



The Joseph Whitaker School *Newsletter*

- December 2023

Dear Joseph Whitaker families,

I write this message at the end of yet another busy term; this edition of the Newsletter focuses on many of the events and achievements since the end of the first half-term.

As usual we are ending this term with our annual Dance Competition - a highlight of our school calendar.

Please take the time to look through the newsletter which celebrates many of the extra-curricular opportunities offered by the school, and also celebrates some of the out of school achievements of our very talented students.

Thank you to all the staff for their hard work this year, particularly in leading the various activities and experiences; I am always so proud of the high level of commitment shown here at JWS.

I know that many of our staff have received thank you messages from both students and parents, may I thank you in return for taking the time to recognise the care and dedication of our staff.

Thank you to you all in supporting your child with their education; the home-school partnership is so important for the success of our young people.

I wish you all a restful Christmas break and a Happy New Year. We look forward to welcoming all students back on Monday 8th January 2024.

Warmest wishes

Carey Ayres

Headteacher

Upcoming Events



4th January 2024 – Spring Term starts

17th January 2024 – Year 10 Virtual Parents Evening

31st January 2024 – Guided Choices Evening 5pm

Monday 12th – Friday 16th February 2024 – Halfterm

22nd February 2024 – Year 9 Parents Evening (face to face)

6th March 2024 – Year 11 Parents Evening (face to face)

27th March 2024 Year 12 and Year 13 Virtual Parents Evening

28th March 2024 – Spring Term ends

Examinations Information

January External Examinations

Wednesday 10th January – Wednesday 17th January 2024 – External Examinations

January Internal Assessments

Monday 15th January – Friday 19th January (Inclusive) – Year 9 Mid Year Assessments

Parent Consultation Evenings Spring Term

Thursday 22nd February – Year 9 Parent consultation evening – Face to Face

Wednesday 27th March – Year 12 & 13 Virtual Parent Consultation Evening

Trips and Visits



Nottingham Forest vs Everton

On **Saturday 2nd December** nine students attended the Premier League Nottingham Forest V Everton match. Prior to the match students were able to try various technologies such as Virtual Reality games,

robot programming and the latest FIFA game. Despite the icy conditions and disappointing result, a great time was had by all. This was courtesy of Nottingham Forest Football Club.

[#Nottinghamforestcommunitytrust](#) [#Thinkbiggoals](#)





Battlefields



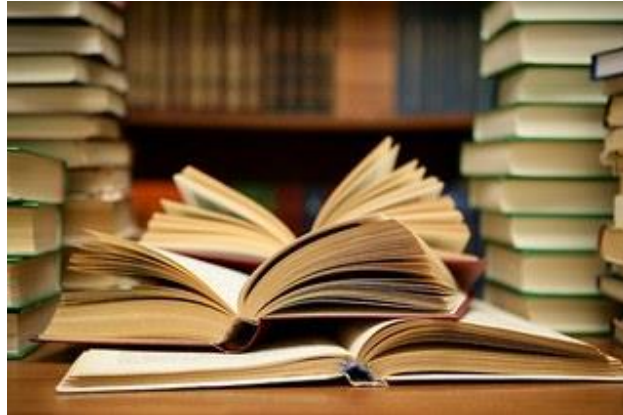
Forty-five Year 11 History students participated on the Battlefields of World War One Trip to Northern France and Belgium. The students had an opportunity to visit the locations of the Battle of the Somme in France by taking in the sheer size of the Lochnagar Crater and walking through the original trench dug outs at Sanctuary Wood. The students then attended the Canadian memorial at Vimy Ridge and were guided round Newfoundland Park by a Canadian University student who gave the students a tour and further education on the importance of the site during the battle and the sacrifices of the Newfoundland Regiment.

In Belgium for Remembrance Day, the students visited the numerous British Commonwealth cemeteries; Tyne Cot British Cemetery, Essex Farm Cemetery & Dressing Station. During the two minutes silence, students paid their respects at the German Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery. The trip finished with by the

students observing the Last Post Ceremony at Menin Gate in Ypres. We were very proud to have three students to represent our school who laid a wreath, Olivia Armstrong, Harry Talma and William Davey.



