head of School

At the start of the new academic year, the Senior Prefect Team was delighted to welcome Old Birkonian, Ian Huntley, to deliver a day of hugely beneficial leadership training. He also delivered a session to our Overdale Prefect team too.

After a quick review of Mr. Huntley's extensive CV in the Royal Marines and Ministry of Defence, we immediately began to explore the mindset behind leadership, benefits of working as a team and ultimately what defines a 'good' leader.

The day assumed a practical approach, with the prefects undertaking tasks which required us to strategise as a group to stack cups using string and order numbers in record time. Watching back the footage of these challenges also allowed us to review where we could have improved our approach and benefitted from leadership during points of low morale, as well as capturing many amusing moments on camera! Above all, the tasks proved to be an invaluable bonding experience, allowing us to strengthen friendships within the team and see new qualities in different people.

However, the training also included much thoughtful debate around how leadership relates to popularity, morality and personality, as well as the distinctions between 'leadership'

and 'management.' Similarly, short group presentations we delivered discussed the need for values such as accountability and compassion in an effective leader. One of the biggest takeaways for me was Mr Huntley's exploration of 'psychological safety' - the need to be able to speak up in a team without fear of humiliation or punishment, and how critical this is to a group's effectiveness. I think it is safe to say that this is a quality which will have developed further within the group thanks to our shared experience on the day and new knowledge of successful teamwork.

On behalf of the whole team, I would like to extend our thanks to Mr Huntley for a fun and thought-provoking experience, as well as the new skills we can now carry forward when performing our roles within the School community.



# Prep Leadership Pathways



Head Boy & Head Girl



Prep Prefects



House Captains



Sports Captains



Music Prefects



Digital Leaders



Little School House Captains



Play Leaders



Little School Student Council

# Reflections From Our Heads of School

## James, Head of School

This year I was lucky enough to have the honour to be Birkenhead School's Head Boy, and what a year it's been. It began with the well deserved winning of the North West Independent School of the Year and was followed by the brilliant performances of the second school play in recent years, Treasure Island, and the last Pankhurst-Robinson musical, Little Shop of Horrors. Our charity link 'Save a Child's Life' in Nairobi has been in full motion and bearing heartwarming results. It has been a pleasure to listen to and read out in assemblies the incredible sporting achievements of our pupils. And who could forget about our newly painted school buses, it's been quite a year.

With the enduring support of the school and our fantastic Ms Smeaton, the Head Team each took on individual projects aimed at improving specific areas of school life and strengthening connections between the Head Team and as many pupils as possible. Topics included encouraging reading throughout the school, integrating technology into daily life, raising students' awareness of societal racism and the importance of diversity, promoting mental health and the value of talking about feelings, and my personal focus: improving public speaking skills for younger students, with the aim of helping them build confidence and develop the ability to speak publicly in the future.

It has been an absolute joy working with this year's Head Team to improve the School community and I also cannot thank the amazing team of prefects for their support to both me and the School through their roles. My grateful thanks to Ms Smeaton and Mr Vicars for our regular meetings, advice and counselling. I also must thank this year's fantastic Head Team, I couldn't have asked for a better set of people to work with!

## Sophia, Head of School

Looking back, Upper Sixth has been the most challenging, yet rewarding, year of School life. It has been a real privilege to serve as a joint Head of School this year, and I have deeply valued the opportunity to take up a role which has further immersed me in the school community. Taking a more active role in events such as November's Remembrance Service has been a genuine honour, as was mine and Scarlett's assembly for 'International Women's Day.' Raising awareness for the plight of girls in Afghanistan was an important reminder of the privilege I have experienced at school and fantastic education none of us should take for granted. Furthermore, helping to co-ordinate the new staff and sixth form reading group with Mrs Reeve has been another highlight of the role. Despite our knack for selecting some weird and unpopular reads (Sebastian Faulks' 'Engleby' will forever haunt me), it was so lovely to see 'Period 9' engage people across the school in a collective conversation and a shared love of reading.

Music also continued to act as one of my favourite parts of school life and a welcome mental reprieve from mock exams and personal statements. Achieving my grade 8s in violin and piano was such a fulfilling way to round off my musical journey at school, whilst March's Baroque Concert was a really special showcase of music I had studied, played and loved throughout my years at school. It joins last year's 80s night as some of my personal highlights of the Sixth Form.

In short, the Upper Sixth has rounded off an incredible fourteen years at Birkenhead, which has fostered within me some of my deepest values, passions and friendships. Whilst it has been a disorientating year not knowing where we will end up come September, I can only hope that the next chapter will bring me as much joy as my time at Birkenhead School has.



# Birkonian Week 2025

## Summer Concert

The annual Summer Concert in Bushell Hall proved to be a wonderful occasion to end the School year with students from across the School coming together to perform.

The evening was an opportunity to showcase the wonderful musical talents of our students and celebrate the School community's passion and commitment to music.

The programme included performances from:

- Orchestras: Prep Orchestra (Years 3 to 6), Senior Orchestra,
- Choirs: Prep Choir, Chapel Choir, Senior Choir
- Saxophone Ensemble, Brass Ensemble

It was a fitting and joyous end to the academic year for our Music department as part of our Birkonian Week celebrations.

Congratulations and thank you to everyone who performed during the evening. It was a wonderful way to also say goodbye to Mr Robinson, Director of Music, who leaves the School after 13 years and enjoyed a standing ovation from staff and students.

Thank you to all the staff in our Music department and to our extensive team of peripatetic teachers who work alongside students throughout the year to develop and nurture an ongoing love of music.





# Performing and Creative Arts Awards

The Performing and Creative Arts Awards were held on Monday 30th June as part of Birkonian Week celebrations.

It was a wonderful opportunity to recognise and acknowledge students who have excelled in creative subjects with awards recognising achievements in English, Art, Music, Dance and Drama.

**Highlight Awards included:**

Excellence in Public Speaking: Jack Vicars

Watson Prize for Creativity: Mia Jones

Michael Scott Award for Inspirational Contribution to Music: Tabi Rushton

Best Newcomer to Drama: Faiz Fulton

Excellence in Stage Production & Design: Daniel Moss

Prize for Drama Leadership & Inspiration: Zoe Janikiewicz

Commitment and Persistence in The Arts: William Gibson

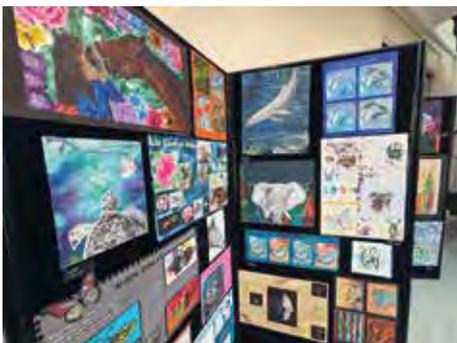
Excellence in Musical Theatre: Carmen Wu

Young Dramatist of the Year: Sophie Thuraisingam

Goodwin Award for Excellence in Theatre: Michael Mehmet

Val Levitt Cup for Drama: Reeve Pankhurst

Thomson Cup for Outstanding Contribution to the Arts: Em Keating



# Birkonian Week 2025

## Sports Awards Evening



The annual Sports Awards were held on Wednesday 2nd July to recognise the sporting achievements of students in Seniors.

### Special Awards

Junior Sportswoman of the Year	Jemima Travers
Junior Sportsman of the Year	Sebastian Whalley
Intermediate Sportswoman of the Year	Scarlet Grundy
Intermediate Sportsman of the Year	Rishi Singh
The Wild Family Senior Sportswoman of the Year	Scarlett Quinn
The Wild Family Senior Sportsman of the Year	Harry Pickering

### Netball

Junior Player of the Year Award	Sophia Singer
Senior Player of the Year Award	Isabelle Pickering
5 Point Award *	Isabelle Pickering

### Lacrosse

Junior Player of the Year Award	Scarlet Grundy
Senior Player of the Year Award	Alice Jones
5 Point Award *	Alice Jones
	Eve Sewell

### Rugby

Junior Player of the Year Award	Zac Birchwood
Senior Player of the Year Award	Harry Tansey

### Cricket

Junior Player of the Year Award	Shiv Malhotra
Senior Player of the Year Award	Krish Malhotra

### Hockey

Girls' Junior Player of the Year Award	Charlotte Jenner
Girls' Senior Player of the Year Award	Holly Jones
5 Point Award *	
Boys' Junior Player of the Year Award	Josh Pugh
Boys' Senior Player of the Year Award	Tom Lindberg

### Athletics

5 Point Award	Scarlet Grundy
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### Girls' Tennis

Player of the Year Award	Alex Williams
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### Rounders

Player of the Year Award	Darcey Golborne
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### Orienteering

Orienteerer of the Year Award	Sebastian Richmond
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### Golf

Golfer of the Year Award	Alfie Ogden
<i>5 Points are awarded for International age-group selection.</i>	



# Seniors Prize-Giving 2025

Prize-Giving was held on the final day of the Summer term and recognised and celebrated the achievements of all students. Mark Cashin, Chair of Governors, gave the Welcome address, followed by Mr Vicars, Headmaster, who gave the end of year address, and Ms Smeaton, Head of Sixth Form, who addressed the 2025 leavers.

## Highlights Awards included:

**Outstanding Academic Achievement Awards** (awarded to the student with the highest overall average in the year group):

Lucy Murphy (Year 7), James Kilty (Year 8), Thomas Huxley (Year 9), Gabriel Vickers, Charlotte Jenner (Year 10), Prem Nagra (Year 11), Luca Noorpuri (Lower Sixth)

**House Awards:** Ben Cuthbertson (Kingsmead), Emme Ashfield (Shrewsbury), Georgina Southworth (Bidston), Jack Vicars (Beresford)

**Old Birkenian Centenary House Cup for 2025** – Beresford

**J.P. Hargreaves Award Presentations** – Murray Cowan, Lexie Daulby, Sofia Grundy, Michelle Liang, Sophia Rowland, Adham Sabry, Jack Vicars

**Birkenhead School Honours Award Presentations** – Sofia Grundy, Jack Vicars

**Jack Hussey Cup for Cup for Charitable Contribution** – Sebastian Richmond

**The Howard Skempton Composition Prize** – Jack Varis

**Pyke Award for Service to the Community** – Sophia Campbell

**Christopher Turner Memorial Award** – Chloe Williamson and Zara Williamson

**Graham Routledge Award for Eloquent Use of the English Language** – Sophie Dougherty

**The Rushworth Shield** – Sophia Campbell

**Jackson Award for All-Round Excellence and Commitment** – Kate Ballantyne

**The Franklin Willmer Trust for Academic Excellence** – Joseph Herbert

**Jon Vater Award for Resilience** – Aaron Mackie  
Announcement of House Captains for 2025-26

Michelle Liang (Beresford), Georgina Southworth (Bidston), Lexie Daulby (Kingsmead), Zach Webster (Shrewsbury)

## Announcement of Prefects for 2025-26

### Overdale

Pippa Hardy, Will Holguin, Alice Jones, Isabella Keating, Bon Laing, Sienna Quinn, Chloe Williamson, Zara Williamson

**Head Boy of Overdale:** Nikhil Patel

**Head Girl of Overdale:** Lucy Murphy

**Deputy Heads of Overdale:** Erin Laing Gibbens, Scarlett Morley

### Senior Prefects:

Kate Baker, Amelia Bantock, Holly Cooper, Murray Cowan, Sofia Grundy, Louis Hayes-Green, Rachel Hughes, Alice Jones, Rohan Kapoor, Krish Malhotra, Lucy Melling, Olivia Melling, Holly Murphy, Ava Nor, Tabitha Oakden, Zack Rashid, Sophia Rowland, Adham Sabry, Tom Sowerby, Jack Vicars, Henry White

**Heads of School:** Sophia Rowlands, Tom Sowerby

**Deputy Heads of School:** Amelia Bantock, Jack Vicars



# Art

By Mrs Margerison

**It has been a busy and productive year in Art. At the start of the autumn term, Sixth Form Art students went on their annual London Galleries trip, visiting the Royal Academy to see work by contemporary artist Micheal Craig Martin, followed by a stroll around the commercial galleries of Cork Street.**

This included seeing pieces by Kehinde Wiley, famous for his Obama portrait. The eye-watering prices asked led to some interesting conversations! An airport style security check permitted our entry to the wonderful Vincent Van Gogh exhibition at the National Gallery, where students were able to appreciate the sculptural texture of his paintings; an experience only made possible through direct observation. In November, Year 9 Artists enjoyed an engaging portrait illustration workshop with graphic designer and graffiti artist 'Emelbi' as part of our week-long Festival of the Arts. The week included various lunchtime workshops plus a fantastic evening of Music and Art to showcase a Bushell

Hall exhibition focusing on work by GCSE and A Level Art students.

