

Newsletter

WORDS FROM MR BACON, HEADTEACHER

Dear Parents & Carers

Another half term gone already with the first signs of Spring approaching quickly and another half term packed with events and news as you will see in the following pages.

A big focus since Christmas has been on our Student Council and Student Voice, to improve communication and to ensure their feedback is heard. I was very pleased to meet with House Representatives earlier this week and received some very helpful suggestions and ideas. We take our relationship with students very seriously and feel it is important to know and understand their thoughts and ideas and act upon them where appropriate. For example, discussion with the Local School Board on reviewing elements of the uniform, involvement in the awarding of the contract for the catering supplier from September and feedback regarding toilets, trips, clubs, and other facilities. We intend to strengthen these relationships going forwards with identified links and meetings with Governors and SLT as you will see in Mrs Dixon's article on pages 2 and 3.

As you will also see in this edition, students have had the opportunity to attend a range of school trips over recent weeks, with more in the pipeline for the rest of the year. These are linked to student learning and give them the opportunity to reinforce their knowledge of various curriculum areas whilst developing key areas such as communication and problem solving etc. We really enjoy being able to offer these as much as the children love attending them. However, these trips carry a significant cost to the school and we rely heavily on receiving payments from parents/carers to be able to cover the costs of the transport, entrances to events etc. Despite requesting 'voluntary contributions', these great experiences cannot go ahead unless we receive sufficient payment as there is no provision within school budgets for trips. If your child(ren) have the opportunity to attend a trip and wish to attend, I would like to make a plea, if you are able, to send in your contributions as soon as possible and if you have difficulty in paying, please do get in touch (in confidence) and we may be able to help – opportunity@watling.academy

Thank you and I hope you have a safe and enjoyable half term break.

Ian Bacon, Headteacher



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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- End of half-term— Fri 16th Feb @ 3:15pm
- School reopens —Mon 26th Feb
- Y10 Subject Consultation Evening—Thu 29th Feb @ 3:45pm to 8:00pm
- Afterschool Clubs end—Fri 22nd Mar
- End of term—Thu 28th Mar





STUDENT COUNCIL

During the past term we have made a determined effort to capture student voice and enhance communication between the student body and school management.

Earlier in the term, House Representatives gleaned feedback from students in their Form on what they appreciate at Watling (to Keep), what they would like to change or improve (to Adapt), and what they really would like to have (to Add). This feedback was collated and sent to Mr Bacon for consideration. Mr Bacon has already given feedback to House Representatives on some of these elements so that information can be filtered back to the student body.

Representatives from our House Council were invited to share their views, priorities and suggestions with prospective catering companies bidding for our whole Trust tender. Although somewhat daunting to present to a room full of adults, our House Captains did a tremendous job in highlighting what we value and need from our caterers.

To optimise our impact and play a role in whole-school initiatives, we will be meeting with our Deputy Headteachers once a half-term as follows:

Ruby, Colby, Janelle and **Mihir** (Lead) will meet with Mrs Fry (EDUCATION focus).

Tulin (Lead), **Yaseen** and **Rasheed** will meet with Mr Cassidy (OPPORTUNITY focus).

Lydia, Riley (Lead) and **Pranav** will meet with Ms Harris (CARE focus).

Continued on page 3.



STUDENT COUNCIL

High on our agenda is an ongoing goal of working towards creating more opportunities for students to get involved in inter-house competitions.

More recently, we have collaborated with Mr Green in organising an inter-house Year 8 basketball tournament during the last week of term. At the time of writing this article the tournament had just begun – results will be announced in due course.

After robust discussion, and much tweaking and adapting of the wording, we've agreed on and made the following commitment to our Watling Community:

Our Pledge

To be enthusiastic and always have a can-do attitude in all that I do.