Week of Words



On Monday 11th December we started our reading festival called the Week of Words which celebrates the love of reading and how important words are in careers in the arts today. We hosted many exciting workshops and events from authors, illustrators and journalists. Martin Walker was our first author who worked with Year 7 students, looking at his books in the Hybrid series. Paula Rawsthorne, author, joined us on Tuesday and celebrated her writing with Year 8 groups.

A very special guest joined Year 11 on Tuesday, Simon Winston, to talk about his experience as a child in the Holocaust. This was an incredibly moving and emotional event which Simon commended the students' response on, and Simon himself said he enjoyed and benefited immensely from. Jay Sandhu worked with a small group of students creating 'A Book in a Day' with poems, illustrations and stories – we look forward to this being published.

On Wednesday of the Week of Words we welcomed author Darren Simpson who led a fantastic Year 7 assembly entitled *Turning your Lemons into Lemonade* and then a Year 8 assembly looking at creating fictional villains. Julie Malone worked with our Year 7 students on Ghost Stories and then delivered a special workshop for the Carnegie Book Club.

Last Thursday we met Ian C Douglas (author) who worked with students in Years 8 and 9 on developing fantasy characters; Ben McPherson (poet) worked with Key Stage 4 and 5 Drama students and Megan Turner, BBC Journalist, worked with Year 10 Film Studies students.

We were very excited to have Nick Sharratt, the famous illustrator of Tracy Beaker and many more books, *zoom in* to share his knowledge with Year 10 GCSE Art classes; Nick is an ex-student of The Joseph Whitaker School and it was wonderful to have him share his work with current students.

Friday completed the focus week with Professor Natalie Barber (Nottingham Trent University) working on linguistics and the Nottinghamshire dialect with Year 10 and Jason Henson, crime novelist and psychologist, speaking to our Sixth Form students and running a special lunchtime club for budding crime authors.

During lunchtime on Friday we hosted a *book fair* and *book swap* through which students shared their love of reading by picking up a new book or two! Six students also received vouchers as prizes for their wonderful story boards which they had created as part of the school wide competition - well done to all of those who entered.

Thank you to all of our visitors and everyone who took part in the various activities – we had a fantastic week!

Proud to be Us!

Year 7

Oliwia Zembrzuka

James Walker

Year 8

Jack Smith

Reicela Reinhold

Year 9

Ollie Cornish

Thomas Speir

A few authors commented on our students and these show what lovely young adults we have in school and are proud of every day.

The pupils were really enthusiastic and full of ideas - some of them even started going beyond the workshop's remit by writing stories!

I really enjoyed working with all the Year 8 groups. I was SO impressed with some of the writing created.

What a wonderful group of people I got to work with today. Thank you so much for booking me, there's a lot of talent in your young people.

Performing Arts



School Band Spread Holiday Cheer at Kingsmill Hospital

On December 21st, the school band and swing band continued their annual tradition of bringing festive tunes to Kingsmill Hospital. This low-key yet heartfelt event has become a community favourite, offering a touch of holiday spirit to patients and visitors.

The bands, featuring talented individuals like Alex Holmes and Gabriel White on alto saxophone, Herbie Skidmore on tenor saxophone, Cillian Dyne on guitar, Mr. Ball on bass guitar, Tom Rhodes on trombone, Matt Rhodes and Mr. Gillott on clarinet, Ruby North on flute, Ruby Westmoreland on violin, and Harrison Bradshaw and Leo Armstrong on percussion, played a mix of familiar tunes. Special thanks to our woodwind teacher, Ms. Beedle, and alumni Evie Farr and Abi West, for joining in the musical festivities.

Rocking Around the School: Highlights from the Christmas Concert

On December 19th, our school came alive with the spirit of the season during the Christmas concert, a delightful showcase of musical talent. The evening featured a diverse line-up, spanning an impressive hour and a half of performances, compered by Mr Ball and Mr Gillott.

Among the highlights were the Y7 rock bands, diligently honing their skills after school under the guidance of Mr. Pottage. The school band, Y11 GCSE ensemble pieces, and Y12 and Y13 BTEC Music groups delivered captivating performances, showcasing the depth of talent across different year groups. Ms. Beedle's swing band added a jazzy touch to the festivities, while solos from singing students, violinists, the school choir, and the guitar group provided a rich tapestry of musical genres.

A shoutout goes to the Junior Band, whose fantastic performance highlighted the promising talent of tomorrow. The Christmas concert was a testament to the collective musical prowess within our school community, making it a joyous celebration of the holiday season.