GCSE and GCE Art students rose to the challenge of their practical exams in May to produce wonderful work and demonstrate an impressive breadth of creativity and individuality. Outcomes included paintings, drypoints, fine art dresses and mixed media sculptures. KS3 students have enjoyed paint, print and clay and mixed media processes with the Year 10 Global Food project leading to ceramic food being an extremely enjoyable and creative addition to the GCSE course. At the end of the year, the Arts Awards evening in Birkonian Week celebrated the achievements of many with prizes for students in KS3 and 5. Outside the classroom, the department has painted staging and props for Treasure Island and Little Shop of Horrors!

I would like to end by wishing leaving students all the very best for their futures and to thank Mrs Cormack, Mr Ryan and our amazing new art technician, Mrs Martin for their hard work, good humour and enthusiasm.

## Artist Achievements

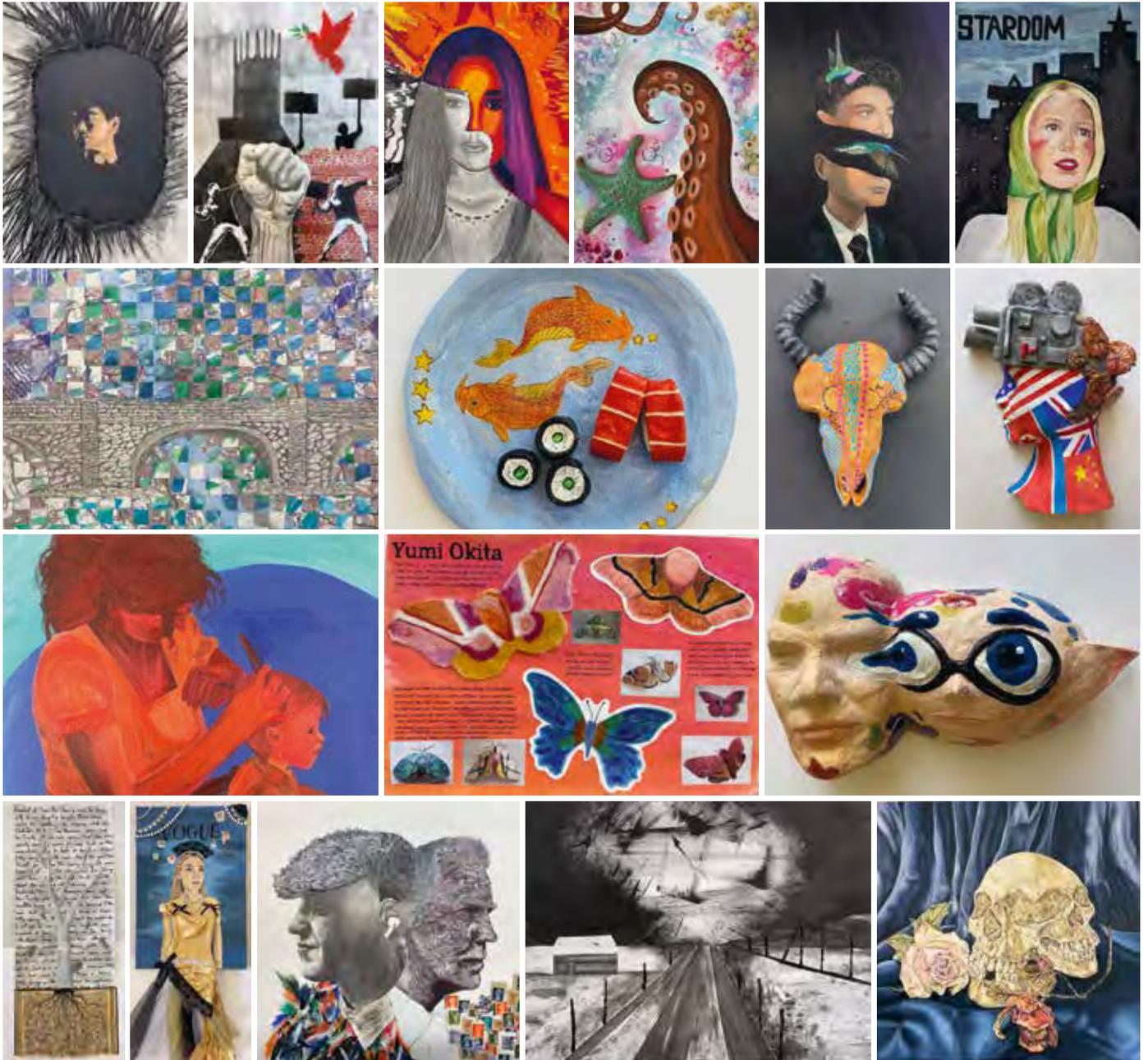
**On Monday 30 June, the achievements of Senior School students across the Performing and Creative Arts were celebrated as part of Birkonian Week.**

Lillie Smith, who begins an Art Foundation Course in the autumn, is our 'Young Artist of the Year' while Mia Jones received the Watson Prize for Creativity.

The 'Amazing Artist' Award recognises achievements across different areas of KS3 including sharing good practice, gaining new skills, as well as being a skilful creative. This year's award recipients were Year 7 Erin Laing Gibbens, Year 8 George Ousey, and Year 9 Daisy Jones. Art badges were awarded at an Art Department presentation to further KS3 students who had impressed throughout the year. Congratulations to all.



# GCSE & A Level Exhibition



# Year 10 Global Food Project





By Mr Jenkins



**Year 7**

Over the academic year, Year 7 students have engaged in a range of practical and creative projects to deepen their understanding of materials, design thinking, and manufacturing processes.

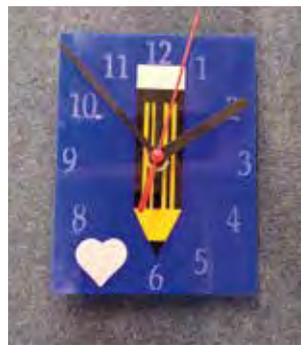
In the Michaelmas Term, students completed the Chester Zoo project, designing and making a puzzle-in-a-box product suitable for a gift shop. During the Lent Term, pupils tackled an Electronics project, designing and manufacturing a 'Steady Hand' game. This introduced them to electronic circuits, soldering techniques, and the use of CAD/CAM technologies to produce components with precision. In the Summer Term, students have applied their knowledge and creativity to a Textiles project, designing and making a functional zipped pouch.

**Year 8**



In Year 8, students have continued to develop their understanding of materials, tools, and manufacturing processes through a series of diverse and

skill-building projects. The year began with an Electronic Night Light project, where pupils learned about light-sensitive circuits, exploring the function and purpose of various electronic components to create a working product. Building on this, they moved into the Pewter Casting project, using CAD/CAM technology to create a mould before casting molten pewter to produce a custom keyring. During the Lent Terms pupils applied their creative and practical skills to a Textiles project, designing and making a personalised bag for life for a specific client, considering both form and function in their work. In the Summer Term, students have turned their attention to working with resistant materials, using workshop processes to manufacture a Lego figure from pine.



**Year 9**

Throughout the year, Year 9 students have undertaken a series of more demanding and varied projects, aimed at broadening their technical capabilities, design thinking, and practical skills. In the Michaelmas Term, students were challenged to design and manufacture a clock suited to a specific context of their choosing. The project provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen skills in resistant materials, alongside the integration of CAD/CAM technologies, including laser cutting, to support the production of high-quality outcomes. Building on prior knowledge of textiles, students next took on the task of designing and making a door stop for a chosen client and location. Pupils were encouraged to repurpose pre-loved garments as their base material, promoting environmental responsibility through thoughtful material choices. In the Summer Term, students applied their growing confidence and knowledge in an Electronics project, where they designed and manufactured a fully functioning stylophone.

**Year 10**



During Michaelmas Term, Year 10's began with a mini-skills project, designed to revisit and strengthen students' familiarity with a range of workshop manufacturing processes allowing them to refine practical skills and techniques essential for producing high-quality outcomes in future coursework.

Following on from this, students were introduced to a Seating Project, which challenged them to think creatively and interactively. They explored a wide variety of contexts in which seating is used, researched existing designs, and analysed the work of established designers and manufacturers. Through sketching, 3D modelling, and prototyping, students developed a series of innovative design concepts, leading toward a well-resolved final prototype.

**Year 11**

Our GCSE students have been fully engaged in completing their Non-Exam Assessment (NEA) contextual challenge — a demanding and rewarding project that allows them to apply a wide range of skills and knowledge in Design and Technology.

Working within a given design context, students explore ethical and cultural considerations, materials selection, manufacturing techniques, and costings. Through this process, they develop not only technical competence but also creativity and innovation — key qualities in producing imaginative yet realistic design proposals. Their ideas evolve through an iterative design process, requiring them to refine and improve their concepts until they achieve a final outcome that meets the demands of the assessment brief.

**Lower Sixth**

One highlight of the Lower Sixth curriculum was a project in which students designed and manufactured an occasional table for a chosen context. This served as an effective introduction to the various stages of the Non-Exam Assessment (NEA), providing valuable insight into the design process from

concept through to production. Students employed CAD/CAM processes to create decorative marquetry tops and applied traditional cabinet-making skills to construct the leg and frame structures.

In addition, students participated in a 3D printing project focused on handheld products. This project challenged them to design ergonomic, functional objects such as personal organisers, gadgets, or tools, taking into consideration factors such as user interaction, form, and usability. Through this, they gained hands-on experience with digital modelling software and additive manufacturing processes, further expanding their understanding of modern product development.

**Upper Sixth**

In the Upper Sixth, students have been diligently working towards the completion of their Non-Exam Assessment (NEA) contextual challenge. This project requires students to identify and investigate a specific design context, prompting in-depth exploration across multiple facets of Design and Technology.

Students are expected to develop innovative yet practical design proposals that address real-world needs. The successful manufacture of a complex, high-quality final outcome that meets the demands of the brief is essential for achieving top marks.

## Modern Foreign Languages

By Mrs Holgate

Our department is, once again, proud to announce that one of our A Level students has been successful in her Oxbridge application, having received an offer for a coveted place at Cambridge University.

We congratulate Scarlett on her well-deserved offer of a place to read Modern & Medieval Languages (Spanish & German) at Pembroke College, Cambridge, and we wish her every success!

This year, we also have some excellent linguists in Year 9, who took part in the UK Linguistic Olympiad competition.

Jennifer Venables and Georgia Alcock received Silver award and Bethany Kennedy scored Bronze, which are

excellent results, especially at this relatively early stage of their school career. Congratulations!



## Jenny Williams

Mrs Williams joined the School on 1st September 2008. During this time, she has superbly led our Learning Support Department alongside her Head of Spanish role. We wish Mrs Williams well as she takes on a promoted post of Assistant Head in Liverpool.



# Business Studies

## Manchester Airport Visitor Centre

The Lower Sixth Business students had a trip to Manchester Airport Visitor Centre in June to learn more about how Manchester Airport runs as a Business.

While within the cabin of the DC10 aircraft, students took part in an interactive lecture discussing the daily operations, stakeholders, employment opportunities and challenges Manchester Airport may face and airports in its wider group. They were also able to visit the flight deck and try on authentic Cabin Crew and Pilot's uniforms! The tour around the airfield also included time spent on their aircrafts on site, including the Avro RJX and a closer look at the iconic Concorde. It was a fantastic day, and the students were able to contextualise the topics taught this year, such as economies of scale, customer service, marketing strategies, and operational management. It was an inspiring day and hopefully allowed the students to see further opportunities using their studies.



