



# Parents' Newsletter



Dear parents

As you know, we consulted with you in May with regard to Gillotts joining the River Learning Trust (RLT). We heard this week that the Department for Education has approved the plan and we will become part of RLT on 1 March 2025. RLT is a MAT with which the school already collaborates and which shares our commitment to excellence in education. Whilst all schools in the Trust work together to support and challenge each other, sharing key values and principles, the Trust respects each school's individual strengths and characteristics. This means that our students, parents and staff will not notice any immediate difference; students will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will still have the same identity and ethos. In time we will all benefit from the impact of collaboration with other schools within the Trust and the support provided by the central Trust team. As a successful school, we will also have influence on future Trust development. A great deal of time has gone into researching and considering this change, which means we now feel confident that this is the right next step in the school's journey.

There has been a lot to celebrate at Gillotts this term. Although it seems like a long time ago now, it was a pleasure to celebrate the GCSE results of last year's Year 11 with them on results day at the end of August, and then again at Presentation Evening on 7 November. And there was such a lot to be proud of. Our Progress 8 score, which is the key measure Ofsted uses, was +0.71 - second best only to 2022's score of +0.73. This means that on average students achieved almost three quarters of a grade better in each of their GCSEs than would be expected based on their prior attainment. We are so proud of the success of our students, especially when you consider that the pandemic impacted on them in Years 7 and 8. They have shown incredible resilience. If you want to see how well we compare to other Oxfordshire schools, you can find all the Progress 8 scores [here](#).

Gillotts' students have as normal been out and about with all of Year 8 experiencing geography field work in the River Pang and all of Year 9 visiting the Science and Natural History Museums. Trips to the theatre have included 'Wicked' and, still to come, 'War Horse'. Year 11 German and History students also had the opportunity to travel to Berlin. You can read more about all these trips elsewhere in the newsletter.

The Parents' Association Quiz was a fantastic fundraiser for the school, raising over £4000 to support our Climate Action Plan, in particular focusing on making the most of our fantastic environment for our students. It was great to see so many parents there. Huge thanks to the Parents' Association Committee and their band of helpers for the tremendous hard work that sits behind the success of the evening.

A new innovation this year was the Christmas tree festival at St Mary's Church. Our crochet club truly rose to the challenge – even crocheting the tinsel!

After the usual exceptionally busy term, it has been good over the last week or so to feel that Christmas is in sight. The KS3 play, 'A Grimm Night for Hans Christian Andersen' was wonderfully enjoyable, with so many students with cameo roles as updated fairy tale characters. It was a highly amusing hour of entertainment. As I write, we still have The Carol Service at St Mary's to look forward to on Tuesday and, with ever growing popularity of music at Gillotts, I know it will be better than ever. The whole school will then get an opportunity to hear some of the highlights in final assembly on Friday – always a lovely way to end the term.

I do hope that the holidays will allow for some precious time with family and friends and some much needed rest and relaxation.

See you all again in 2025.

Catharine Darnton  
Headteacher

## Uniform

Our uniform at Gillotts is designed to be functional but also appropriate for school. When it is worn as intended, students do look well presented and their appearance is consistent. Unfortunately when students try to modify the uniform, its impact is reduced. Here are a few key reminders.

**Skirts** - please make sure skirts are the best size to achieve a good fit and that all the fastenings are in place and can be done up. The skirt should be worn as designed - please support us by making clear that it is not to be 'rolled'. It is important all students learn to make choices about what they wear, appropriate to context.

**Jewellery** - No jewellery should be worn except a light chain with a religious symbol, and a maximum of one stud earring in each ear.

**Hair styles** - No extreme hairstyles, or non-natural colours (or combination of colours that are stark in contrast).

## Operation Encompass

Our school/educational setting is part of Operation Encompass which is a national scheme that operates jointly between schools and police forces.

Operation Encompass is the method of reporting to schools, prior to the start of the next school day, when a child or young person has experienced domestic abuse.

As a school/educational setting we have ensured that a member of our staff, has been trained in the Operation Encompass procedures allowing us to then use the information that has been shared, in confidence, to support the child/ren in our care.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 identifies children who experience domestic abuse as victims of domestic abuse in their own right.

On 24 May 2024 Royal Assent was granted to The Victims and Prisoners Act. The Act placed Operation Encompass into Law. This places a statutory obligation on police forces to share Operation Encompass notifications with schools/educational settings.