To create a culture of kindness

To complete tasks entrusted to me

To respect the ideas of others

To listen to the voice of my peers

To lead with integrity

To bring people together

To enhance our school environment

To model Respect, Responsibility and Kindness

Mrs Dixon



House System



HOUSE SYSTEM UPDATE

As we reflect on the first half of the spring term, we are excited to share the wonderful achievements and events that have taken place within our House System at Watling Academy. We were thrilled to welcome back our students after the well-deserved Christmas break, and it was heartening to see them return with fantastic spirit and enthusiasm.

House Points

Throughout the term, we have witnessed remarkable engagement and participation, resulting in over 59,000 House Points being awarded. The competition for the 2023-2024 winning house has been intense, with Rutherford currently leading by just over 1000 House Points, closely followed by Marshall – but no one is out of the race just yet!

Charity Focus

This term, our House System has embraced the school's ethos of kindness through a focus on charities. Students from each house had the opportunity to engage with representatives from various charities, including the Food Bank, Harry's Rainbow, Mind, Willen Hospice, and the Parks Trust. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to these charities for their invaluable contributions in educating our students about their vital work. Moreover, we would like to commend our students for their generosity, demonstrated through their donations to the food bank during the Christmas appeal and contributions on non-school uniform day.

Continued on page 5.



HOUSE SYSTEM UPDATE

Upcoming Lunar New Year Celebration

As we approach the end of the term, we are delighted to celebrate the Lunar New Year. To mark this auspicious occasion, the Modern Foreign Language department is organizing a Lunar New Year poster competition. May the best form win!

We are immensely proud of the achievements and endeavours of our students this half term. Their dedication, compassion, and enthusiasm truly embody the spirit of Watling Academy's House System.

Warm regards on behalf of all House Champions,

Mr Green, Mrs Hardie, Mrs Hollingsworth, Miss Kennedy and Miss Palmer



MIND BLMK—

A LEADING MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY FOR BEDFORDSHIRE, LUTON & MILTON KEYNES

Watling was delighted to welcome Gretchen Larkin, Fundraising and Engagement Manager at Mind BLMK to a recent Rutherford House assembly to share how the charity provides support to improve the mental health and wellbeing of individuals in the communities of Bedford, Luton and Milton Keynes. Gretchen gave an overview of the history of the charity through the years and the students heard about the vision, mission and values of the charity, which was very inspiring. The comparison of values between Mind BLMK and Watling were drawn; both have respect as a core value.

The assembly heard some sobering facts about mental health, such as:

- 1 in 6 people report experiencing a mental health problem in England like depression or anxiety in any given week.
- 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem of some kind in the UK each year.
- 1 in every 100 deaths worldwide is the result of suicide and every 90 minutes, someone dies by suicide in the UK and the republic of Ireland. We also know that the suicide rate is higher amongst men than women and the biggest killer of young people between 16-24.

On a positive note, more people are now talking about their mental health however there is still a way to go.

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Mind BLMK

Young Person's Sanctuary

Supporting young people's mental health across Milton Keynes

CAMHS Eaglestone Health Centre, Standing Way, Milton Keynes MK6 5AZ

Wednesday - Friday (5.00pm - 10.00pm)
Saturday (4.00pm - 10.00pm)

To find out more:
0300 330 0648
VPS@mind-blmk.org.uk
www.mind-blmk.org.uk
Charity No. 1068734

Where?
Milton Keynes

FREE Confidential Service

NO Appointment necessary

14-17yrs

NHS Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust

there is always someone there who will listen

MIND BLMK—

A LEADING MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY FOR BEDFORDSHIRE, LUTON & MILTON KEYNES

The talk included details of organisations offering support to young people with their mental health, wellbeing and resilience. The work of Young Person's Sanctuaries were highlighted. Below are details of a new young person's sanctuary which has opened in Eaglestone, Milton Keynes.

The students actively listened to the assembly and had an opportunity to ask questions at the end.

A huge thank you to Gretchen for visiting Watling.

Mr Green



Gretchen Larkin



Consultation Evenings

YEAR 9 SUBJECT CONSULTATION EVENINGS

We are pleased to share insights from our recent Year 9 Subject Consultation Evenings. It was encouraging to see a strong turnout, with participation from over 80% of parents in the online virtual meeting.