### Mike Turner

Mr Turner joined the School on 1st September 2010. In this time he has led on various aspects of School life, most notably our UCAS provision in Sixth Form along with whole school PSHE delivery. A committed supporter of co-curricular activities, he has led on several visits, coached rugby, and led various musical contributions. We wish Mr Turner well in his future endeavours.



### Jennifer Curry

Mrs Curry joined the School on 1st September 2021. During her time she has contributed greatly to the design and delivery of KS3 and KS4 English whilst providing numerous opportunities for students to visit live performances outside of hours. We wish Mrs Curry well as she takes on a pastoral role in Liverpool.



### Kate Harrison

Mrs Harrison joined the Learning Support Department in September 2022. A qualified Maths teacher, her support for all her students, but particularly those who developed a hitherto undiscovered passion for Maths under her guidance, has been a real feature of her three years. We wish her well as she moves to West Kirby School & College.

# English

By Mrs Ballantyne

**It's been a rich and rewarding year for the English Department at Birkenhead School, with theatre visits, competitions, creative writing, and wider academic engagement all contributing to a thriving literary culture.**

Our theatre programme was as strong as ever. In November, students in Years 9 to 11 were treated to a moving and memorable performance of *Dear Evan Hansen* at the Liverpool Empire Theatre. The show, which explores mental health, friendship, and the complexities of modern adolescence, offered powerful themes that sparked thoughtful discussion back in the classroom. Later that same month, we returned to the Empire with a group of Year 10 and 11 students to see a gripping production of *An Inspector Calls*, reinforcing key GCSE themes around social responsibility and dramatic structure.

In April, Year 10 and 11 students travelled to the Octagon Theatre in Bolton for a high-calibre staging of *Of Mice and Men*. Seeing Steinbeck's iconic story brought to life was a valuable extension of their set text studies. We rounded off the theatrical year in May with a spectacular visit to see *Hamilton*, again at the Liverpool Empire – a dynamic and innovative experience that delighted students and staff alike.



Year 8 students were also captivated by a magical open-air performance of *Romeo and Juliet* at Royden Park in June. Set in the Regency era, the play brought Shakespeare's tragic love story to life with dazzling costumes, dramatic sword fights, and powerful emotion under the summer sky. A truly unforgettable experience!

Our commitment to performance and public speaking was showcased in *Poetry By Heart*, with Year 7 students delivering confident recitations of classic and modern poetry. Several received Highly Commended certificates for their excellent efforts.

Year 7 also took part in an engaging session with *Debate Mate*, where they learned the art of persuasive speaking and critical thinking. The workshop was lively and interactive, helping students build confidence while tackling big ideas through structured debate.

This year also saw Birkenhead School take part once more in the Rotary Club's Youth Speaks debating competition.

We were delighted to be successful in the local round, with Intermediate Team 1 winning and progressing to the next stage of the competition at Wrexham University. The standard was incredibly high across all teams, and students tackled their motions with passion and polish. Congratulations go to all involved, and especially to Jack Vicars, who coached the Intermediate teams so effectively.

The sixth annual Ghost Story for Christmas event was another standout, thanks to Mr Bell's unwavering dedication to this now well-established tradition. Featuring haunting tales penned by students from Year 7 to Upper Sixth, the evening welcomed guest readers from St Mary's College and Wirral EOTAS. Supported by legendary horror author Ramsey Campbell, the stories will appear in a new print edition illustrated by talented Upper Sixth student Emily McGrath.



Beyond performance, academic enrichment continued through the Shakespeare Study Group (Years 8–10), which this year explored themes such as revenge, comic relief, and postcolonial readings of *Caliban*. Sixth Form students also attended a thought-provoking workshop on Romantic protest writing, delivered by Dr Andrew McInnes from Edge Hill University, deepening their understanding of Coleridge's evolving political vision.



Finally, our Sixth Form wider reading group studied *King Lear*, the poetry of Keats, and Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*, while several senior students launched their own philosophy discussion circle, taking on thinkers from Descartes to Marx and Kant.

# GEOGRAPHY

**It has been another incredibly busy and successful year for the Geography Department. We were thrilled to celebrate our best ever set of GCSE results in summer 2024, and we now send our very best wishes to all our hardworking GCSE and A Level Geographers as they await their results in August.**

Their dedication over the past two years has been outstanding, and we look forward to seeing them rewarded for their efforts.

This year also saw the arrival of Mr Edwards, who has made a fantastic impact in his first year with us. His fresh ideas and infectious enthusiasm have been hugely appreciated, and we are delighted that he is staying on to help us continue to push the department to be the best it can be.

At the same time, we prepare to say a very fond farewell to the legend that is Mr Hill. After many years of dedicated service, working under three different Heads of Department, Mr Hill is moving on this summer. His contribution to the department has been immense, and he leaves behind a lasting legacy. He will be greatly missed by colleagues and students alike, and we wish him every success and happiness in his future adventures.

We are incredibly proud that Geography remains the most popular optional subject at GCSE — for the fourth year running — and we are equally excited that we are now on course to become the most popular A Level subject choice too! It is wonderful that so many students recognise the relevance and value of studying Geography in today's world.

Looking ahead, we have plenty of exciting plans to further enhance the curriculum and create even more opportunities for learning beyond the classroom. Watch this space!



Mr Roberts, Mr Hull, Mr Whitworth and Mr Edwards, at Senior Prize Giving in June

## Fieldwork

**It has been another exciting year for fieldwork in the Geography department, with students taking part in trips that brought classroom theory to life and helped develop vital skills for their GCSE and A Level studies.**

At the end of March, our Year 10 students embarked on what has become a much-anticipated rite of passage — the residential fieldwork trip to North Wales. Staying at Conwy YHA, the group enjoyed a full and varied programme.

Their first investigation focused on the river at Aber Falls, where they studied how its characteristics change downstream. Later, they visited Llanberis to assess the effectiveness of the town's regeneration and rebranding efforts.

Both investigations will support their preparation for the GCSE Paper 3 exam, where they will be tested on their understanding of fieldwork techniques and their ability to analyse data and draw conclusions.

Meanwhile, our Year 12 students headed to South Wales for a residential at the excellent Margam Discovery Centre. Set within the beautiful 850-acre Margam Park, the centre's state-of-the-art, low-carbon facilities provided

the perfect base for three nights of fieldwork and study. The park itself, home to around 600 deer — including the rare Pere David deer — offered a spectacular backdrop, even if our visit coincided with the annual deer cull! The trip gave students the opportunity to build on their practical skills and refine their ideas for their A Level NEA (Non-Examined Assessment) projects.

Both trips were a fantastic success, thanks to the enthusiasm of the students and the dedication of the staff involved. We look forward to seeing the positive impact of these experiences in their upcoming exams and coursework.



# SCIENCE

By the Science Department

## Biology

By Mr Armstrong

In June, Mr Armstrong took a group of our enthusiastic Lower Sixth biologists to the prestigious Edge Hill Biology Olympiad.

Our team – proudly named Birkenhead Supercoilers – came first place! The students performed brilliantly across a range of challenges, from measuring thermal stress in plants to identifying animal skeletons and investigating tropical diseases.

With the sun shining, it was also the perfect day to explore the Edge Hill campus in all its glory. A fantastic experience for all involved – well done to our budding biologists who took part: Sofia Grundy, Rachel Hughes, Krish Malhotra, Luca Noorpuri, Ava Nor, Lexie Daulby, Louis Hayes-Green, Holly Murphy, Tabi Oakden, Sophia Rowland.

Alongside the day-to-day classroom teaching, Mrs Brooks and Miss Rerri-Bekibele delivered a very effective GCSE revision programme. Many students took full advantage of this extra support to strengthen their grasp of key topics, and we would encourage even more to make use of it next year. These lunchtime and after-school sessions undoubtedly helped boost quite a few final grades. In March, our Lower Sixth biologists visited the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine as part of their A Level studies on Immunology. This is always a well-loved

trip—especially for the chance to tour the herpetarium and encounter Europe’s largest collection of venomous snakes! A live demonstration of snake ‘milking’ provided a memorable finale to the visit. Later in the year, the Lower Sixth headed to Ainsdale sand dunes for their fieldwork. They gathered key data on-site, which was then analysed back in the school lab. Our Upper Sixth students joined forces with the Psychology department for the annual Brain Day in December. The day included an overview of neuroanatomy and brain function, and also delved into current developments in academic neuroscience and brain imaging. We’ve also enjoyed collaborating with the Eco Club to make use of the new pond area. It’s been encouraging to spot a growing variety of invertebrates taking up residence, along with the welcome return of our frogs—always a good sign! The next stage is to plant up the pond at varying depths. If anyone reading this has an overgrown pond at home, we’d gladly accept any surplus aquatic plants.



## Cambridge Chemistry Challenge for Lower Sixth Form students

By Mrs Tharme

**This competition aims to stretch and challenge students interested in Chemistry, and provides an excellent experience for anyone considering taking their studies further.**

Mr Lindberg organised our entry in to this as an alternative to the Chemistry Olympiad, which clashes with our mock exams in January. Set by an experienced team of teachers and university chemists, it is designed to be accessible to Lower Sixth Form students but takes them significantly beyond the syllabus and encourages them to think about science in the way they would at university. Students who do well in the competition are sent

certificates of achievement, and those who perform best win an invitation to a residential camp at the University of Cambridge at the end of August. The awards are of course based on Elements, of increasing value; Copper, Silver, Gold and Roentgenium, the latter awarded to students in the top 0.5%.

**We are delighted to report the following results for 2025:**

**Copper was awarded to nine students:** Adam Jones, Alexander Clark, Eric Mei, Gabriel Mercer, Louis Hayes-Green, Oliver Coleman, Olivia Melling, Tom O'Brien, Tom Sowerby;

**Silver was awarded to four students:** Amelia Bantock, Lexie Daulby, Oscar Song; Henry White

**Gold to two students:** Michelle Liang, John Brocklebank

**Roentgenium** was awarded to Luca Noorpuri and he has been invited to the Cambridge residential at the end of August. Congratulations to all.

# SCIENCE

continued

## Engineering Advanced Tutorial Group

By Mr Mathew

The Engineering ATG supports students in exploring careers in Engineering. This academic year, the group followed a structured programme exploring all the different fields of engineering one by one.

Each session included an introduction to a branch of engineering, with both major ones like mechanical, electrical and minor ones such as environmental and petroleum covered. We then proceeded to solve problems, have debates and engage in discussions relating to that field.

We had some recurring activities, such as the annual talk by OB Ben Griffiths, talking to our students about his career in Engineering.

As the year progressed, students had an opportunity to present on an area of engineering that they had a passion in. We had some great entries this year, including how

Computational Fluid Dynamics can be used in Open Heart Surgery, the Blockchain and the History of Prosthetic Limbs.

The year finished with some wonderful trips to a variety of engineering companies. We started with NSG Environmental Ltd and Airbus Broughton, both sites that we have visited before. It was a pleasant surprise to see Charlotte Dowell, an OB and one of the first graduates of the ATG, now in the second year of her degree apprenticeship. NSG is always a fantastic site to visit; we were warmly welcomed, and the students got to walk away with some knowledge of the nuclear sector, and most importantly, some goodie bags! The final trip for this year was to Yozu Software Engineering Ltd. They allowed us to join their company briefing, and we had the chance to pick the brains of their engineers over lunch.

All in all, it has been a brilliant year for the ATG as it goes from strength to strength, and the students have had a great insight into the various fields of engineering as they begin their UCAS applications.



## Psychology

By Mrs O'Brien

**Psychology students visited Shrewsbury Prison where they took part in a history of crime and punishment tour, experiencing the development of prison processes, the modernisation of cells and the roles of guards and prisoners over time.**

An interesting lecture was presented on the role of the media in sentencing and how a jury works both in and out of the courtroom. Students also took part in prison breakout rooms in small teams, being locked in a cell and decoding clues to 'escape'. The trip enabled them to understand how psychology is embedded in the



UK judicial system and then use this knowledge in the examined topic of Forensic Psychology.