We are keen to offer the best support possible to all our pupils and through Operation Encompass we will be able to provide the best possible support to our children

## Parent View

Parent View is an online questionnaire for parents and carers to feed back to Ofsted on their child's school. It is now the main mechanism that Ofsted use to gather parents' views at the time of an inspection. There are just 12 questions to answer. The questions look at the key areas such as happiness, safety, progress, quality of teaching, behaviour and school leadership. The final question asks if you would recommend the school to another parent. Everyone's responses are put together and are available to view on the Parent View website. In order to minimise the risk of abuse, you are required to register and create a password. We would be very pleased to have your ongoing feedback of what you think of the school – please visit <http://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/>

## School Fund

Our School Fund is an opportunity for parents to support the quality of education for their children through making regular voluntary contributions to be used directly to provide resources for use in the classroom and at home.



### Why do we need your support?

Unlike many schools, Gillotts has not had a tradition of regular individual donations to support the school. However, as you will have seen from media coverage, the financial climate for all schools has become increasingly difficult in recent years. School funding is still below 2010 levels in real terms - in spite of steadily rising costs - so in real terms, our income is falling. This is making it harder for the school to deliver the excellent teaching and learning we aspire to.

### How much would we like you to contribute?

There is no obligation or pressure to donate but, if you would like to, we will be grateful for whatever you can afford. Suggestions donations are below.

If you give £10 per month, this would give us £120 per year – with Gift Aid, that is £150!

If you give £1 per day, this would give us £365 per year – with Gift Aid, that's over £450 per year!

### How does this work with the support provided by the Parents' Association?

The Parents' Association has provided invaluable support to Gillotts for many years. The Association fully endorses this request for individual regular contributions. However payments will be through the school, to preserve parents' anonymity.

“The PA fully supports the school in striving to maintain a high standard of education for our children in the face of reduced income. Donating to the School Fund will be a way of trying to ensure that our children continue to receive the excellent standard of education that Gillotts at present provides. The School Fund is also a way for parents/ carers who do not have time to help with the PA to be involved with the school.”

### What will we spend the funds on?

We will spend the funds on ensuring all curriculum subjects are well resourced, including with the additional new online resources that we know students and their parents value so much. This will enable us to support students to continue to make the outstanding progress that has become the norm in recent years.

Please give whatever you can – fill in and return the form attached – thank you for your support.

## House Award Update

The Autumn term has undoubtedly been a very busy one at Gillotts. Our school motto of Non Nobis Solum is always at the forefront of trying to ensure the school community upholds our three key values of Kindness, Respect and Not Doing Harm. Giving students the opportunity to demonstrate these values and celebrating them when they do is an important part of school life.

From a House perspective, the autumn term gives the opportunity for lots of activities to get involved in, as new Year 7s get settled, Inter House sports competitions kick off, and we enjoy all the fun activities, fundraising and community initiatives around Christmas.

So far this term, Houses have participated in:

- Inter House Sports!
- Fortnightly House Quizzes in Tutor Time (physical and mental!)
- Nomad Food Bank collections (Biggest collection, Best decorated boxes)
- Taskmaster Team Tasking events (building famous landmarks out of natural items)
- Best Xmas themed outfit
- And much more!

Students also continue to accumulate points for their house through their achievements in school, excellent effort and attendance, and displaying acts of kindness and community spirit around the school site. For Pankhurst house, there has been a change in personnel with Tracy (House Admin) leaving after many years of service at Gillotts. We would like to thank Tracy for her commitment and dedication to the school and Pankhurst House, and wish her all the very best for the future. We have already welcomed Nic Massey, who has taken over the role of House Administrator for Pankhurst house.

The updated House points score will be revealed at the start of term in tutor time, and also posted on our social media!

The best place to see everything else that is going on is through our school social media pages at Instagram and X:

[www.instagram.com/gillottshenley](http://www.instagram.com/gillottshenley)

[www.twitter.com/gillottshenley](http://www.twitter.com/gillottshenley)

We are always keen to also hear of achievements and exploits outside of school as well, so if you have any newsworthy stories, please do let us know!

