
13th February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been another busy term at Fitzharrys with students thriving both in their lessons and in the wider events going on around the school. Throughout the term I have been continually impressed by the positivity, engagement, behaviour, and attitude to learning of our students. They continue to show a calm and focussed approach to learning, alongside a willingness to take on new challenges. As staff, we see this in every lesson, club, and event, but I am aware that for you, as parents, it remains important to share some key examples of what has gone on this term.

Aspiration

There have been several STEM (Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics) events this term. This has included all of year 9 visiting Vertex Pharmaceuticals to carry out experimental work in professional laboratories with our Science teachers. In addition, a group of girls attended the 'It all adds up' Maths Day at Oxford University. The University also hosted a group of year 12 students for a STEM careers event, at Trinity College. In school, year 10 students have taken part in OxSocrates research project, and the intermediate Maths challenge.

Year 12 and 13 English Literature students visited the Globe Theatre in London for a day of lectures and workshops. Year 9 students took part in a Languages Day at Queens College, Oxford, and our careers offer continued with an apprenticeships fair. An update about our careers offer can be found here: [CAREERS-February-Newsletter.pdf](#) Preparation for GCSE and A level exams continue, with year 13 completing their mocks and starting their revision, and year 11 taking part in practical PE assessments. I know that students in both these year groups will be busy revising and studying over the half term, using the techniques they have been taught in lessons and with their tutors. I wish them well as they build their knowledge and understanding in the lead up to their exams.

We have also focussed on building further engagement in the classroom. This term, our KS3 students have been introduced to the concept of STAR: active engagement. Ms Corley delivered an assembly on how students can become better active listeners in lessons by considering the acronym STAR (Sit up, Track the speaker, Appreciate ideas, Rephrase) for which their teachers will be rewarding house points and encouraging in lessons.

Opportunity

Football and Netball have been central to the sporting opportunities this term. Girls in years 7-10 have all taken part in the Vale 5-a-side football competitions, with year 7, year 8, and year 10 all becoming vale champions, whilst year 9 were runners up. The year 7 girls football team were 4-0 winners in another match, while the year 7 boys football team went out of the county cup after losing on penalties. Our year 8 boys football team won 4-1 against Burford School, taking them to the next round of the county cup, whilst year 7 girls entered 3 netball teams into the Vale tournament, with one of our teams winning. Year 9 and year 11 netball teams have also had notable victories in friendly fixtures.

All our year 8 students have had the opportunity to hone their art skills in Oxford, as they visited both the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers museums. Students were very well behaved and were able to draw a range of items from different cultures and time periods. A group of our musicians took part in 'Music Flood' at Radley School, playing 3 wonderful pieces of music in a combined orchestra comprising students from primary and secondary schools from across the area. It was a pleasure to see and hear them in action. Musicians were also at the fore with this week's inaugural 'Great Gig' where bands and solo musicians performed superbly to a packed hall. Our Duke of Edinburgh Bronze students have been building toward the next stage of their award in regular sessions. The expedition is the current focus, with practice walks to follow early in term 4.

Integrity

Students have been active in supporting each other this term, including our OX14 Learning Partnership (OX14 LP) events which brought about collaboration and support. Fitzharrys hosted the InspirED event, where around 180 students from the OX14 LP schools took part in workshops focussing on how to communicate effectively. JMF6 students have been supporting students lower down the school through their role as Peer Support Leads, Academic Coaches, and through paired reading during English lessons in the library. Year 10 students have also

been busy with a sexual health awareness day, and a democracy event. We also are grateful to the Fitzharrys School Association (FSA) for their fundraising efforts. The Jumble Sale raised over £3,000, and was brilliantly supported by parents, students, and staff.

Site Update

Following updates across the term, key maintenance has taken place across the site, with the driveway repaired, and heating back up and running in West Block. Final engineering work will take place across half term to ensure the heating in our Science block is fully operational for the start of term 4. I am grateful to everyone in the school community for their patience as these issues have been resolved.

Mobile phones

This term the Education Secretary announced that rules around mobile phones have changed. [Government to drive action to improve children's relationship with mobile phones and social media - GOV.UK](#) The key change is that mobile phones cannot be used by students in any circumstance in school. This is in line with our existing policy; however, we will be making some adjustments to ensure we are fully aligned with the Department for Education's expectations. Once these changes are made and approved by our governors, we will communicate these to you.

The overriding principle will remain the same: students should not be on their phones at all whilst on the school site. They should be off and in the bottom of bags. The vast majority of students follow this very well. However, a small number of students struggle to regulate their phone use in the day and have been repeatedly on their phones. Our new policy will set out clearly how we will try to support these students in reducing their reliance on mobile devices through clear and consequential steps for persistent use.

New guidance

You may be aware that there have been changes to the Ofsted Inspection Framework. Whilst we are not expecting an imminent inspection, it is important to be aware of the changes to how schools are inspected. With the new inspection arrangements now fully in place, the following provides information on the key differences between the current and previous ways of reporting an inspection:

- For very many years, an overall judgement grade was used as the indicator of how good a school was. This changed a few years ago with schools no longer receiving an overall grade, but grades for each of the categories that were inspected.
- Whilst the underlying framework remains the same, the way of reporting has changed substantially.
- Schools will receive an online 'report card' that details the 'grades' awarded for the following areas of an inspection:
 - Safeguarding, Inclusion, Curriculum and Teaching, Achievement, Attendance and Behaviour, Personal Development and Wellbeing, and Leadership and Governance, with Early Years and Sixth Form Provision included where relevant.
- Each of these areas receives one of five grades: Exceptional Standard; Strong Standard; Expected Standard; Needs Attention Indicator; Urgent Improvement indicator.
- Safeguarding continues to be judged separately as Met or Not met.

As we move forward, we will be updating you about how these changes impact on information you receive as a parent.

Term 4

This week students have been set our latest house challenge, with a competition to create a strapline for their house. Winners will be announced in the house assemblies during term 4, with prizes given for the winning entries. When students return after half term, there will also be a focus on uniform in the first couple of weeks back. This will include checks by tutors first thing each day, looking at earrings, footwear, and any other non-uniform items. Please can you ensure your child comes to school dressed in line with the uniform guidance [Uniform & Equipment - Fitzharrys School](#) Our curriculum newsletters will be sent out in the first week back, outlining the curriculum for your child, and highlighting key dates for your diary. This will include the dates for our school production of 'Frozen' and how to book tickets; it promises to be another amazing school show.

I hope you have a relaxing break and look forward to welcoming all students back into school on Monday 23rd February.

Yours sincerely,



Will Speke
Headteacher