Biology and Psychology students were pleased to welcome Dr Sutton back to the School to present his 'Brain Day'. They learnt about how the brain works e.g. synaptic transmission, the role of neurotransmitters and neuroplasticity. A lecture in methods of exploring the brain and its function was supported by a sheep brain dissection so that descriptions of specific areas of the brain could be experienced first-hand. Contemporary issues in neuroscience such as neurogenetics and the use brain organoids in laboratory-based research were discussed and students were able to examine what happens when the brain becomes damaged and degenerates.



### Rebecca Lightfoot

Miss Lightfoot joined the School in September 2020 as a Science Technician. She has been an organised and innovative influence on the Physics Department during this time;

providing the foundation for practical work and Science extension outside of lessons. We wish her well as she moves onto a new role.



### Toni Crawford

Miss Crawford joined the School on 1st September 2017. In this period she has been instrumental in the design and delivery of Physics across the key stages. Most recently as Head of Physics and Junior Science, Miss Crawford has provided significant

opportunities in Physics, both in and out of the classroom. We wish her well for her Head of Science promotion in Liverpool.

## STEM Olympics

**In June, four of our top Year 9 scientists represented the school at The Grange School's annual STEM Olympics.**

Competing against 20 other schools from across the Northwest, they took part in a range of challenging events across Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Engineering, and Computer Science.



# Mathematics

By Mrs Eassie

## Girls' Olympiad

On the 25th September our Upper and Lower Sixth female mathematicians took part in the annual Girls' Mathematical Olympiad. All the students did well with particular praise going to Michelle Liang who achieved a distinction and Amelia Bantock and Olivia Melling who both achieved merits.



## Challenges

The UKMT Senior Challenge took place on 1st October 2024. All of the sixth form mathematicians took part. Five of our students received Gold certificates and progressed to a further round of competition. Conrad Baker, Michelle Liang, Oscar Song and Henry Wells all took part in the Andrew Jobbings Senior Kangaroo competition. Michelle received a merit in this competition. Luca Noorpuri progressed to the prestigious British Mathematical Olympiad competition. On the 29th January it was the turn for the Intermediate Challenge, over 40 students from year 10 and 11 took part. Congratulations to Amay Diwan and Kai Jackson who both gained the highest score in the school. On the 1st May the Junior Challenge took place, five students achieved gold certificates in this competition: Ellana Bennett, Seth Marks, Alfie Ogden and Joshua Pugh in Year 8 and Alexander Maguire from Year 7.

## Team Challenge

In February Birkenhead school hosted the regional finals of the UKMT team challenge. Gene, Nathaniel, Tharmilaan and Felix worked together on a number of mathematical rounds and came third in the Regional Finals of UKMT competition.



## Pop Quiz

On the 1st March, 2025 two teams went to Liverpool John Moores University to take part in the annual Pop Maths Quiz. An exciting day included lots of Maths questions and an evacuation of the building! When the scores were eventually totalled one of our teams was awarded joint eighth place (with the joint fifth highest score).

## Much Ado About Numbers

On Wednesday 5th March, Year 10 were taken to the Chester Storyhouse to see the stage adaptation of Rob Eastaway's book entitled Much Ado About Numbers. As the title itself suggests, this was a crossover between Mathematics and English, and looking at how the connection between the two subjects could be seen within Shakespeare's work.

The show was hosted by the author himself and was both entertaining and informative with lots of opportunities for audience participation which kept pupils engaged throughout the performance.

## Year 5 Maths day

In January, all Year 5 students spent a fun morning in Bushell Hall exploring maths through different activities. The students played maths strategy games and worked together in teams to solve different mathematical problems. All of the activities were differentiated so that all students were able to help get points for their team. Congratulations to the winners: Jacob, Sam, Connor and Charlie, all from 5R.



## Andy Oake

Mr Oake joined the School on 1st September 2022. During his time, he has been an outstanding and inventive teacher of Mathematics and a supportive form teacher. A key contributor to the co-curricular programme through his support of

Duke of Edinburgh expeditions and hockey coaching, we wish Mr Oake well as he continues his teaching career overseas.

**Visit from Dr. Andrew Brown**

In June a group of Lower Sixth students were fortunate enough to have a Mathematics tutorial with Andrew Brown, a lecturer in Pure Mathematics at Lincoln College, Oxford. During the session they heard about the expectations and requirements for an application to a top university for Mathematics. They also did some work on mathematical proof and were introduced to the theory underpinning Mr (soon to be Dr!) Brown's thesis on the construction of slow growing counter examples to the strong Eremenko conjecture.



**Ellie Hope**

Mrs Hope joined the School on 1st September 2014. During this period she has contributed greatly to the development of Maths and KS4 in particular. In addition, the leadership of the 'Be Inspired' outreach programme has been a real success. We wish Mrs Hope well as she takes on a promoted post in Runcorn.

**Classics**

**Our annual Sixth Form trip to London for Art and Classical Civilisation students was a vibrant dive into art and culture!**

Students explored the colourful works of Michael Craig-Martin at the Royal Academy, admired Van Gogh at the National Gallery, and enjoyed a stroll down Cork Street.

Meanwhile, Classics students had an inspiring visit to the British Museum, studying primary sources for their A-Level course, from the Parthenon pediments to the Head of Augustus, ending with some well-deserved retail therapy at the museum shop.



# Drama

## Blood Brothers Workshop with Stage Ed

An incredible day in January for our Year 10 Drama students, with huge thanks to Mike and Stephen, former cast members of Blood Brothers!

Both Mike and Stephen, who previously brought the roles of Sammy and Mickey to life on stage, delivered an inspiring and insightful workshop to our students today. Their professional expertise and passion for theatre shone through as they shared their experiences and knowledge of this powerful musical.



## War Horse with Q&A with Jack Lord

In September our Year 11 Drama students attended the Lowry Theatre to see War Horse for their Live Theatre Review.

Our students were also delighted to meet Jack Lord who plays Klausen on the tour who answered the students questions about acting and working in theatre.



## Shakespeare Workshop with Nick Wilkes

The Drama Department had the incredible honour of hosting actor and playwright Nick Wilkes for an unforgettable Shakespeare workshop in November.

Our talented students dove deep into the Bard's world ahead of the ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition.

Bertie and Sophie went through the first round and got through to the second. Although this was the end of the road this year, we cannot wait to host the ESU competition next year!



## National Youth Theatre

Earlier this year a number of our students picked monologues, recorded self tapes and auditioned for the National Youth Theatre



After a number of callbacks three of our Drama students were offered places at the 2023 summer course! Congratulations to Hannah, Oilly and Max!

National Youth Theatre empowers young people to tell stories and find their voices on leading stages, screens and behind the scenes. For nearly 70 years they have equipped young people with toolkits to realise their creative potentials, from Helen Mirren and Daniel Craig to Regé-Jean Page, Ed Sheeran and Florence Pugh.

## National Youth Musical Theatre and British Youth Musical Theatre

**Huge congratulations to Em in Lower Sixth and Jemima in Year 11!**

Em secured a place and was cast in National Youth Music Theatre's brand-new musical Carmilla, while Jemima earned a spot and was cast in British Youth Music Theatre's exciting production The Glamification of Loki!

This incredible achievement comes fresh off the back of their outstanding performances in our recent school production of Little Shop of Horrors, where Em dazzled as Crystal and Jemima shone as Chiffon. We are so proud of them both—watch this space for their next big performances!



## Greta and Tristan in Feature Films

Greta will play Ffion in Madfabulous which will have a World Premier this year and Tristan is playing loan in the film 'On The Sea' which will be premiering at the Edinburgh Film Festival.



## Little Shop of HORRORS

**What a fantastic weekend in London some of our incredible Little Shop of Horrors cast and backstage team had back in February! From West End wonders to blood-curdling history, they devoured every moment of theatrical magic the city had to offer!**

They kicked things off with a trip to Oliver! before stepping into the world of Mean Girls—because being fetch is a full-time job! Safe to say their theatre hearts were left FULL.

They also took a walk on the eerie side with a Jack the Ripper tour and spotted some incredible street art along the way.

While our backstage team got the behind-the-scenes tea at the National Theatre, our cast was getting down to business with two killer Little Shop workshops.

They ended the adventure with a trip to Covent Garden, some friendly competition at bowling, and, of course, karaoke! Because what's a theatre trip without belting out show tunes with your drama family?

Teacher of Drama, Mrs Groves, commented – “Safe to say London has our hearts... Incredibly proud of our talented bunch who threw themselves into every moment of this theatrical adventure. Their passion, professionalism, and energy lit up every workshop, show, and activity. These rising stars represented themselves and our production brilliantly!”



By Ms Keegan, Head of Futures & Development

## Futures support at Sixth Form: Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders

Our Futures Team has been working hard to deliver a dynamic, tailor-made skills programme that gears Sixth Form students up for the exciting challenges of Higher Education and the world of work.

With a packed schedule of interactive workshops and seminars, students dive into a variety of hands-on activities designed to supercharge their research, reading, interview skills, and provide bespoke preparation for the tests and interviews that come with their future ambitions.

We have rolled out a carousel of courses that focus on essential skills like interview techniques, presentation finesse, research methods, and critical thinking—skills that will set them apart in the application process. For those preparing for university interviews, we have tapped into our vast network of external contacts, giving students the opportunity to practice and refine their interview techniques in real-world settings, ensuring they are as prepared as possible.

Our Advanced Tutorial Groups bring together students aiming for competitive fields like medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry, engineering, and top-tier universities such as Oxford and Cambridge. Students are encouraged to decode admissions tests, prepare for interviews, navigate the college system, and make sure they are maximizing every opportunity from open days to super curricular activities.

This preparation is immensely valuable in supporting the leaders, thinkers, and innovators of tomorrow.



## Sixth Form Taster Day – A Peek Into the Future

In June, our Year 10 students flooded the Sixth Form Centre for a taste of what life after GCSEs could have in store.

This was no ordinary day - students had the chance to explore exciting new subjects like Psychology, Business, and Economics, while also chatting with current Lower Sixth students about their journey through Advanced-level studies. The Sixth Form was buzzing, with plenty of students sharing glowing reviews about the engaging and fun aspects of the courses they explored.

The goal of the day was to help students navigate their future choices, discover new subjects, and be inspired by new possibilities they had yet to imagine.

The Futures team was also on hand, offering insights into career pathways and answering any questions about the road ahead.



## Apprenticeship Breakfast

We hosted our fifth annual Apprenticeship Breakfast in February bringing together students, employers and current apprentices - many of which are Old Birkonians.

Held as part of National Apprenticeship Week, the students got the chance to informally chat over a breakfast of pastries and savoury rolls to ask any questions they had and to learn more about apprenticeship routes as an alternative to university.

We would like to thank all the employers and apprentices who attended. It was a wonderful opportunity for our students.



## Engineering ATG professional visits

The Engineering ATG group visited two engineering companies this year: NSG Environmental Ltd, a nuclear engineering consultancy based in Chorley, and Airbus, based in Broughton.

Our students were exemplary and had the opportunity to talk to real engineers, including an Old Birkonian, Charlotte, who is doing an engineering apprenticeship at Airbus. Thank you to both NSG Environmental and Airbus for welcoming us, the students got so much from their visits!

## Exploring the world of work

March saw Birkenhead School's Sixth Form Centre transformed into a hub of career inspiration, as students and parents gathered to meet an impressive line-up of professionals eager to share their expertise. The annual Careers Fair brought together a vibrant mix of industries, offering a perfect opportunity to explore future paths and get a taste of the exciting world beyond the classroom.

From Years 7 to 13, students and their families packed the event, delving into conversations with experts from all corners of the working world. Whether they were seeking insight into potential careers or simply curious about life after school, many students seized the chance to start thinking about their future. For those on the cusp of their next big step, the event was useful for making connections, securing advice on job and university applications, and brushing up on interview skills.