Harmonizing Generations: School Band Spreads Festive Cheer at Ravens Lodge

On December 18th, our school band, accompanied by talented Year 10 singers Emily Rainbow and Ella Salter, brought holiday joy to the local pensioners' Christmas lunch at Ravens Lodge in Ravenshead. The heart-warming performance featured a mix of traditional carols, modern Christmas tunes, and timeless classics.

Equipped with books of lyrics, the elderly members of the community actively participated, singing along to beloved songs ranging from "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" to "Silent Night." The event was hosted by Cornwater Evergreens, offering companionship and a vibrant environment for older individuals to socialise and engage in a variety of activities throughout the day.

Our students' musical talents not only entertained but also fostered a sense of community, bridging the generational gap and spreading the spirit of togetherness during this festive season.

Oh yes they did! Staff Panto Delivers Hilarious Take on Robin Hood

In a rollicking display of talent and humour, the staff panto presented "Robin Hood," a production by former English teacher Ms. Curley and our own Mr. Ball. The evening performances were a riot, with Friday night's show proving that the staff not only knew what they were doing but also how to make the audience burst into laughter.

Ms. Mayes reprised her role as Robin Hood with panto heroism, accompanied by her sidekick brother, Little John (Ms. Morgan from English), and the hilariously smelly love interest, Maid Marian (Ms. Henderson from Drama). Ms. Riley's magical performance as the Magic Fairycorn and Mr. Ball's comically evil dances as the Sheriff of Nottingham added to the amusement.

A stellar supporting cast of villagers, guards, and the king (Ms. Lee, Ms. Bexon, Mrs. Newey, Ms. Turley, Ms. Wilde, Mr. Davies, Mrs. Lewis, and Mrs. Bingham) enhanced the comedic atmosphere. The show's standout, however, was our new Deputy Head, who made a memorable debut as White Post Ma'am (the dame and Robin's mother, unrelated to White Post Farm). His energetic performance even involved bringing an audience member on stage for dinner, adding an interactive and unforgettable element to the hilarity. In summary, a funny and riotous show – “in my pants”!

Ben Macpherson Brings Real-world Drama Insight to School Workshops

Local writer and performer, Ben Macpherson, recently led workshops for our GCSE and A-level drama groups, focusing on the art of devising—an essential aspect of their exams. Known for his involvement in the GOBS Collective and as a director of the Nottingham Poetry Festival, Ben's visit provided students with practical insights into the world of performance.

In these sessions, Ben not only met the exam requirements but also shared his genuine industry knowledge. Having been involved in poetry and spoken word projects since the mid-2010s, he offered a unique perspective that resonated with our students.

Ben's first book, *Serious Nonsense (for Terribly Grown-Up People)*, was released earlier this year. His workshops not only enriched our drama students' understanding of their craft but also highlighted the real-world applications of their studies.

School Choir's Stellar Performance at Royal Concert Hall

On December 4th, our school choir and snow chorus captivated the audience at The Royal Concert Hall with a remarkable performance. Prior to the event, 25 students participated in two workshops with Matt Roughley from the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, honing their skills for the big night.

The evening concert featured our students singing in three-part harmony alongside peers from other schools in Nottingham. Their repertoire included lively renditions of "Sparkle and Shine" from *Nativity!* and "Somewhere Only We Know." Mrs. Ambler, our dedicated singing teacher, provided invaluable vocal direction.

The concert was a collaborative affair, bringing together students, professional musicians, primary schools, and the Dementia choir. Our thanks go to Mrs. Ambler for her guidance in shaping these memorable performances. The evening was a testament to the students' musical talents and the spirit of unity in shared harmonies.

National Youth Choir Workshop

Our school was honoured to welcome Matt Roughley, a director of the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, for an enriching workshop that left a lasting impact on 30 of our finest singers. This diverse group comprised members of the school choir and the snow chorus from the school production cast. In this collaborative session, Matt guided the students through the intricacies of three-part harmony, imparting not just musical knowledge but also fostering a sense of unity and shared passion.

The enthusiasm and talent displayed by our students fantastic, and their receptiveness to Matt's expertise was evident in the strides they made during the workshop. Inspired by the festive season, Matt introduced an African Christmas song, adding a unique and culturally rich dimension to the repertoire.