## Darwin News Tutee of the Term

DGS: Jina Shah

DHLS: Annabelle Owens

DAPM: Gabriel Robbins-Cherry

DLLF: Emily Markham

DROM/BJB: Sophie Markham

DCHA: Holly Maxwell

DSGG: Amy Chaimbault

DHLK: Dom Betteridge

DJLG: Jack Dixon

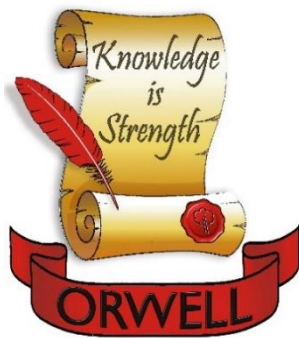
DFMW: Ruby Coyne

DPJY: Ellie Anderson

DDI: Amy Baker



## Orwell News Tutee of the Term



OHJS/SEL: Monty Haigh

OPCM: Alexandra Tomanov

OJSK: Rebecca Parker

OGMO: Anais Thimonier-Bayet

OJJ/SMS: Ned Heverin

OHRW: Darius Pop Anghel

OCG: Emma Cook

OCST/AB: Mark Fabian

OTL/NFD: Joy Kemboi

OACM: Lou Thimonier-Bayet

OADT: Charlie Ward

OJRE: Leo Holland

## Pankhurst News Tutee of the Term

PHJ: Zofia Johnstone

PCJW/ELD: Olivia Norris

PLJA/LS: Niamh Coombs

PFLP: Aidan Bonar

PJDS: Zac Carson

PNGK: Oscar Sheppard

PSJW: Freddie Williams

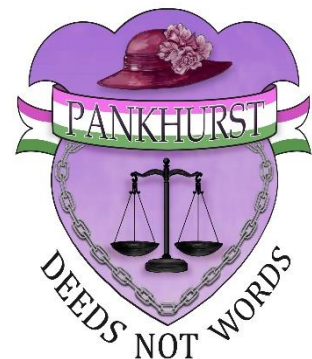
PESS: Violet Sindle

PKLO/CLF: Harry Waldron

PWJH: Kiki Charman-Vazquez

PGDM: Charlotte Jean-Jean

PCEG: May Campbell



## Geography Trips

The Geography department has been very busy organising and running a number of fieldtrips and visits since the start of the academic year. These have involved students in Years 8, 9 and 11.

### Year 11 Osmington Bay

The term started off with the Year 11 residential trip to Osmington Bay near Weymouth. This trip took place over a weekend and involved students participating in a human geography fieldtrip (studying regeneration in Weymouth town centre) and a physical geography fieldtrip (measuring the changes in the characteristics of the River Wey as it flows from source to mouth). The students are required to answer questions about their fieldwork in their GCSE Geography Paper 3 and the classroom-based teaching which took place alongside the actual fieldtrips has put them in a great position to do really well next summer. While the accommodation was rather basic, the views across Weymouth Bay to the Isle of Portland were truly stunning.



### Year 8 River Pang

We had to postpone the River Pang trips for last year's Year 7 in March owing to the river being in flood. In fact, the road which we normally drive along had turned into a river! However, we re-arranged these trips for mid-October. Two weeks of almost continual rain had us worried that we would need to postpone them again. However, although the students were not able to go in the river as the water level was quite high, I was able to use the newly purchased set of Geography Department waders – much to the amusement of some of the students and all of the staff! The students worked really well and learnt a lot about how and why the river changes as it flows from its source on the Berkshire Downs near Compton towards where it joins the River Thames at Pangbourne.

### Year 9 Natural History and Science Museum

This time the Geography Department teamed up with the Science Department to run three day trips for Year 9 to these world-class museums. It was interesting to find out that probably only around half of the students had visited the museums before and it was great to give them the opportunity to visit and look around. In the morning session, the focus was on the Earth Sciences section of the Natural History Museum – finding about how earthquakes and volcanoes form; the Earth's history over 4.6 billion years of geological time; and also how all sorts of gems and minerals were formed. In the afternoon, we visited the Science Museum visiting a range of galleries which included displays ranging from some of the earliest steam engines through to the Apollo spacecraft which went to the moon.

Looking ahead we now have a bit of a break until mid-May when we will be taking the whole of Year 8 to Lulworth Cove over three days. They will complete investigations into coastal landforms and processes and will be rewarded with a fantastic ice cream at the end of the visit. In early June, we will take the Year 10 GCSE Geographers for a day trip to Bristol which will include the famous boat trip around the regenerated Bristol Docks. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff who have joined us on these trips. A huge thanks also needs to go to Mrs Michael for being the main organiser of the Year 9 trips and to Miss Pearson for her superb work as the school's trips' administrator.

Dr Newbold



## Year 11 Berlin Trip

On Wednesday 16th October, students from Y11 set off for their four day visit to Berlin. After a good flight, we arrived at the Aletto Hotel in Berlin ready for dinner. The first evening saw a trip to the 'Fernsehturm' (TV Tower), which at 368m tall is the city's most visible landmark.

On Thursday, students went on a tour of the 'Hohenschönhausen' memorial (the former Stasi Prison) where we learnt about the harsh conditions the political prisoners were kept in. Students also had some free time at 'Alexanderplatz', a vibrant public square in the centre of Berlin and also home to the TV Tower, and some students took the opportunity to order a 'Bratwurst mit Pommes' in German! In the afternoon we went to see the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which consists of 2,711 concrete slabs of varying heights, arranged in a grid pattern. The memorial serves as a powerful reminder of the past and a commitment to combating intolerance today. Very close by was the iconic Brandenburg Gate, which has represented both division and unity over the years, another iconic photo opportunity.