The fair included an abundance of industries, highlighting the endless possibilities open to young people today. Representatives from big names like Sony PlayStation, NHS, DWF Law, SEFE Energy, British Airways, Lloyds Banking Group, Atlantic Chambers, Mitchell Group, and Samsara Vision attended. Additionally, institutions like the University of Liverpool and the University Campus of Football Business were on hand to guide students on Higher Education opportunities.

A huge thank you to all the professionals who generously gave their time to share their wisdom with our students. We are also incredibly grateful to the students and parents who made the evening a success, and we hope they walked away feeling inspired and empowered for what lies ahead.

# Nicholls Lecture Series

#inspiringtalksseries



By Ms Smeaton, Head of Sixth Form

The Nicholls Lecture Series, named after eminent Old Birkonian, Lord Nicholls of Birkenhead, is a Sixth Form enrichment programme about which we feel justifiably proud.

Affording students an opportunity to listen to a variety of thought-provoking lectures on a range of topics, it provides them with valuable insights into the career paths of professionals from all walks of life. To give you a flavour of the sorts of subjects covered, this year we have delved into the worlds of food product design and civil engineering. Experts in the fields of medicine, finance and the Arts have inspired us. We have welcomed back Old Birkonians as well as new visitors to the School.

This year's speakers and topics have included:

**Ms Katharine Rutherford, Graduate Stakeholder Engagement Consultant**

*This is what Chat GPT said about my Degree: Mapping Out Careers in Geography and Social Science*

**Mr Jonathan Bagley, Managing Director, Trustland Connection**

*Why Uncertainty about your Career Path is Okay and How Exploration can Enrich the End Results*

**Mr Andrew Crofts, Ghost Writer**

*Making a Career as a Freelance Writer*

**Dr Keri Nixon, Consultant Forensic Psychologist**

*Forensic Psychology and the Assessment of Risk*

**Dr James Butcher, Scholarly Publishing Consultant**

*Scholarship in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*

**Mr Martin Wilson (Old Birkonian), Head of Content, Researcher Services, Taylor & Francis Publishers**

*US Elections: Truth from Fiction*

**Professor Tim Cable, Director of the Institute of Sport, Manchester Metropolitan University**

*The Science Behind Developing Elite Athletes*

**Dr Scott Murray, Consultant Cardiologist**

*Outsmart your Heart*

**Mrs Joanna Kingston-Davies, Co-Founder and Co-Owner of the MAPD Group**

*Learning to Dance in the Rain: Taking Risks, Finding your 'Why' and Loving your Career*

**Dr Emily Clarke, Consultant in Genitourinary Medicine & HIV**

*A History of HIV: Past, Present & Future*

**Mr Michael McGrath (Old Birkonian), Special Adviser, Child Safety Online Taskforce, NSPCC**

*Confusion, Chaos and Clarity – Lessons in Life & Career*

**Mr Saul Marks, Company Director, Brother's Wish Genealogy Service**

*Genealogy via Psychology, Teaching & Archives*

**Professor Shabbar Jaffar, Director, UCL Institute for Global Health**

*Trends in the Health of People Globally*

**Mr Paul Kenny (Old Birkonian), Charity Trustee**

*Change a Child's Life*

**Mr Oliver Gilding (Old Birkonian), Head of Innovation & Licensing, Iceland**

*Frozen Fortunes*

**Ms Katie Swanick, Operations Manager, JN Bentley (Operations & Construction Contractor)**

*Are We Really Still Talking About Women in Construction?*

**Mr Chris Wells, Retired Professional Mechanical Engineer; Lecturer in Engineering Management, Academic Sub-Dean, Faculty of Engineering, University of Liverpool**

*A Life-Changing Adventure in Zambia*

**Mr Tim Carruthers & Mr Leigh McGinley (Old Birkonians)**

*From Bouldering to Big Wall Climbing*



# Sixth Form Last Day

Sixth Formers took part in the annual tradition of dressing up on the final day before study leave.



# Sixth Form Leavers



# Class of 2025



## Leavers 2025

Holly Anderson, Myles Arnott, Emilia (Emme) Ashfield, Ben Baker, Kate Ballantyne, Sadie Berry, Ben Booth, Sophia Campbell, Evie Clewes, Gemma Clewes, James Coghlan, Cara Curtis, Ben Cuthbertson, Shona Davies, Samson de Bacq Rose-Bannon, Stanislas (Stan) Dugeiet, Finlay (Finn) Eymond, Kate Farmer, Ruby Fenton, Emily Groves, Perna Gupta, Louis Hancock, Amelia Hennell, Joseph (Joey) Herbert, Charlotte Hodgson, James Huxley, Zoe Janikiewicz, Charles (Charlie) Jones, Holly Jones, Henry Jones, Mia Jones, Amelia Kelly, Tom Lindberg, Aaron Mackie, Aly Ashraf (Aly) Maklad, William Malpas, Madeline (Maddy) McAlister, Emily McGrath, Millie McTear-Smith, Matilda Meisner, Daniel (Dan) Moss, Daisy Murphy, Harlan Murray, Max O'Brien, Patrick (Paddy) Pythian, Harry Pickering, Luca Quayle, Scarlett Quinn, Sebastian Richmond, Tabitha (Tabi) Rushton, Harvin Sandhu, Emilia (Mimi) Sedgewick, Lillie Smith, Cameron Steel, Daniel (Dan) Sweetman, Harry Tansey, Nathan Thrikawala, Benjamin (Ben) Tottley, Jack Varis, Luke Weston, Jacob Wilby, Alexander (Alex) Williams, Calum Wilson, Max Wright.

# Sixth Form Beyond the Curriculum

By Alice Jones

When you think about Sixth Form, it's easy to just picture textbooks, revision, and endless coursework. But here, it's so much more than that. In addition to the regular academic curriculum, we're lucky to have a range of exciting opportunities that genuinely prepare us for life after school.

One of the most exciting parts of Sixth Form life is the Beyond the Curriculum (BTC) programme. BTC gives us the chance to build core life skills that we don't always get to practise in normal lessons. We've had sessions on things like critical thinking, research methods, presentation skills, and even interview prep. Honestly, I didn't realise how useful these things would be until I started preparing for university applications!

Enhancing this support is the dedicated Futures Team, who provide expert guidance on all aspects of UCAS applications and career planning. Whether you're thinking about

Oxbridge, Medicine, Engineering, or looking at top degree apprenticeships, there's tailored support every step of the way. It's reassuring to know we're not doing it all alone.

One of my favourite things we get to do though, is outside the classroom. As part of a Coaching and Leadership opportunity with Mrs Jones, some of us work with the reception children and it's honestly the most heart-warming experience. Helping the little ones with activities and seeing their faces light up when they remember your name is something special. It's not just about them either; working with younger students has massively helped build our communication skills and confidence. Plus, it really brings the whole school community closer together and form relationships across all the years.

So yes, we study hard and push ourselves academically - but what makes Sixth Form here different is how well-rounded it is. It's not just about grades; it's about growing into capable, confident people ready to take on the future.



## *Christopher Copple – reflection on a year in the sixth form*

*"I feel that my move to study A levels at Birkenhead School is one of the best decisions that I have made for my education. The support and opportunities available here are unrivalled by other Sixth Forms in the area. The transition from my old school was straightforward, due largely to the friendly and welcoming nature of the teachers and my peers.*

*Since joining the School, I have enjoyed a wide array of co-curricular activities. Badminton Club is 'a great way to end the week', playing a relaxing game with friends I have made through the club. Through the Rocketry Club, I have had the opportunity to apply various processes from 'product design', making the rocket building process more in-depth and enjoyable. It was rewarding to work as a team, test flying and improving aspects of the rocket, based on observations from the test flights. We spent time as a team scrutinising every detail, refining the rocket from the aesthetics of its design to the shape of the fins. This team effort cumulated in a completed rocket that flew in the North Region of UKROC, placing in the top 10 entries. This was a*

*great day filled with many rocket launches and much excitement.*

*I have much enjoyed my studies this year, finding them both challenging and rewarding. My teachers are always happy to help me reach a deeper understanding of their subject and there have been a variety of trips to help students further develop their knowledge. These bring the subject to life and help with answering examination questions.*

*The co-curricular programme offered at Birkenhead School far surpasses that which I have previously experienced. The "Beyond the Curriculum" weekly sessions cover various topics to help students in later life, such as Critical Thinking, Presentation Skills, and Interview Skills. All of these are beneficial for the world of work. The Advanced Tutorial Groups (ATG) are aimed at specific areas of interest such as engineering, apprenticeships, medicine and Oxbridge. Each ATG develops skills crucial to each area. On top of this, the Nicholls Lecture series covers multiple topic areas to highlight different career paths and has helped me understand that every decision, regarding my future does not need to be made immediately.*

*As my time as a Lower Sixth student comes to an end, I look back at the year and feel a sense of achievement and belonging within the School community."*

# A Level Results 2025

Students at Birkenhead School were again celebrating strong A Level results in August, and now proceed on to higher education opportunities, competitive apprenticeships and Gap years at top institutions and destinations both in the UK and worldwide.

Headmaster, Paul Vicars, comments: 'It is with mixed feelings that we see this year's Upper Sixth depart. They are a hugely talented and happy cohort, one known for their diversity and breadth of contributions across so many areas of School life, be it sporting, music or numerous creative pursuits. It is these experiences and grasped opportunities that have been pivotal to the pathways they now take, guided by the bespoke guidance from the School's Futures Team. Over 95% of students who have chosen university or apprenticeships as their pathway have secured places: these range from apprenticeships with the BBC and multinational law firms, to degree choices as diverse as Aeronautical Engineering to Astrophysics, Classics to Criminology, Medicine to Media Production, and Stage Management to Sports Management.'

'The results and destinations are testament to the hard work of the students and to the professionalism and talents of all staff. I also wish to pay tribute to our families whose support of the School and the inspiring education we aim to provide, leads to deserved outcomes like today's. I truly believe that an

investment in a child's education is the very best investment families can ever make, and a Birkenhead School education, recognised by the Sunday Times as 2025 Independent Secondary School of the Year in the North-West, is one where we are committed to all-round excellence, and balance.'

Paul Vicars continues 'I say this every year, and make no apology for doing so again, but while we rightly celebrate the pathways these students now take, perhaps the most important outcome from a Birkenhead School education is the self-belief, resilience and skills that these students now take with them on their individual journeys. Many have overcome considerable adversity along the way and knowing that they can overcome challenges and still deliver at the highest level will stand them in great stead as they now join the extensive global network of Old Birkonians.'

'These days, the very best schools deliver on all fronts – strong academic results alongside a richness of sporting, musical and creative opportunities that provide students with the leadership and life skills to be happy, confident and prepared for life beyond school. These remain the hallmarks of a Birkenhead School education and one that is leading to increased competition for Senior School places at the Year 7 entry point.'



# GCSE Results 2025

**Following on from the A Level outcomes, Thursday 21st August was the turn of the Year 11's to celebrate their GCSE achievements.**

Headmaster, Paul Vicars, commented: 'It has been a privilege to witness the joy and relief as students and families have received their results this morning. The message this year continues to be one of celebration of the strong results the students have achieved, whilst also recognising the quality and breadth of this cohort's contribution to the School community which has been outstanding over so many years. These students have immersed themselves in the co-curricular life of the School providing them with the all-important balance and perspective to successfully meet life's challenges in the years ahead. Today's students include those with international sporting honours and the highest performing arts accolades, whose achievements outside of the classroom now sit equitably alongside excellent academic achievements.'

'Almost half of all grades gained were 7-9 with the majority of students now proceeding into the School's Sixth Form, where

Grade 7s or above in chosen A Level subjects are required for automatic entry. The Sixth Form continues the School's focus on knowing each individual, developing strong core values and nurturing wider interests and skills that develop broad minded and ambitious learners. In addition to the regular academic curriculum, these students will enjoy a range of further opportunities designed to provide the launchpad and mindset for success after school. These include the Beyond the Curriculum programme (BTC) which develops core skills including critical thinking, presentation, research and interview skills, alongside bespoke Oxbridge, medical, engineering and apprenticeship pathway preparation and support from the dedicated Futures Team. Many Sixth Formers particularly enjoy the volunteering, mentoring and leadership opportunities that are integral to the warm community that characterises an all-through school.'