The evening offered a chance for parents and guardians to directly speak with teachers about their Year 9 students' academic progress, strengths, and areas for improvement. These conversations were productive and focused on the individual needs of each student, allowing for effective collaboration in supporting our students' educational journeys.

The evening also proved to be not only a moment for academic review but also an essential opportunity for our Year 9 students to consider their future options and subjects. Engaging with teachers and parents about potential paths is a crucial step in their educational journey, and we are glad that the platform facilitated these important discussions.

We also wish to highlight that the Subject Consultation Evenings for Years 7, 8, and 10 are scheduled to take place later this year. These meetings are vital for maintaining open lines of communication between the school and our students' families. We believe that fostering a collaborative environment is key to enhancing the educational experience for our students.

The recent consultation evenings have set a positive precedent, and we are eager to replicate this success in our future events. We look forward to your continued support and participation, as we aim to build stronger connections and improve our communication with parents.

Thank you to everyone who joined the consultation evenings. Your involvement and engagement is invaluable to us and greatly appreciated.

Mr Parks



FRIENDS OF WATLING ACADEMY (FOWA)

On 22nd January, the Friends of Watling Academy convened to discuss several important topics. The meeting was productive, covering a range of subjects from fundraising activities to future plans for the school.

We're pleased to report that the recent cake sale was a success, raising over £200. This achievement was made possible by the generous contributions from our school community, and we extend our thanks to everyone involved.

During the meeting, a constitution was adopted to guide our future activities. Efforts to update the school website with pertinent information and ideas for future fundraising were also discussed.

Looking ahead, we're considering a Krispy Kreme sale after Easter as another fundraising initiative. Ideas are also being developed to support the school's production of "Bugsy Malone," aiming to contribute positively to this event.

Mark your calendars! A quiz night is planned for the **6th of March**. This event is sure to be a fun-filled evening that will bring our community together. Further details will be shared soon, so stay tuned.

The next meeting of the Friends of Watling Academy is scheduled for **11th March**. We invite anyone interested to join us and share their ideas for supporting the school.

The Friends of Watling Academy are committed to supporting the school through various initiatives. Your participation and support are valued as we continue to work towards enhancing the school experience for our students. We hope to see you at the quiz night and the next meeting.

Mr Parks



LGBT+ History Month

WATLING ACADEMY EMBRACE LGBT+ HISTORY MONTH

This February, Watling Academy has been proud to engage our school community in the celebration of LGBT+ History Month. It has been an enlightening time, dedicated to educating our students about the significant contributions and history of the LGBT+ community within the UK and beyond.

Throughout the month, our corridors have been adorned with informative displays. These have showcased key moments in LGBT+ history in the UK, providing students with valuable insights into the journey and achievements of the LGBT+ community. Additionally, we've highlighted the lives and contributions of renowned LGBT+ figures. By showcasing their talents, skills, and societal contributions, we aim to inspire our students and celebrate diversity in all its forms.

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WATLING ACADEMY EMBRACE LGBT+ HISTORY MONTH

An integral part of this month's activities has been the tutorial sessions conducted by form tutors. These sessions have been pivotal in further educating our students about LGBT+ history and the importance of understanding and recognising this aspect of our shared heritage. Through open discussions and interactive learning, we've explored why learning about LGBT+ history is vital in fostering an inclusive and respectful school environment.

Furthermore, to engage students actively in learning and to celebrate their achievements, we've hosted competitions throughout the month. These friendly contests have not only been a fun way for students to deepen their knowledge but have also offered them the chance to earn prizes for their houses, fostering a spirit of unity and collaborative learning.

At Watling Academy, we believe in the importance of embracing and understanding the rich tapestry of human history and diversity. Celebrating LGBT+ History Month is a part of our commitment to inclusivity and providing a comprehensive education that respects and values all individuals.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the students, staff, and form tutors who have participated in and supported this month's activities. Your enthusiasm and willingness to learn and educate others play a crucial role in building a more inclusive and understanding school community.