On Friday we left Berlin centre on the extensive public transport network to travel to the Sachsenhausen Memorial in Oranienburg, a former concentration camp, in the state of Brandenburg. Students had a detailed tour from an excellent guide who explained what had happened on the site. After lunch, we returned to the city centre to the Mall of Berlin, where some students found, amongst plenty of shops and cafes, the spiral slide inside the shopping centre. We returned to the hotel via Checkpoint Charlie, an iconic border crossing point between East and West Berlin during the Cold War. Our final evening was spent bowling and students all received an 'I love Berlin' wristband as a keepsake.

Our final day, Saturday, was also full of action, starting with a visit to the 'Tränenpalast' (Palace of Tears), so called because the border crossing point reflects the heartbreak and sorrow experienced by friends and families forced to part ways. We then went onto the Berlin Wall Memorial on



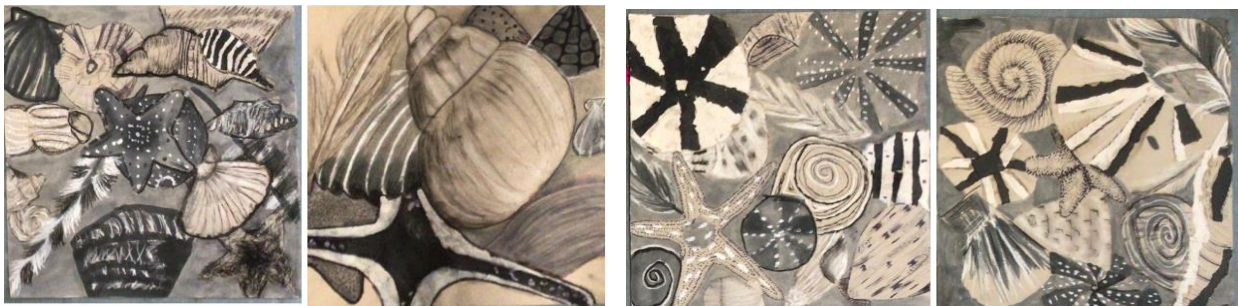
Bernauer Strasse, where students could get a sense of not only how high the Berlin Wall was, but also what no man's land looked like from the observation deck. We finished off the trip with a walk along the 1.3km East Side Gallery, the longest continuous section of the Berlin Wall still in existence.

The visit was a huge success, students represented themselves and the school incredibly well. Thanks to all staff who helped to organise and accompany the trip; it was a wonderful experience for Year 11.



## Art Update

Year 7 have been learning all about line, texture and tone this term. They have created these amazing mixed media shell pieces using oil pastel and ink, chalk and charcoal, pens, collage and pencils. I'm so impressed by their efforts!



Year 8 have been drawing and modelling owls. They were inspired by artists Clare Youngs and Alison Pink. Here is a small selection from our parliament of owls





Architecture has been the theme for Year 9 this term. Alongside learning about architectural features, iconic buildings and famous architects, students have been developing their skills in painting using just grayscale. Do you recognise the buildings?



Art captain, Izzy, has been busy making noughts and crosses boards out of clay with students from Years 7, 8 and 9 in Key stage three art club.

I can't share any Y10 and 11 work with you at the moment, but watch this space next term.

## Food Technology Update



It has been a busy term in Food this term in KS3 with the highlights being pizzas, enchiladas, Year 8 cake experiments, and macaroni and cheese being my personal highlights. The macaroni and cheese also got great feedback from parents at open evening. An impressive group of students also made hundreds of scones which everyone enjoyed. In KS4 one of the highlights of this term was the apple pie making lesson

where students did a variety of decorations for their pie tops which can be seen in this photo. Well done to everyone! And the Gillotts favourite chocolate brownies are on the menu for lessons soon.

## Performing Arts Update

The Performing Arts Department has started the 2024-2025 academic year as it means to go on - being very busy and very creative!

### **Year 9 Voices of the Holocaust Performance**

On Friday 8th November we were joined by Voices of The Holocaust, a theatre company who specialise in Verbatim work. They performed their play "Kindness: A legacy of the Holocaust" for all of Year 9 and to GCSE drama students in Year 10 and 11. The performance was incredibly hard hitting and students valued the hour long question and answer session afterwards, where students explored more about theatre, acting, devising and the historical context of the play.

Year 9 students are invited to enter a Birthday card competition: to send a 95th Birthday card to Susan Pollack MBE, the Holocaust survivor whose story was told in the play. More details on Year 9 Drama google classrooms.