Paul Vicars continues 'I truly believe that an investment in a child's education is the very best investment families can ever make, and a Birkenhead School education, recognised by the Sunday Times as 2025 Independent Secondary School of the Year in the North-West, is one where we are committed to all-round excellence, and balance.'



# Staff Community

By Mr Vicars

**As the School has grown in recent years, so too has the staff community required to support and inspire our children, students and families. Our staff body now numbers close to 200, perhaps unsurprising when considered against a student roll of approx. 950, and who, ever year, add to the global Old Birkenian community, of whom over 5000 are active OBs and support the School in so many generous ways.**

There will be times within a School's cycle that there is greater staff leave, and this year, is one of those times. I pay particular tribute to staff below who have made special contributions to the School and the lives of those within the community.

Within every year's edition of In Focus, a word commonplace within articles is 'community'. It is a particular feature of the School that staff develop a special bond with Birkenhead School, its beautiful site, and the sense of community that results, and many devote a significant period of their career to the development of children and students who are fortunate to study and grow here.

No staff have encapsulated being such integral parts of the community more than two members of our Estates Team who retired this year and deserve special mention – Dave O'Brien and Trevor Roberts. While neither would want many words written about them, it is a measure of their warmth and importance to the community that so many OBs, themselves with children now at the School, enquire about Dave and Trevor, speaking fondly about their own times at Birkenhead School. After a collective 90+ years of service to the School, it was a privilege to recognise their contribution with long service awards at Prize-Giving in July 2024, and we wish them well in their retirements.



Communities rely on strong core values and no staff members have visibly demonstrated these more openly than Graham Hill and Elizabeth Reeve. Over his 16 years at Birkenhead School, Mr Hill has taught across the humanities, mainly within the Geography department, and his passion for fieldwork has inspired generations of School geographers. Such a belief in the benefits of outdoor education naturally led to oversight of the Duke of Edinburgh programme, and, more latterly, much-loved Sixth Form Beyond the Curriculum sessions, including cooking and car maintenance! A greatly caring Sixth Form tutor, we will greatly miss his values and support of his fellow staff members and wish him well. Elizabeth Reeve joined the School in 2003 as School Librarian, and over the past 22

years, generations of staff and students have benefitted from her supportive approach to all. This natural pastoral approach led to her appointment as Assistant Head of Overdale approx. a decade ago, and for many years her guidance extended to leading the School's careers provision. As Librarian, Mrs Reeve was instrumental in the extensive refurbishment of the Library a couple of years ago, and we thank her for the considerable legacy she leaves in so many areas.



Legacy can be an overused word, but it is right that I pay tribute to the contributions of Kirsten Pankhurst, Deputy Head and Philip Robinson, Director of Music. Often mentioned together for the inspirational musical productions they established as a key part of the School's co-curricular offering, generations of OBs are indebted to both Mrs Pankhurst and Mr Robinson for the confidence and passion they have taken into life beyond Birkenhead after enjoying musical productions of West End quality.



Many of the School's performers learnt their musical discipline within the School's Chapel Choir, and this almost unique offering for a day school – singing weekly Sunday Evensong and leading the congregation's worship – will perhaps be Mr Robinson's other significant legacy. After over a decade in role as Director of Music,

having joined in 2013, we wish him well and thank him for the foundations laid in such a key area of the School's life.



Mrs Pankhurst's legacy and list of achievements are considerable, and her promotion to her own headship, that of Hulme Grammar in Oldham from the Summer Term onwards was long overdue. A few lines here will do scant justice to her contributions, but as Deputy Head, the School's Pastoral and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and

with responsibility for our co-curricular provision, her influence has been considerable. Her oversight of the School's sporting programme, and particularly that of girls', has led to the School's 'pushing above our weight' label, and despite the

many demands on her time, she has remained a passionate English teacher and a huge advocate for supporting teenagers through the many challenges of contemporary life. This desire to support and provide opportunity was perhaps most clearly exemplified by the launch of the 'Be Inspired' programme in 2021 to inspire local Year 5 children through a Summer Term Saturday programme of co-curricular activities – a key part of the work we do as part of the Wirral community. We wish Mrs Pankhurst and her family well in the knowledge that we will stay in touch, and thank her for the considerable legacy she leaves behind.

We also say goodbye this year to a number of longstanding Heads of Department. We thank Liz Grey (Head of Religious Studies) and Peter Lindberg (Head of Science & Chemistry) who started back in 2003, Duncan Bell (Head of Academic IT), who joined in 2004, and Stephen Hope (Head of Maths – started in 2007) for devoting so much of their career to leading successful academic departments at Birkenhead School. The foundations of learning they have provided, and the leadership of their departments, have contributed greatly to the academic success of the School and we thank them for their many years of service.



## Georgia Birks

Georgia Birks had seven fun-filled years as a member of the Pre-Prep team and will be remembered for her creative and caring approach in all that she did. She was a real enthusiast for outdoor learning and imaginative play, and was particularly adept at turning children's games into meaningful learning opportunities. Her positivity and friendly nature ensured that every child in her care felt valued and motivated, and Georgia took great pleasure in preparing children for a successful transition to Reception. We are delighted to have supported Georgia in her continuous professional development and are so proud that she has achieved her goal of qualifying as an Early Years Teacher. We wish her all the best in her exciting new appointment as an EY Teacher at Church Drive Primary School, but will miss her very much.

We also said goodbye to the following staff during the year and wish them all the best

Lucy Wu, Early Years Practitioner

Elaine Pryce, Janitor

Joanna Bratherton, Early Years Practitioner

Tim Hughes, Janitor

Jeanine Curtis, Office Administrator



# THE OLD BIRKONIAN SOCIETY

## OLD BIRKONIAN SOCIETY BULLETIN



### Chairman's Report

By Will Roberts

The first event of the academic year was the under-25s drinks which took place in early September at the Library in Oxtan village.

This was an ideal opportunity for recent leavers (and therefore new

OBs) to reconnect and reminisce about school life. This is now a regular diary event and is proving popular amongst the younger elements of the society's membership.

The OBS golf day returned on 4th October with Dave Edwards (82-89) winning the Hoblyn Trophy, Dave Ashton (89-96) the Hoblyn Prize, and John Hargreaves (73-80) the Gross Prize. The AGM took place the following day with nothing controversial on the agenda. The President, Pippa McKeown, chaired the meeting and read out my report in my absence. Meanwhile, the accounts were presented by Kirsten Stewart in the absence of our Treasurer, Rob Young.

The London dinner took place on Friday 8th November and again was held in the Houses of Parliament. We had another strong turnout which saw 150 OBs and parents enjoy a fabulous dinner in a unique setting. It was also very pleasing to see a wide range of age groups represented at the dinner, with a noticeably high proportion of leavers from within the last ten years. Our thanks to Lord Hall of Birkenhead for agreeing to sponsor the event and it is pleasing to note we are returning to the same location for this year's dinner, details of which can be found on Birkonian Connect. Meanwhile, the Bazaar drew in the usual crowds at the end of the month.

Monday 11th November was the school's Remembrance Day service. This was a very poignant affair with all pupils from senior school gathering on the school field while the names of OBs lost in the Great War were read out by the heads of school. Refreshments were provided by the school afterwards. I would strongly urge any local OBs to attend the event; again, please register through Birkonian Connect.

Two more OB Liverpool Business Lunches took place over the course of the academic year: one in late November 2024 and the other one in May 2025. Both were held at the Restaurant Bar and Grill and were well attended. The average age continues to fall as recent leavers continue to see value in mingling with more experienced members of the society as well as enjoying a very cost-effective lunch!

Unfortunately, the traditional Christmas rugby fixture against Birkenhead Park fell victim to the weather again. Meanwhile, Council meetings continued to be held on campus and of course the Society continued to support pupils at the school through 6th form scholarships which I know were appreciated.

There continues to be a lot of hard work and investment going into the Society with Council members working alongside Carol Keegan and the Headmaster to continue to make progress. Birkonian Connect is the most obvious sign of these efforts and I would encourage all OBs to sign up and make use of this facility as it evolves. Registering and paying for events is via this platform which makes the whole process more efficient while members can keep up to speed with news and events.

We are also trying to make a more inclusive Society that appeals to all ages and genders. The Council members are all working very hard in voluntary roles to make something special for both existing and future generations of OBs. We are aiming to put in place firm foundations to allow the Alumni network to operate within a modern, efficient system. We want a Society that enhances the experiences of all its members by focusing on three pillars: Social, Careers and Networking but this needs the input and engagement of the membership.

Meanwhile, we are aiming to interact more with staff and sixth formers to see what might work for the latest cohort of OBs when they leave school. In my opinion, it is imperative to have a strong alumni network to add to the vast list of benefits children have by attending Birkenhead School, especially in the current political environment. I strongly believe the OB society adds extra value for pupils and their parents.

As ever, on behalf of the membership, I would like to thank my fellow Council members that work so hard on behalf of the Society as well as the Society's President, the Headmaster, the Archives department, and all the other voluntary leaders of our Group activities. Lastly, a special mention for Carol Keegan and Michelle Wardman; very little OB related business would get done without them!

I look forward to seeing fellow OBs in the coming year at the various Society events that we are organising.

**Will Roberts (1982-1996),  
Chairman of the Old Birkonian Society**

## News & Events

### 1st XI Cricket Match v Marylebone Cricket Club

Wednesday 18th June saw another of the School's annual cricket matches against the MCC, which took place on the main School cricket field.

The MCC are a team of adults, some of whom have played to a very high level, and consist of some of our Old Birkenian's, who play against current pupils.

If you would like to read more about the MCC please visit <https://www.lords.org/mcc/the-club/our-history>

It was a good game and a good challenge for the School's current team on the day, overall the results were: MCC got 178-6 declared with Birkenhead School being bowled out for 159.

Some of School's team players included Teddy, who was the pick of the bowlers with 2 for 31 off 8 overs, whilst Year 10 Shiv bowled really well, 12 overs 1 wicket, 44 runs. Also, Krish achieved 67 runs and Kai 31.

Included in the MCC team was OB Madeleine Arthur, a 2020 leaver. Madeleine will be touring with the MCC's International Team playing in Brazil in November, to which we wish her and the whole team the best of luck!



### OB Climbs Mount Everest for Charity

OB Aaron Anderson, 22 and dad Paul Anderson, 56, from West Kirby, made it to the summit on Monday (May 27 2024) via the notorious north-east ridge in Tibet.

The pair took on the challenge to raise funds for Dementia UK in honour of Paul's mother and Aaron's grandmother, who has vascular dementia, and managed to raise an incredible £85k for the charity.

Paul said the Chinese Tibetan Mountain Association "seemed to think" they were the first father and son to accomplish the hard to access route from Tibet "which was really cool".

He said: "It was not something we'd thought about." Aaron said: "We had no idea." The pair said there were plenty of challenges due to the extreme altitude, which means climbers have to prepare the body to summit the mountain in stages from each camp.

Paul said: "You shock the body into producing more red blood cells to account for the lack of oxygen."

Aaron said there was "a lot of time sat in the tent with not much to do". However, Paul said it was "like a dream" when they got to the top. "It was surreal," he added.

To see more information, pictures and details of how you can donate please visit <https://www.instagram.com/everestsummitchallenge24>



## Old Birkonian Golf Day

By Ms Wardman

Another sell out for this year's OB Golf Day at the RLG and what a fantastic day it was at the Royal Liverpool Golf Club in Hoylake.

Thank you to all those to attended and we hope to see you at the next Golf event in 2025. For this year however the results were very close but the Prize Winners from the Golf Day are:-

Hoblyn Tropy Winner - Dave Edwards (82-89), Runner-up - Andy Last (79-86), Hoblyn Prize Winner - Dave Ashton (89-96), Runner-up - Ian Ashton (82-89), Gross Prize Winner - John Hargreaves (73-80), Putting Cup Winner - Jon Morgan (70-77).