We're thrilled to announce that these students will showcase their newfound skills in a live concert at the prestigious Royal Concert Hall in Nottingham on Monday, December 4th, at 7 pm. For those unable to attend in person, the concert will be live-streamed, providing an opportunity for a broader audience to witness the harmonious culmination of dedication and musical education. Don't miss this chance to support our talented performers as they bring the joy of music to life!

Hockley Hustle

In the exhilarating atmosphere of The Hockley Hustle music festival during the October half term, our school proudly showcased the extraordinary musical prowess of six talented Year 11 musicians. Commanding the stage at Suede Bar, these budding artists demonstrated exceptional skill and confidence, seamlessly blending into the professional milieu of this well-attended event.

Josh Cappin, with finesse, presented original compositions on the piano, while Elissa Schofield captivated the audience with showstopping ballads. Eva Collopy transported listeners with beautiful renditions from musicals, and Hattie Davies delivered emotive pop ballads. Matthew Rhodes took the stage by storm with an extravagant performance of a Steve Vai electric guitar piece, and Gabriel White serenaded the crowd with the iconic 'Careless Whisper' on the saxophone.

This experience was more than a performance; it was a testament to the incredible talent within our school community. The Hockley Hustle music festival provided a platform for these musicians to shine, offering a glimpse into the future of the music industry. We applaud their dedication and artistry, recognizing this as a fantastic opportunity for the stars of tomorrow to share their gifts with a wider audience.

On the back of this, Elissa was invited to perform at Fire Rock in Sutton in Ashfield in November and perform her own full set – incredible work!

Soapbox Challenge – Public Speaking Competition

The Soapbox Challenge public speaking competition happened in October. In Drama lessons, every student in Year 8 and 9 wrote their own speech and learnt how to perform it. Three students from every class were then nominated to perform their speech on the stage in front of a packed hall of students. They were phenomenal! Students discussed issues as diverse as the economic burden of golf, the government, the length of school holidays and why cereal is so good! The winners were:

Year 8: Jessica Smith on School Uniform

Year 9: Tilly Thompson on Feminism

Can I just say something crazy?

Frozen rehearsals are underway! Well done to the 147 students who auditioned to be in the cast for our whole-school production of Frozen (taking place in February). Students are now learning lines and choreography, musicians are preparing to 'let it go' and the art department are making snowmen, reindeer and oh so much snow! Save the date – performances will be on the evenings of the 6th-9th February 2024.

The music industry visit KS4 and KS5 students

In September, we were lucky enough to be visited by WaterBear – a college based in London and Sheffield – who brought industry performers, producers and singer-songwriters to share their experience in a workshop with our KS4 and KS5 music students. The conversations had by our students has given them ideas for the future and knowledge to tackle the 'Music Industry' exam in our Level 3 BTEC Music.

Duke of Edinburgh Trips



The School's 2023/24 Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme was launched during the first half of the autumn term and following the challenges of the COVID pandemic this year we have a very encouraging 140 participants across the three levels of the Award, including a record-breaking 25 sixth formers doing Gold!

The first two training weekends of the school year have taken place at Pindale Farm Outdoor Centre in the Peak District. At the end of November, Silver candidates enjoyed cold but fine weather for their training weekend, the Saturday being especially pleasant with blue skies and fantastic views from Mam Tor and Win Hill.

A fortnight later the first of two Gold training weekends brought somewhat more "British" weather, with torrential rain and gale force winds on the Saturday evening. Staff and students alike were happy to be in sturdy bunkhouse accommodation rather than under canvas. Sunday saw the teams taking to the moors above Hathersage to test their enhanced navigation skills, which will be further honed during the second Gold training weekend in the Yorkshire Dales in March.

Please look out for an announcement regarding the presentation evening for students who achieved the Bronze, Silver or Gold Award during the 2022/23 school year.

Tony O'Donnell

DofE Manager









Owl Sculpture



On Thursday 30th November we were pleased to welcome Woodie's Wings and Miner 2 Major to celebrate the official unveiling of our new owl sculpture. The sculpture marks 60 years of learning at The Joseph Whitaker School and the Eco Club worked with sculptor Richard James to design the owl and then approximately 30 students and staff helped carve the final piece. Students got to experience and hold five species of owl as part of the celebration.