### **Year 10 Voices of the Holocaust Verbatim Workshop**

On the morning of the performance Year 10 Drama students were lucky enough to take part in a workshop run by Cate Hollis, playwright for the performance. Cate launched their topic on verbatim theatre and took students through the process of adding movement sequences to real life testimony.

### **Year 8 Theatre Trip - Warhorse**

On the penultimate evening of term a group of year 8 students will head to Oxford to see Warhorse; this is an amazing production and I am sure that everyone will enjoy themselves.

### **KS3 Play - A Grimm Night for Hans Christian Andersen**

A spectacular show from all for the KS3 performance of a Grimm night for Hans Christian Andersen! The two nights of fun and laughter were a perfect reflection of the hard work put in over the last three months by the fabulous Gillotts students and the Drama team. From the vibrant costumes and the handmade signs to the entertaining deliveries and ruckus crowd chantings, Mrs Alder did a wonderful job as per usual.



### GCSE Music and Drama - Wicked the Musical

On Wednesday 4th December GCSE Music and Drama students went on a trip to the Apollo Victoria Theatre in London to see Wicked the Musical. A great time was had by all, thank you to Mr Grice for organising.



### Annie Jr Rehearsals

At the time of writing, rehearsals for Annie Jr are well under way. The performance will take to the stage in March 2025 and we are looking forward to seeing you all there. We continue our hunt for costumes, so if anyone has anything appropriate at the back of the wardrobe please let us know!

### The Carol Service

At the time of writing, we are busy with the last preparations for our annual carol service in St Mary's Church on Tuesday 17th December at 7pm. Our performers are working hard and we are looking forward to a festive evening of music and readings from our students, Performing Arts captains and staff.

### Clubs and Extracurricular

We continue to have many students who regularly attend Drama, Dance and Music rehearsals and it is lovely to see their dedication and enthusiasm. The Performing Arts Department is thriving as a place to learn as well as socialise. Please see the extra curricular schedule for details of how students can get involved.

Our Year 11 Music Captains recently organised assemblies for Year 7 & 8 where they shared information about the many instrumental lessons available at Gillotts as well as ensembles students can take part in. They shared personal experiences of how this has enriched their own time at Gillotts. If your child is interested in Instrumental or voice lessons at Gillotts please contact a member of the performing arts team for an information sheet.

## Careers Update

### Year 9 PSHE day: Career Bites

On Wednesday 2nd October, Year 9 were lucky enough to receive talks from a range of careers; the NHS, marketing, journalism and photography. Thank you to those parents that gave up their time to come and talk to our students; it was so great to bring careers 'alive' in the classroom. We also had Piggott School in to talk to Year 9 about their choices for GCSE, what their sixth form offer is and this ended with a very competitive and interactive quiz!



### Year 11 Post-16 evening

On Thursday 10th October, Year 11 students and their parents were invited to a post-16 information and revision evening. Following the talks by Mr Druce, Ms Stepney and Mrs Tristem and our ex-head student, Cameron Reyburn, parents and students were able to explore fifteen post-16 provider marketing stalls including Piggott, Borlase, Reading College, BCA and AWE Aldermaston.



### Year 10 Cambridge Workshop

On Tuesday 15th October, 40 selected Year 10 students participated in a workshop run by an outreach coordinator at the University of Cambridge. Students learned about the colleges at Cambridge, Russell Group universities and how A-level choices can affect your future career.

### Year 11 PSHE day: Henley College

On Thursday 14th November, Year 11 travelled to Henley College as part of their school partnership day. Students attended subject taster sessions, chosen beforehand, to gain an insight into A-levels and vocational diplomas. Students enjoyed their day and left feeling more confident about their post-16 choices.



### Reading College, Piggott and BCA Assemblies

Throughout this term, Activate Learning (through Reading College), BCA (Berkshire School of Agriculture) and The Piggott School have delivered assemblies to many year groups. These focussed on the range of options available when students leave Gillotts as well as giving students something to aspire to.

### Careers Adviser

#### Your Future, Brighter. Your Path, Clearer –

Charlotte van den Berghen, Careers Adviser - RCDP, Brighter Careers Coaching  
I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Independent Careers Adviser at Gillotts School. I am a qualified Level 6 Practitioner in Careers Guidance and Careers Leadership, with extensive experience working in both independent and state-maintained schools across Berkshire, London, and Oxfordshire. My mission is to empower students to make realistic and informed choices about their education, training, and career pathways by providing expert advice, information, and guidance. During one-to-one careers appointments, I use a combination of proven careers theories, psychometric assessments, and a wealth of experience to help students navigate their future with clarity and confidence. I aim to help each individual overcome self-limiting beliefs, discover their true potential, and develop a tailored action plan to achieve their goals. Additionally, I offer regular *Careers Clinics* during lunchtime in the library, where students can drop in for advice and guidance on any career-related questions they may have. I look forward to working with you and your children to equip them with the tools, confidence, and direction they need for their future success and happiness.