Mr Parks



EXPLORING THE WORLD OF PHYSICAL THEATRE

Frantic Assembly: Pioneers of Physical Theatre

Frantic Assembly stand as trailblazers of physical theatre, pushing boundaries and redefining the ways in which stories are conveyed on stage. With a reputation for their innovative approach to movement, collaboration, and narrative, the company has become a beacon for aspiring performers and theatre enthusiasts worldwide.

The Workshop: Movement and Narrative

Under the expert guidance of Frantic Assembly's seasoned facilitators, our Year 10 students delved into a world where movement becomes a language, and the body serves as the primary storyteller. The workshop seamlessly blended physicality with storytelling, challenging our young performers to explore new dimensions of expression and communication.

Students engaged in a series of dynamic exercises and collaborative activities designed to break down inhibitions, foster teamwork, and encourage creative thinking. The workshop emphasised the importance of body language and spatial awareness to convey emotions and narratives without relying solely on spoken words.

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Finley and Elisabeth

EXPLORING THE WORLD OF PHYSICAL THEATRE

Building Confidence Through Collaboration

Frantic Assembly's unique approach places a strong emphasis on collaboration. Through group exercises and ensemble activities, students learned the value of working together to create a cohesive and impactful performance. The workshop fostered an environment where every voice mattered, and each contribution added to the collective artistic expression. We look forward to witnessing the continued growth and creativity of these aspiring performers as they carry the lessons learned from this workshop into their future theatrical endeavours.

Mrs Brooks



Brenny, Elisabeth, Emir, Finley, Liv, Mia, Mikey, Riley, Summer, & Toby



CROSS COUNTRY COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS

On Wednesday 7th February, Watling's PE department took 42 runners to the historic Stowe School to compete at the Cross Country County Championships. With over 60 schools competing across the whole county; it was a brilliant event. Our teams represented the school impeccably and the students had comments from other teachers and schools about their fantastic supporting and cheering of all the students competing.

We had many successes on the day, but to mention a few outstanding performances goes to the Year 10 Boys, Team where 5 students finished a 6km demanding run including 7 steep hills. Watling was the only school to have 5 students complete the race!

Well done to **Sofia** in Year 10 who came 4th in the county over a 4.5km gruelling run and will now go onto the regional round representing Buckinghamshire. **Nicole** in Year 7 came 7th in her 2km race and will be considered to represent Bucks. Well done to both!

Miss Willison



Y7 Girls Team



Y7 Boys Team

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CROSS COUNTRY COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS



Junior Girls Team



Junior Boys Team



Inter Boys Team

SPORTING FIXTURES UPDATE

As we are nearing the end of the winter sports leagues, I am pleased to share it has been another successful half-term of fixtures.

All teams are sitting in respectable positions in their leagues with a shoutout to our Year 9 Boys, Year 7 and 8 Girls Football, Year 7 Netball and Year 9 Basketball Teams who of which are currently undefeated in their respected leagues. This is a great achievement by those involved.

The Year 8 Boys and U13 Girls County Cup squads both bowed out at the quarter final stages after big performances but just fell short against their opposition. Both teams should be extremely proud of their achievements, dismantling some decent opponents along the way. The Year 9 Boys still have their quarter final to play, and we wish them the best of luck.

This half-term has seen us host the Year 7 and 8 Junior NBA tournaments in which Watling played against multiple schools across Milton Keynes and represented themselves very well with some great results along the way.

As well as our league fixtures, our sports teams seized every opportunity to compete in a variety of tournaments. Most recently has been the girls football tournaments which saw our Year 8 Girls crowned champions after defeating 7 other schools without losing a game!

Miss Young



Y8 Girls Football Team

ROUTES INTO LANGUAGES

FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPELLING BEE

During the second term, the winners of Stage 1 of the Spanish Spelling Bee have been practising translating and spelling in Spanish up to 150 words in Spanish as part of their preparation for Stage 2. The competition itself took place during assembly with the rest of their year group. Students had to correctly translate and spell as many of the 150 words as possible in a minute. The students with the highest scores were then selected to take part in the Regional Competition where they will compete for a place in the National Competition.