## Under-25s OB Drinks

Another fantastic OB event, there was a great atmosphere with lots of young OBs from a range of years catching up.

With special thanks to all at The Library for hosting us, and in particular OBs Jess Basnett and Kai Watson behind the bar. Good luck to those who are back to university soon and we look forward to the next one.

Thank you to the OBS for sponsoring the event.



## OB Tom Cross becomes a Kings Counsel

OB Tom Cross became a Kings Counsel (KC) on 24th March at a ceremony in Westminster Great Hall and received his Letters Patent from the Lord Chancellor.

Tom later took his seat as a KC at an ancient ceremony at the Royal Courts Of Justice when he paid his respects to the Lady Chief Justice (The Rt Hon Baroness Carr of Walton on the Hill - Dame Sue Carr) in her capacity as Head of the Judiciary of England and Wales and President of the Courts of England and Wales. Dame Sue is the first woman to hold this office since the inception of the role in the 13th century .

Tom practices public law in the administrative courts. His practice is varied and includes acting for and against the Government. He was recently involved with challenging the delay in bringing into force the Freedom Of Speech Act. Tom will be in the news again shortly as he prepares to challenge the Government's VAT on private school fees focused on the adverse impact caused to SEND students and families.

Tom is shown in this photograph with his father OB Andy Cross who was Chair of Governors until the end of last year, his brother OB Adam Cross who was recently appointed Deputy Head of Berkhamsted School, mum Brenda and sister Nicky (an actress who has taught during the pandemic at the school and helped in drama productions). We are delighted to hear of this progress.



## OBS Leavers Gifts

Our OBS continue to gift the Upper Sixth leavers with a branded hoodie and water bottle, we hope they enjoy!



# Old Birkonian Society Annual London Dinner

By Shelly Wardman

On Friday 8th November 2024 we returned to The Houses of Parliament for the 2024 OBS Annual London Dinner. The venue really is awe inspiring, and created another memorable experience.

An excellent attendance of over 130 OBs with over 30 of these being our under 25's; this was amazing to see so many of our younger members attend and be part of another night nobody will forget. Our grateful thanks to OB Lord Tony Hall CBE for the opportunity to host the dinner in such a prestigious venue, and also to Will Roberts (Chair of the OB Society), Paul Vicars (Headmaster of Birkenhead School), OBS council members, archives representatives and all who attended for helping to make the evening a huge success.



# In Memoriam

We offer condolences to the families and friends of Old Birkonians of whose passing we have been informed during the past twelve months.

Name	Years at School	Died	Name	Years at School	Died
M Rhodes	1978-85	2024	A Hanson	1952-1959	2025
R Skelly	1957-65	2024	D Blythe	1945-51	2024
D Cameron	Staff	2024	J Cushing	1948-60	2025
J Berry	1951-62	2024	W Bender	1941-45	2025
J Carruthers	1950-63	2024	I Smith	1940-46	2025
W Lee	1957-64	2024	M Lund	1952-60	2025
T Sanderson	1980-94	2024	A Edwards	1947-52	2025
H Manley	1945-51	2025	C Lund	1954-61	2025
W Richarrds	1951-58	2025	M Wetherell	1968-75	2025
M Owen	1955-60	2025	D Hope	1945-51	2025

## Alan Hanson

We are sorry to have to report the recent death, at the age of 84, of Alan Hanson.

An Old Birkonian (1952-59), Alan read Physics at Liverpool University, and his first teaching post was at MTS, Crosby. In 1970 he returned to his alma mater, where he stayed for thirty years, taking over from Harold McCready as Head of Department in 1980.

Alan was an extremely effective teacher, much respected by his colleagues and deservedly popular with pupils. It was not unknown for there to be more than sixty takers of Physics to A Level in a year group, with OHP's widely in use to ensure that the syllabus was covered efficiently. Outside the classroom, Alan was a very keen and committed Officer in the Naval Section of the CCF.

Some years ago, Alan and his wife emigrated to Melbourne to be nearer their sons Mark and Tim, themselves OBs, and their families.



## J Alastair Carruthers

Alastair attended the Prep and Big School 1950-63, was a prefect and represented School in rugby and athletics. He studied medicine at Brasenose College, representing the college at rowing.

He joined the Faculty of the Department of Dermatology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver 1977. He was instrumental in setting up the Canadian Society for Dermatological Surgery in 1983. With his wife, Dr Jean Carruthers, he discovered the cosmetic use of Botox and In 2012 they both received the Philip Frost and Eugene Van Scott Leadership award from the American Academy of Dermatology.

He was an avid sportsman - skied worldwide, biked through Europe and Canada, ran marathons, scuba-dived, sailed internationally and golfed. His obituary in the New York Times covered over a full page.

Alastair sadly passed away 19th August 2024.



## Gary Hopkins

We were shocked and saddened to hear of the recent death of Gary Hopkins, at the age of 71.

Gary was educated at Wallasey Technical Grammar School (now The Mosslands School) and Christ's College, Cambridge, where he read English. After teaching initially at Wrekin College, he was appointed to teach English at School in 1982. He quickly proved himself an inspirational and popular teacher of the subject and in 1990 was appointed Head of Junior School, to succeed Michael Harrison.

He was later appointed by John Clark to the post of Head of Sixth Form, which he held until he retired in 2013.

A man for whom the adjective suave might well have been invented, Gary found it easy to establish excellent relations with pupils of all ages. Over the years he produced several plays in Bushell Hall and was later responsible for entering a team to take part in the English Youth Parliament Competition. Hundreds of pupils who were fortunate enough to come into contact with him will remember him with respect and affection.

## Barry Owen

Michael Barry Owen OBE (OB 1955 - 60) sadly passed away on 5th April 2025, aged 82.

While at School, Barry was a House Prefect, a member of the 1st XI Cricket team, the Athletics team and the 2nd XV Rugby team. He was also the secretary of the F E Society, the School's debating group.



Following School, Barry attended the University of Liverpool to read Economics and Economic History. Shortly thereafter he founded the Liverpool-based property company, Mason Owen, with Geoff Owen, in 1967, which resulted in a long and successful career.

He was awarded an OBE in 2009 for services to business and charity in Liverpool, and was also a fellow of Liverpool John Moores University.

A long-standing supporter of Birkenhead School Foundation Trust, Barry's name is printed on the Benefactor's Board in Bushell Hall to mark his significant contributions over the years, for which we are very grateful.

Described as a 'true gentleman whose enthusiasm inspired a generation', Barry is survived by his wife Susanne, six children and seventeen grandchildren.

## Donald Cameron

It was with considerable sorrow that we learnt of the death, in August 2024, of Donald Cameron, after a short illness.

A proud Scot, Donald was educated at Edinburgh Academy and Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. After several years teaching in Kenya, where he met his wife Gillian, he was appointed at School to teach Physics on the retirement of Frank Ellis in 1982. Besides teaching a full timetable, he was for twenty-six years Examinations Officer. It was fortunate indeed that someone of his administrative ability was on hand to oversee the arrangements for all public examinations: many were the changes over the years as GCSE was introduced in 1988 and A Level gave way to the AS/A2 system in 2000/2001. As if this was not enough of a challenge for him, for many years he masterminded the arrangements for pupils to take part in the Community Service scheme.

He retired in 2008 and later moved to Cambridge to be nearer his daughter and lived in an apartment overlooking the River Cam.



## Graham Richards

Professor Graham Richards OB (1951-1958), sadly passed away on 11th February 2025.

Graham attended Greasby Primary before coming to Birkenhead School from 1951-1958, where he obtained A Levels in Maths, Physics and Chemistry.

In his School days, he was awarded the Divinity Prize, was a House and School Prefect, and a member of the CCF.

After distinguishing himself at School, he went on to study Chemistry at Brasenose College, Oxford, and subsequently spent his career at Oxford where he became Head of the Chemistry Department.

He was involved in the creation of spin-out companies, including being founder and chair of Oxford Drug Design. Graham was a pioneer in the field of computer-aided molecular design for industrial applications, particularly in pharmaceuticals.

Graham helped found Oxford University Innovation, the university's technology transfer company, and cofounded its first spin-off, the successful Oxford Molecular, which provided software to researchers.

In 2004, the American Chemical Society gave Graham its Award for Computers in Chemical and Pharmaceutical Research. In 2010 he was appointed as vice president of the Royal Society of Chemistry, and in 2011 elected as fellow of the Learned Society of Wales. In 2018, Graham was elected to a Fellowship of The Royal Society, and also received the Richard J Bolte Sr Award for Supporting Industries.

Graham gained a DPhil from the University of Oxford and was the author of 350 scientific articles and 20 books.

Graham continued to be involved in School life, being instrumental in fundraising activity and the creation of Birkenhead School Foundation Trust. He was also President of the Old Birkonian Society from 2007-09.

Graham was keen to support aspiring Chemistry students and organised visits to Oxford University for them to view the facilities, as well as providing individual advice and guidance on their university applications.

We are grateful to Graham for all his contributions to the Birkenhead School community, and he will be missed by many.



## Valerie Ann Levitt

Members of staff and Old Birkonians associated with the school during the 1980s will remember a 'golden age' of costumes for school plays which began, quite by chance, with a request to Valerie from the late Prep teacher, Miss Joan Lockhart, for help with making complex cardboard masks for a performance by the Prep of Captain Beaky in 1980. She enjoyed herself enormously, and the next year she designed and made some costumes for a Junior School production of two short plays written and produced by Martin Downes. And so, it began! Michael Harrison next asked her for some serious designing and fabrication for his stupendous 1982 production of Hamlet, in the then-new 'New Hall' (now Bushell Hall), starring Martin Downes as Claudius, together with pupils of the school and the former Birkenhead High School. The local newspaper lauded it as excellent all-round with fulsome praise.

Valerie studied sculpture and fashion design at Leeds College of Art, and dress design and millinery at the House of Worth in Paris, teaching fashion and millinery in her twenties. When Daniel and I were born, she put everything aside, apart from a few years when she ran a mail-order business providing part-made designed clothing for women, which they would then complete with the materials and patterns supplied. But she remained a housewife at heart, until she inadvertently became expert in theatre costumery based on her previous experience. After Hamlet, she went on to provide hundreds of costumes, on a shoestring budget, with materials sourced through the Birkenhead business of another OB, Michael Abakhan, for such productions as Charley's Aunt, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Don Juan, The Rivals, La Cantarice Chauve, Andorra, The Little Sweep, A Headline for the Sultan, Snowy Whiteman & the Seven Dwarfs, and more, working with Keith Stevens, Michael Harrison, Gary Hopkins, Martin Downes, Michael Jackson, Lionel Austin, and many others. In the mid-eighties, after encountering the then Liverpool Grand Opera Company (later Merseyside Opera) when they gave a concert at the school, she was 'picked up' to make costumes for several of their productions too.

She was helped at the school by an ever-changing team of seamstresses, which included Mrs. Brew, Mrs. Edwards, Mrs. McDonald, Mrs. Wilding, Mrs. Whitford, Mr. Champion, Mrs. Steele and more. She 'retired' in 1988, having built a large wardrobe of hundreds of costumes, wigs, headwear, and costume props, stored under covers, on racks and shelves and catalogued in the huge attic of Number 17 Kingsmead Road.

She went on designing and sewing her own clothes and passed her delight in sewing to two of her grandchildren (one via each son!). She passed away peacefully, after a brief period of Alzheimer's Disease, on 9th January 2023.

Written by Michael (1973-1987) & Daniel Levitt (1976-1989).



## Julie Ambrose

By Ian Caddick, Catering Manager

Julie has been the beating heart of the catering team for 27 years. She brought inspiration and an unmatched work ethic, and was dedicated to creating a workplace where colleagues became friends and where excellent, personal service was always delivered to the children.

Julie was a shining beacon in the kitchen, making everyone's day brighter no matter how hard it might have been. She always saw the best in people and believed they could be guided with her patience and understanding.