## PE Update

This year we have again been involved in the South Oxfordshire league for both Hockey and Rugby. Unfortunately, we have had some games in Hockey and Rugby cancelled - but in those played overall it has been another successful season in both sports.

In the area hockey tournaments and fixtures the results are as follows:

Year group	Won	Drew	Lost	Cancelled	Any other additional comments
7A	5	1	0	0	
7B	5	0	0		
8A	3	0	1	1	
8B	3	0	0	1	
9	2	0	1	1	
10	2	0	0	1	
11	1	0	0	1	

In Rugby results are as follows:

Year group	Won	Drew	Lost	Cancelled	Any other additional comments
7	4	0	0	1	Unbeaten all season
8	3	0	1	1	
9	4	0	0	2	2 of the year 9 boys were also involved in the year 10 County cup games
10	3	0	1	2	The year 10s beat Borlase in the first round of the National Cup convincingly 24 - 0. They then went on to play Claires Court in the next round - where they lost 3 tires to 5. This was still a good result as Claires Court had been putting 50 points past the other teams they had played all season.
11	3	0	1	2	

### Indoor Ergo Rowing Competition

Year 7 and 8 Girls - 2nd - with Emily Palmer achieving Individual Gold

Year 7 and 8 Boys - 2nd

Year 9 and 10 Girls - 1st - with Darcy Kenney achieving individual Gold, Isla Tate Silver and Livvy Baker Bronze

Year 9 and 10 Boys - 1st - with Alf Mosen achieving individual Gold and Will Salek achieving individual Bronze

Year 7 and 8 Team relay race - 3rd

Year 9 and 10 Team relay race - 1st

### **Duathlon**

We also did really well in the Duathlon (consisting of a 2k ergo row and a 2k run) held at Chiltern Edge School on November 6<sup>th</sup>.

U14 Girls - 2nd with Isabella Stobie achieving individual gold

U14 Boys - 2nd with Jack Clements achieving individual Silver

U16 Girls - 3rd

U16 Boys - 2nd - with Harry Rechner achieving individual Bronze

This was a great result for Gillotts -all the students tried so hard and did us and themselves proud.

### **South Oxfordshire Area Cross Country**

This was held at Gillotts on Tuesday 26th November - on what was a very cold by dry day. The results were as follows:

Year 7 Girls - 3rd

Year 7 Boys - 4th

Year 8/9 Girls - 1st with Zara Tate achieving Individual Gold - with the team clear of the other schools by 26 points

Year 8/9 Boys - 2nd - with Irving Paviour achieving individual Bronze and the team narrowly missing out on 1st place by 2 points

Year 10/11 Girls - 3rd with Bisan Musa achieving individual Bronze

Year 10/11 Boys - 1st with Josh Hatt achieving individual Gold

Henley Rowing Club have continued to offer ergo Rowing training every Friday lunchtime and we are also lucky enough to have a new Squash club on Thursday lunchtimes which is being run by Henley Squash club.

Hayley Rogers

Head of PE

## RS Winter Competition Winner

For thousands of years, winter has been a special time for lots of different religions and cultures around the world. Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs all celebrate important festivals at this time of year, as well as people from many other religions and people from no religion as well.

To celebrate the diverse range of beliefs and backgrounds at Gillotts, we invited students in Years 7, 8 and 9 to take part in our winter decorations competition.



## Crochet Club

Gillotts became part of a new Henley Herald Christmas initiative in partnership with St Mary's Church – a Christmas Tree Festival. Many Churches around the UK hold these during December and invite members of the community to purchase a tree and decorate it for others to then visit and admire. The Festival aims to raise money for the church which this year is in need more after a burglary to the church in March when expensive items were stolen. All the trees were supplied by the Tree Barn along with a donation to the church. The trees could be decorated with any theme. Gillotts Crochet Club chose the theme: Crochet Christmas Night at Gillotts School. The crochet club members became very busy making lots of creatures that run around the school when all the students and staff have left! Every decoration that is on the tree was crocheted by a student and member of the club. Jim Bland (DT technician) made some beautiful wooden toys to sit around the base of the tree for the crochet mice to have fun in! Katy Greene (crochet club teacher) made Catrina the cat that is sitting proudly at the base of the tree. Violet Sindall (crochet club lead), made a special bee to crown the top of the tree. Rosie Elson and Violet Sindall decorated the tree for Gillotts on December 2nd. Between December 3rd and 15th, visitors to the church were invited to choose their favourite tree and vote for it. A prize will be given for the best tree.