The winners of Stage 2 were:

Eliza – Rutherford

Venisha - Turing

Aiden - Rutherford

Well done to everyone who took part. It is great to see everyone spelling words in Spanish using the Spanish alphabet. This will really help you with your learning in general.

Mr Scott



Foreign Language Spelling Bee



HAPPY LUNAR NEW YEAR

To celebrate Luna New Year, Watling Academy hosted a workshop for Year 8 Mandarin Excellence Programme students with a specialist who is skilled in Chinese traditional [movable type](#). The workshop provided an insightful journey into the origin and evolution of Chinese characters, shedding light on the history of movable type printing. The students participated in this ancient craft with great enthusiasm.

The process involved organising Chinese characters in correct order, applying ink to designated squares, and employing a sponge brush to press rice paper against the text for printing. The interests displayed by the students were commendable, with two participants being rewarded with photo frames for their outstanding creations.

In another workshop, a Tai Chi expert introduced Year 10 students to Animal Tai Chi. The exercises mimicked the characteristics, spirit and physical movements of five animal: tiger, deer, bear, money, birds. Each movement was accompanied by an engaging story made up by the teacher, which interested the students to follow the teacher precisely. Beyond the physical aspects, the students delved into the traditional Chinese philosophy embedded in Tai Chi, gaining insights into the wisdom of maintaining health through emulation of nature. Through maintaining the balance and stability of the movements, students also improved the skills to focus on a singular task with resilience.

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Alicea, Fio, G Ho, Mihir, Mohammad, Naseem, Riley and Suzan

HAPPY LUNAR NEW YEAR

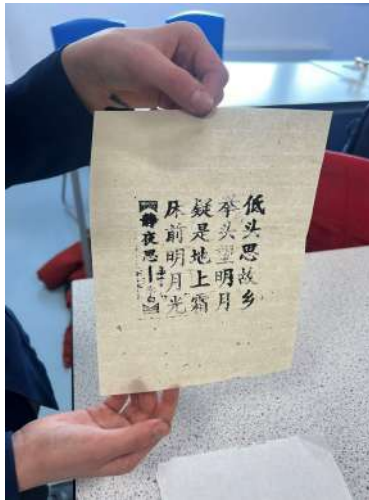
The success of the workshops can be seen through the students' enthusiasm and positive feedback. Additionally, other year groups celebrated the Lunar New Year through diverse activities, such as learning Chinese songs, designing Chinese dragons, participating in quizzes related to the festival, engaging in calligraphy and exploring the richness of Chinese cuisine.

Happy Lunar New Year to all!

Miss Zhao



Alicea, Fio, G Ho, Mihir, Mohammad, Naseem, Riley and Suzan



YEAR 10 WORK EXPERIENCE - KEY DATES

Our Year 10 students are currently sourcing their Work Experience placements. Here is a reminder of key date to keeping on track with the placement process: What needs to be done and when?

STAGE 1: Finding a Placement

By the **25th February** you should have:

1. Logged on to Unifrog. If you have not done so already, check your log-in details to make you can access this tool.
2. Read the work Experience Booklet 'Guide to finding a great Work Experience Placement'.
3. Completed personal research, including:
 - Research questions in your booklet
 - Explore the careers links highlighted in booklet.
 - Utilise career tools and quizzes on the Unifrog platform.
4. Make a list of at least 7 Employers you wish to contact as possible Work Experience placements.
5. Contact with the employers you have identified. This contact may be on the phone, through email or in person.

NB. If you do not secure a placement through these employers you will need to expand your list and continue contacting employers.

Preparing for your placement:

1. Stay in contact with your employer as your placement approaches. Should happen monthly prior to your placement.
2. Check to make sure your travel arrangements work effectively. Should be checked prior to start date.