She was there with her sister Tracy for every hospitality event, and even after a 14-hour shift she remained upbeat, ready to help others, and always perfectly turned out with her bright red lipstick. With Julie's infectious laughter, you could hear Julie before you saw her, and her positive spirit made people love being around her.

Julie left a spark of light in everyone she met. The catering team will carry that spark forward by showing warmth and kindness to others, just as Julie did throughout her life. She will never be forgotten, and she leaves behind a lasting legacy of love, friendship, and joy. She will be deeply missed and always remembered fondly.



# A Tribute to Father Mark

We were saddened by the loss of Father Mark, our former School Chaplain, in February.

Below we share the tribute from Mr Vicars, Headmaster, that was shared at a special memorial service held in the School Chapel on Sunday 4th May.



It is with great sadness that we find ourselves here today, but a great privilege to be asked to provide a short Tribute to Father Mark – thank you Sarah, thank you James.

And a heartfelt thank you to the Choir. What a role you have played, both today and at St. Paul's - great musicianship and immense courage shown in equal measure.

My first tribute, as ever with Father Mark, is through colour and socks – it was never going to be anything else - and I suspect Mark would be smiling in that infectious style of his, looking out from the pulpit here seeing the rainbow of colours – one of his favourite things. Thank you for the splashes of colour everywhere.

When I sat down to draft a few words over recent weeks, I was initially at a loss to know where to start, how to structure my thoughts, how to fit them all into a mere few minutes - because how can you do justice for a man so passionate about his faith, his family, so endlessly positive, so selflessly caring towards others within this community, and in turn his parish - in summary, a man so invested in, and in turn loved by his communities.

So in the end I gave up trying to over-structure my thoughts, and decided I would just start with how Father Mark used to start almost every meeting we had. Because it summed up the man, and his values, which he lived out every day.

'How are you. I mean, how are you, really.'

Here was a man of whom there was nothing superficial about his expression of care, his inquiry about your wellbeing. His was a genuine deep care, a care that I know was cherished, even relied upon by so many children and staff, as they dealt with life's challenges, many of them far lesser than his own.

And he made people feel, through time, words and prayer, that they were not battling these challenges alone – a unique gift of helping pupils, colleagues, friends, parents, OBs, and parishioners find a way of feeling more positive, and seeing the brighter side of things.

And this care extended widely, and he took no greater pleasure than supporting the wider community, particularly the weddings of staff and Old Birkonians, and the christening of their children.

From facing down every obstacle Covid could put in the way of Tim and Lydia Ray's wedding back in 2021, to the assortment of crowns, tiaras and wands that became the property of those lucky enough to be baptised by Father Mark – his were services so personal to those involved, and so full of love and care.

With Dale and Andrew Carins' permission, I share Dale's reflections of the baptism of Catherine in the summer of 2023.

*'Despite having already left the School to take up his post in Hooton, Father Mark worked around his schedule to find a time to come back to do Catherine's Baptism Service – I think it was his third Baptism of the day!*

*It was honestly one of the most joyful days. Catherine was presented with a tiara and wand, holy water was flicked on anyone who looked like they needed a little extra holiness in their lives (there was no escaping Mark's infectious desire to have fun, to spread joy, was there!?), and all of those in the Chapel were captivated by his words and manner. It was so uplifting and heartfelt.*

*So many of our friends and family commented on how special Father Mark made the whole occasion. It was by far the most filled-with-love service many had ever attended, and we feel so lucky to have had that special day and memories with him.'*

In short, Mark had that special gift to make everyone, young and old, of strong or lesser faith, feel special, and what a gift that is...

Staff reflections were of a man who offered enduring support, with a deep, deep sense of the importance of community, alongside a wicked sense of humour with fun rarely far away.

He was our very own Joe Wicks, with his viral TikTok dancing during Covid, a teacher who would always wander into the School Office having just sent through a mountain of printing knowing that making the team smile, having a giggle, would get the printing done that bit quicker. I share Mark's sense of fun, in loving Stuart Nicholson's arrangement of Ding Dong Merrily on High – who else could have that at their Service of Celebration.

What a special, and unique man.

A man, never happier than when it involved community, and bringing people together. And Mark loved seeing all the School gathered on the field for the annual Remembrance Service; he loved making his church inclusive, and Messy Church; and he was never in his element more than when others would benefit – his delivery of Christmas Trees and hampers to the Neo Community charity a particularly fond memory, and so typical of the man.

His community here extended across staff, parents, OB's and children from Nursery through to Upper Sixth – a real breadth, and a challenge to be that person, that Chaplain to all.

It takes a very intelligent and gifted person, as Mark did back in September 2022, to move so seamlessly from the formality of a Seniors' Funeral Service for Her Late

Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, based on the Order of Service for the Funeral of her Father, King George VI – to an age-appropriate service 5 minutes later to Little School, basing it on the Lion King! A great talent.

Before my final thoughts, please do take the time to record your memories of Father Mark in the book of condolence that Beth has placed in the entrance to Chapel. If you wish for more time, do simply send your thoughts through to Beth as we will be putting a little something together to mark Father Mark's time at School.

I suspect it might include this picture and words from one of our Year 3 children:

Father Mark was the best Chaplain in the world  
He was kind  
He made sure everyone could join in  
He wasn't just amazing; he was brilliant!

Rarely do you have the fortune to share the company of an individual so able to combine his special talents that have underpinned my few words today, with the depth of self-effacing humility and modesty that he lived out on a daily basis.

I thought I would finish on one final staff reflection that I received, and it finished with this:

'The smell of the casserole, stewing away in the slow cooker at the top of Overdale – probably best I was not previously made aware of this - and his beaming smile as he welcomed James at the end of the day, reminded me every day that Father Mark was a great dad first.'

**What a special man.**



# Years Past

## 2014-15

Dr Jeremy Grundy, who took over from Mr John Clark resigned as Headmaster after only two terms and was succeeded on an interim basis by Mr David Edmunds. Pupil Annie Mills represented England Hockey U16 XI level. Pupil Joshua Gibbs was awarded a much sought-after Arkwright Engineering Scholarship. The School's CCF was closed after 100 years, owing to declining numbers and was replaced with a new programme of adventure activities. The first two girls to have spent their entire senior careers at School left, having joined the School in 2008 as part of the first cohort of girls in Year 7.

## 1994-95

Oxbridge places were awarded to 14 pupils. Under 15 Cricket XI reached the Lord's Taverners Colts Cricket final – losing to Milfield School. Andy Birley played Cricket for England U19 XI v Scotland and Wales. Mr Kelvin Britton and Rajib Lodh attended the World Scout Jamboree in the Netherlands. D (Dusty) Rhodes retired after 26 years teaching woodwork and technology, and leading the Young Farmers Club. Joan Lockhart retired after 44 years continuous teaching in Prep. Numbers: 690 (194 6th Form) Prep 385.



## 1965-65

OB SA Martin was selected for two England rugby trials, and OB JCW Crenshaw was elected Captain of Oxford University Golf Club, then the youngest Captain in the Club's history. The Young Farmers' Club celebrated its 21st anniversary. A group of geographers, with Headmaster Mr JA Gwilliam as a guest, visited Gresford Colliery in Wales and descended to the coal face 2,750 feet below ground level. The School was listed in Anthony Sampson's "Anatomy of Britain" in the top 10 out of 179 Direct Grant Schools. Numbers: 635 (227 in 6th Form).



## 2004-05

The School CCF sailing team won all the trophies at the North West Schools regatta in Anglesey. The first year when Prep pupils were assessed in Year Five instead of sitting an entrance exam. Chapel Choir tour to Venice and Verona. Chris Smith won the 400m at the Schools National Indoor Athletics meeting. The following retired: Clive Hunt after 36 years teaching Chemistry and General Studies, Mike Goosey after 28 years teaching Prep PE and Games, and OB Roy Collier after 31 years teaching French and Spanish. Numbers: 468 (125 6th Form) Prep 258.



## 1984-85

Prep moved from 143/145 Beresford Road into the former Boarding House building; Mr FE (Freddy) Wakelin celebrated 100 terms at School. Pupil Douglas Elliott played for England U18 Schools' Rugby XV against Scotland, France and Wales, four others played for Cheshire Schools U18 XV. Numbers: 710 (190 6th Form) Prep 215.



## 1974-75

The School Sevens team reached the last eight in the National Rugby Sevens - squad: Sissons Beckett Hearn Norman Whiting Hosker Carr Reynolds McGraw and Roberts. Participation in the School's CCF became voluntary. 24 pupils were awarded Oxbridge places. Mr WTC (Daddy) Rankin, Head of Junior School, retired after teaching science for 40 years, Natural History Society and Christian Union. Mr WF Bushell, former Headmaster, died for aged 89. Numbers: 633 (162 in 6th Form) Prep 207.



## 1954-55

48 Bidston Road was acquired, combined with 46 and converted to classrooms and flats for staff. The Ashcroft Steps were completed, funded by a legacy from Mrs Ashcroft (aged 99) three of whose sons were killed in WWI. They replaced the original 'slope' from the School Field to the Gym. Miss Oakley completed 25 years as Headmaster's Secretary. The Chapel entrance moved from the side to the centre, and named the Mcvicar Memorial Door, in memory of former Chaplain. Big School stage was enlarged which reduced the seating, so Speech Day was now held at Birkenhead Technical College. Numbers Big School 581 (163 in 6th Form).



# Years Past

## 1944-45

Boys from the School again helped with the harvest at Sudlow Farm, Knutsford. School boarders were woken when a stray V2 bomb fell on Upton by Chester. School was granted a holiday following VE Day. Publication of "The Birkonian" resumed in June 1945 with a "Victory Edition". Numbers: Big School 412 (63 in 6th Form).

## 1924-25

The School Endowment Fund was established. School arranged a rowing race against Wallasey Grammar School at Wallasey Dock. A poor year for rugby - the 1st XV won 4, drew 2, lost 2! The Chapel organ fund raised £935, still £150 short of the target. Boys from the School's 20th Birkenhead Scout Troop formed part of the guard of honour at the launch of HMS Rodney. OB SB Brabner was selected to play rugby for Cheshire - first member of Old Birkonian RUFC to be honoured in this way. Numbers: Big School 334 Prep 150.

## 1904-05

Noctorum Field was made available by a School Manager, later bought by the School. OB FE Smith became an MP. An article in the Birkonian reported that a Mission was organised by 20 OBs "to develop the character of boys from the 'slums' of Birkenhead". numbers: Big school 180 Prep 60.

## 1884-85

Rev WC Wood was appointed Headmaster. Although he stayed only five terms, he improved



the character of the School, including installing the clock in the tower, building the woodworking corrugated iron shed, arranging the annual choir outing, completing the chapel porch, dividing the School into three houses, introducing sporting competitions and starting a debating society.

## 1934-35

Headmaster Mr WF Bushell, purchased six acres of land off Bidston Road, later to become known as McAllester Field. The School acquired Direct Grant status - the government would now fund 25% of entrants from Local Government schools. Mr Warrington York, Professor of Tropical Medicine at Liverpool University, was elected Chairman of Governors. School CCF formed part of the guard of honour when King George VI opened the Borough Road Library. Numbers: Big School 256 (38 in 6th Form).

## 1914-15

Oak choir stalls were installed in the Chapel. OB Sir Frederick E Smith was appointed Attorney General, with a seat in the Cabinet. Mr W Coop, a master at the School, died of wounds in June 1915 received at the Battle of Hooge, while serving with the Liverpool Scottish Regiment. Numbers: Big School 210 Prep 73.



## 1894-95

Junior games were introduced. The School magazine published its first photograph - of the Rugby 1st XV who recorded an excellent season: 10 wins out of 13. OB RP Klauss represented Scotland at Rugby. The first Prep speech day was held.

## 1874-75

Fees were £6 per term for day pupils under 12 and £7 per term aged 12 and upwards. School was located at its present site on Shrewsbury Road. Numbers: 150 including 50 boarders.

## 1864-65

Owing to an increase in numbers, the School Managers submitted a plan to build a new school on a four-acre plot of land at a cost of £2,000. However the cost was too high. The School bought the same land five years later when the cost had doubled!






**BIRKENHEAD**  
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