## Library Clubs

This term we have been running three weekly clubs in the library, to help students focus more on collaborative activities with the smart phone ban coming into force.

### Tabletop Games

This takes place on Tuesday lunch-times and is run by Mrs Seddon and Mr Delorenzi. We bring in our own games, as we both have quite a collection. Games need to be reasonably quiet although silence is of course not required. We have also had to cater for the possibility of students dropping in and out, depending on when they eat lunch, and other commitments. We always have some quick games available such as Uno, Shut the Box and a Build Stonehenge game. For longer sessions we have Herd Mentality, Taco Cat Goat Cheese Pizza (a fast-paced card game), Senet (an Egyptian game) and Top Trumps. Mr Delorenzi has also introduced us to other lesser-known card games from his collection. Students are welcome to bring along a game that they would like to play; occasionally we have break-out groups and some have played chess. The club is open to all year groups but is dominated by Years 7 and 8. Sometimes Years 10 and 11 like to take a break from their study and join us.



### Arts and Crafts

This is our regular club which has been active for a few years but has become even more popular this term. Our focus is on making decorations and useful items out of old books and using any materials which need upcycling or which are biodegradable. Students are welcome to make items for using in library displays or to take home. We also use yarn and old CDs/DVDs. If there is a seasonal theme to the week, then we use that for inspiration. Before half-term we decorated two real pumpkins with pictures and graffiti, demonstrating that you can have fun with Halloween themed decorating without necessarily wasting a pumpkin – as they have a habit of going mouldy once carved! We also made paper pumpkins and wrote some new acrostic poems based on the ones in the fabulous book 'The Lost Words' by Robert McFarlane and Jackie Morris – if you don't have this book, it really is a book to treasure and would make a great Christmas gift! (suitable for all ages).

We continued to explore the possibilities of the classic pom pom maker, following last year's activity of making hedgehog pom pom decorations for Christmas. Over the past few weeks we have also been making Eco Christmas Crackers, stars from old book pages and some hand-crafted cards.

## Eco Club

Sometimes the themes and activities in Eco Club merge somewhat with those in Arts and Crafts Club; the aims of both clubs are in some respects very similar. At Eco Club in addition, we take part in whole school activities, helping to achieve some of the aims and objectives of applying for our Green Flag Award. This term members of the club had the opportunity to meet Doug Gurr from the Natural History Museum concerning a Habitat Mapping project.

Led by Mrs Michael, members of the club also took part in a pollution analysis activity, which was followed up by a morning visit to Henley College. A morning of activities organised by Greener Henley involved our students, as well as those from other local secondary schools, leading some eco experiments with primary school children. Our Eco Club members were a wonderful example to the community of what fantastic work is going on at Gillotts with regard to climate change awareness projects.

We have also been checking on the Quad planters and doing some pruning activity, as well as identifying some bird song and plants, with the aid of Mrs Seddon's smart phone.

On cold/wet days, we have an informal group discussion in the library about the environment and recycling, whilst making eco decorations for display. One week, students were enjoying some of the inspiring eco books in the library and creating posters based on the books.



## Reorganising the Library into Genres



For some time now, I have been taking fiction books out of the alphabetical author sequence and sorting them into genres. This term we decided to complete the project. This did mean some moving of library lessons back to classrooms; this has meant the project has progressed much more speedily than was possible before. Most students have been really keen to take out books and have come to use the

library and borrow books out of lesson time. The project has meant my taking a good look at the books and discarding some which are out of date and/or too tatty to be of interest. Our new look fiction library is now almost ready; it has been back in use for library lessons for the last week and a half of term. There is more signage to be completed and more stickers to be added to books but otherwise the genres are on display and clearly in separate sections. A reminder of the link to our library catalogue: using the drop-down menu under 'Quick Lists', it is possible to find themed lists for instance on Historical Fiction, Christmas, Dystopia and so on.

<https://uk.accessit.online/g1100/#!/dashboard> - all students should be familiar with this link, which is accessible via their online planner and also if they have the tile page set up on their devices.

### Duke of Edinburgh Volunteers

This term we have had a brilliant team of Year 9 volunteers, all working towards their Bronze Award. I hope that I have included all the relevant names here:

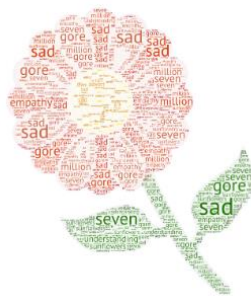
Aaron Phillips	Louis Wootton
Christopher Booth	Benji Rilett
Swarup and Ojas Joshi	Jack Clements
Sophie Clarke	

Their tasks this term have mainly been to assist with the moving of fiction books and labelling them with their genre stickers, as well as helping with our blackboard displays and adding some library usage statistics to a spreadsheet. Being a D of E volunteer in the school library is fantastic work experience, as well as aiding me considerably with tasks in the library.