@Miner2major



Hospitality and Catering Event



1 - On Monday 18th December Year 11 took part in the Tunnocks Teacake Challenge! This is a practical challenge that is popular in the Hospitality and Catering education sector which promotes higher level decoration skills. The purpose of the challenge is to present a Tunnocks Teacake in the style of a dessert. The students had the chance to practice some complex practical and decoration skills which will help prepare them for their practical cooking exam at the end of January. Well done! You did a fantastic job.

Sporting Achievements



Lawrence Burton - Year 13

Lawrence in the desert!

In October Lawrence Burton returned from representing the England under 17s indoor cricket team at the Junior World Series in Dubai, organised by the World Indoor Cricket Federation.

This was the first Junior World Series since 2018. Each country was represented by teams at under 13s, 15s and 17s in both boys and girls. Lawrence was the only player from Notts. He was pleased to receive video messages of support from England and Notts legend Stuart Broad and current Notts and Trent Rockets star, Steven Mullaney.

As expected, the England teams faced some tough opposition from the southern hemisphere nations, where this form of cricket is hugely popular. In Lawrence's under 17 category the gold medal match was between Australia and New Zealand with the Kiwi's coming out on top. With not progressing to the final stages, England's under 17s then played in the separate Shield event where they progressed to the final and beat the host nation UAE. This meant they were invited onto the stage at the closing ceremony to collect their medals. All the games were live streamed on YouTube and with much coverage on social media it is hoped this form of the game will grow and develop in England.

Lawrence has said that it was a relentless 11 days of having to be at his peak both physically and mentally. The constant training, playing, more training, and supporting the other English teams was demanding. He said: 'The games are fast paced with the ball always in play so there is no room for lapses in concentration and all team members have to bat and bowl. I field front court leg side and have an important role in getting run outs and stopping runs being scored. I have to be very sharp in the field as I field so close to the batsman meaning I don't have much room for error. Due to my performances in the group stage games I was selected to play in the semi final and the final'. The under 17s had an experienced Aussie coach and he remarked during a stint on co-commentating duties that there was nobody better in that fielding position at the tournament.

Lawrence says it was a massive honour to wear the three lions and the ECB logo. He was able to meet players and coaches from the other major cricket playing nations and swap shirts and badges.





Abigail Rich - Year 12

Abigail took part in the East Midlands School Trampolining Competition (BGSA) via her trampolining club, Night Flyers. The competition was held on Sunday 3rd December in Hinckley and Abigail came 2nd!

Super proud of her, she did really well.

Cross Country

Football

The Year 11 boys football team were knocked out of the English Schools Cup after a tight fought match against Ashfield School. Having beaten Ashfield in the Mansfield Cup final the last two years, they were out for revenge, and were leading 1-0 at half time. With a change in formation the second half was a different story and we dominated throughout, but ultimately were undone at set pieces and lost 3-2.

The MA-Cup 7-a-side season kicked off with the Year 7 boys event in the last week of November. After a battling performance they unfortunately didn't manage to secure a place in the finals. The Year 11 boys, out to defend their title, started with a shaky loss to Quarrydale but then went on to beat all other schools without conceding a goal and progress on to the final.

Moving into the New Year we have the boys Year 9, 11 and 6th Form teams still in with a shout in the Mansfield and District Cup. While in the County Cup the Year 7 boys are through to the quarter final and Year 8 boys to round three. We wish all teams the best of luck in the New Year.

On Wednesday 13th December the final Year 7/8 girls CVL football tournament took place on our 3G pitch. This was run as part of the FA Girls Programme to increase opportunities for competitive fixtures. A total of 14 teams have participated from schools across Newark and Sherwood, Mansfield and Ashfield districts with around 150 girls taking part. It was a great success for our students as we were 2nd in the A league and winners in the B league, with the events being supported by our fantastic Year 10 football activators.

We have had many successes in cross country this half term. In the country cross country league that take places at Berry Hill park on Saturday mornings our Year 7 boys team were crowned winners so congratulations to Wilf Oliver, Owen Cooper, Will McClemens, Euan Baxter and Harry Wright.

Within the same competition individual medals came in the form of gold for Jude Ryan (U16 boys) who finished first in all three of the races and became county league champion. Oliver McClemens also walked away with a medal as he claimed silver in the U14 boys category.