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YEAR 10 WORK EXPERIENCE - KEY DATES

STAGE 2: Securing a Placement

By the **1st March** you should have:

1. Completed the student section of the placement tool on Unifrog. This should be done with an adult, either your parent/carer or Form Tutor/Head of Year. Ensure you double check that emails have been typed correctly.
2. By the **8th March** you should have contacted your employer to make sure they know to expect and email from Unifrog to complete.
3. By the **29th March** you should have tracked your Unifrog to make sure your employer and parent/carer have completed their sections. Email or speak to them to give reminders if needed. Check 2-3 times a week to make sure this is completed.

NB. Please make your Form Tutor aware if your placement is not progressing on Unifrog.

By the **15th April** you should have had your placement work experience confirmed and completed on Unifrog.

Preparing for your placement:

1. Stay in contact with your employer as your placement approaches. Should happen monthly prior to your placement.
2. Check to make sure your travel arrangements work effectively. Should be checked prior to start date.

Mr Stormer



LIBRARY INSIGHTS

Visit to Watling Primary School

On January 15th a group of student Reading Advocates from Year 7, 8 and 9 visited Watling Primary School to spend time reading with groups of Reception and Year 1 students. The Watling Primary students were proud to show us their new library and were impeccable hosts. Equally, the enthusiasm and care shown by Watling Academy students to their younger counterparts was wonderful to see. We look forward to the return visit when we will host Watling Primary students in our library for some more reading activities.

Miss Williams



LIBRARY INSIGHTS

Year 7 Accelerated Reader (AR) Competition

This week was the final week of the current Accelerated Reader target competition. Students who hit their AR targets by passing their book quizzes were entered into the raffle prize draw. Congratulations to all those who entered and those who won prizes! A new competition will start after Half Term so there will be a fresh opportunity to take part.

Congratulations also to the winning form 7M SNR who received the most AR points overall!

Miss Williams



STEP 1

Monday 26th February - Friday 1st March

Bring up to 3 books from home that you no longer want and take to the school Library.

PLEASE GET PERMISSION FROM PARENTS FIRST!

STEP 2

Collect 1 ticket for each book that you bring. Or you can choose to donate any of these books to the school Library.

STEP 3

Monday 4th - Wednesday 6th March

Come to the Book Swap in the Library at break time and use your tickets to get books that other students have donated.

ONLY BOOKS IN GOOD CONDITION WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR THE SWAP.

TRING NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM TRIP

In January, Year 7 students visited the Natural History Museum in Tring as their first whole year group trip at Watling. Students visited all the exhibitions within the museum, which has over 4,000 specimens in its collection, including rare and extinct species.

Students linked this to what they had been learning in science on food chains and webs, and looked at what features makes an organism a good predator. Part of the task they completed guided them to reflect on how humans can impact the food chain, and the effects this has on the environment. Students had the opportunity to get up close and personal with some of the exhibits in the workshop, where they saw and touched a turtle and a hedgehog, amongst others.

Everyone involved enjoyed the day, and the students were a credit to the school.

Mrs Gallagher



Ibrahim and Ronnie

WATLING NOTICE BOARD

IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2023-24

- Watling reopens on **Monday 26th February**
- Y10 Teacher Subject Consultation Evening @ **3:45pm to 8:00pm on Thursday 29th February**
- End of half term @ **3:15pm on Thursday 28th March**



POLITE REMINDER ABOUT STUDENT ABSENCE PROCEDURE

In the event your child is unable to attend school, you must advise our Attendance Officer of any student absence **before 08:00am each day of their absence**. You must also notify us of any appointments made during the school day. However, we do ask that you book appointments outside of school.

Absences can be reported by telephoning **01908 794094** and selecting **Option 1**, using the ParentMail app, or by emailing **attendance@watling.academy**. Please include your child's name, full details of the absence, and when you expect your child to return to school.

Watling Academy, Barrosa Way, Whitehouse, MK8 1EP

Phone: 01908 794094

Website: watlingacademy.net

Email: admin@watling.academy.