Some of our previous volunteers have chosen to stay after the required three months for D of E, and help in the library for the sheer fun of it! (and maybe some house points).

### Berkshire Book Award

Year 7 and 8 students are very engaged with this award, which gives them the opportunity to read, review and rate some of the best up and coming children's fiction being published today. The award always includes some lesser known authors, thanks to the wide selection of new fiction available in our school library. Many of these books come to us free from publishers because of our involvement with another brilliant award, the **Children's Book Award**, which is a national award. The books on the longlist for BBA were very much influenced by the choices of students at Gillotts. A group has been selected to read the books in more detail and to help to select the shortlist; this will include a trip to Reading Blue Coat School in January – more about this next term. Some of the students in the BBA group have created word clouds based on the longlisted books.



This is a word cloud based on *Seven Million Sunflowers* by Malcolm Duffy. Agatha created this and it was much admired by the author on Twitter!

A reminder of some useful links for finding inspiring books, in addition to our own library catalogue link mentioned earlier:

<https://www.berkshirebookaward.org.uk/> for the longlists and to follow progress of the awards

<https://fcbg.org.uk/childrens-book-award-2024/> for books and information about this national award

<https://uk.bookshop.org/> If you want to buy books as gifts, this website supports independent bookshops, if that is easier than going to the bookshop in your nearest town

<https://www.readingjackdaw.co.uk/> inspiring reading lists created by another School Librarian

<https://childrensbooksequels.co.uk/> this one helps you to find the order of a series

<https://www.whonextguide.com/access/Gillotts> this is a paid for subscription available to Gillotts students. It gives ideas for what to read next and to explore genres.

<https://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/account/GoogleSSO> this link gives you access to the small library of e books that we hold at Gillott

## Term dates for 2024 - 2025

The dates set out below are the confirmed school term and holiday dates from September 2024.

Term	Dates	Number of days
<b>Autumn Term</b>	02 September - 25 October	40
October half term	28 October - 1 November	
<b>Autumn Term</b>	4 November - 20 December	35
Christmas holiday	23 December - 03 January	
<b>Spring Term</b>	06 January - 14 February	30
Spring half term	17 February - 21 February	
<b>Spring Term</b>	24 February - 04 April	30
Easter Holiday	07 April - 21 April	
<b>Summer Term</b>	22 April - 23 May	23
Late Spring half term	26 May - 30 May	
<b>Summer Term</b>	02 June - 22 July	37
<b>Total</b>		195

### INSET days

The school will be closed to students on:

Monday 2 September 2024

Tuesday 3 September 2024

Friday 27 September 2024

Monday 21 July 2025

Tuesday 22 July 2025

**Note** that only Year 7 and Year 10 (and Year 11 Leaders) are required to attend on Wednesday 4 September 2024. The remainder of the school returns on Thursday 5 September 2024.

Monday 5 May 2025 is the May Day bank holiday.

### Early closures (12.30pm)

Thursday 26 September 2024

Friday 20 December 2024

Friday 18 July 2025

Staff and students preparation for Open Evening

## Term dates for 2025 - 2026

The dates set out below are the confirmed school term and holiday dates from September 2025.

Term	Dates	Number of days
<b>Autumn Term</b>	01 September - 24 October	40
October half term	27 October - 31 October	
<b>Autumn Term</b>	03 November - 19 December	35
Christmas holiday	22 December - 02 January	
<b>Spring Term</b>	05 January - 13 February	30
Spring half term	16 February - 20 February	
<b>Spring Term</b>	23 February - 27 March	25
Easter Holiday	30 March - 10 April	
<b>Summer Term</b>	13 April - 22 May	29
Late Spring half term	25 May - 29 May	
<b>Summer Term</b>	01 June - 20 July	36
<b>Total</b>		195

### INSET days

The school will be closed to students on:

Monday 1 September 2025

Friday 26 September 2025

Thursday 23 October 2025

Friday 24 October 2025

Monday 20 July 2026

**Note** that only Year 7 and Year 10 (and Year 11 Leaders) are required to attend on Tuesday 2 September 2025. The remainder of the school returns on Wednesday 3 September 2025.

Monday 4 May 2026 is the May Day bank holiday.

### Early closures (12.30pm)

Thursday 25 September 2025

Friday 19 December 2025

Friday 17 July 2026

Staff and students preparation for Open Evening