

RISE *and* SHINE



Spring 2026



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WADDES DON

Voice

magazine

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This term's cover picture shows Year 9's Taffy and her shining performance at the Big Gig in February. You can read about the incredible contributions of all of our musicians at the Big Gig in our article on Page16.



From the Headteacher

*"You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may tread me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise."*

*Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise."*

These words come from Maya Angelou's famous poem, 'Still I rise' in which she addresses racial inequalities, oppression and deliberate deception. It is a powerful, beautiful poem which transcends pettiness and injustice by reminding us that even if we are downtrodden and dispossessed, we will rise. It is a hymn to human dignity and to hope.

Why, you may ask, however, has it come to mind for this term's edition of the *Voice*?

Each time we go to print, I am reminded of the optimism and promise of our young people. I am reminded how they rise to challenges, lift and inspire others. Through their creative flourishing, public speaking (in assemblies, the mock trials or the Model United Nations) and through curiosity and connection to wider opportunities, their talents shine out as their potential is unlocked.

The majority of what you are about to read here is authored by them; it is their voices you are hearing and it is their reflections on how school-life enhances and sustains them. And for that reason, it provides me with profound hope, "springing high", when I read the *Voice*. I hope that is also your experience.

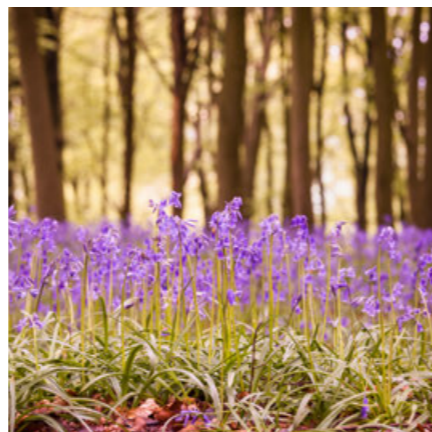
More philosophically, Maya Angelou's poem also squarely addresses the challenges that we all face in life, whether they be ones of discrimination, adversity and disadvantage, or even gossip and misrepresentations of facts and events. It reminds us that "just like moon and like suns...still 'we'll' rise." Life can be very tough; people can be mean; things go wrong. But that does not need to define who we are, what we believe in and how we live our lives.



Matthew Abbott

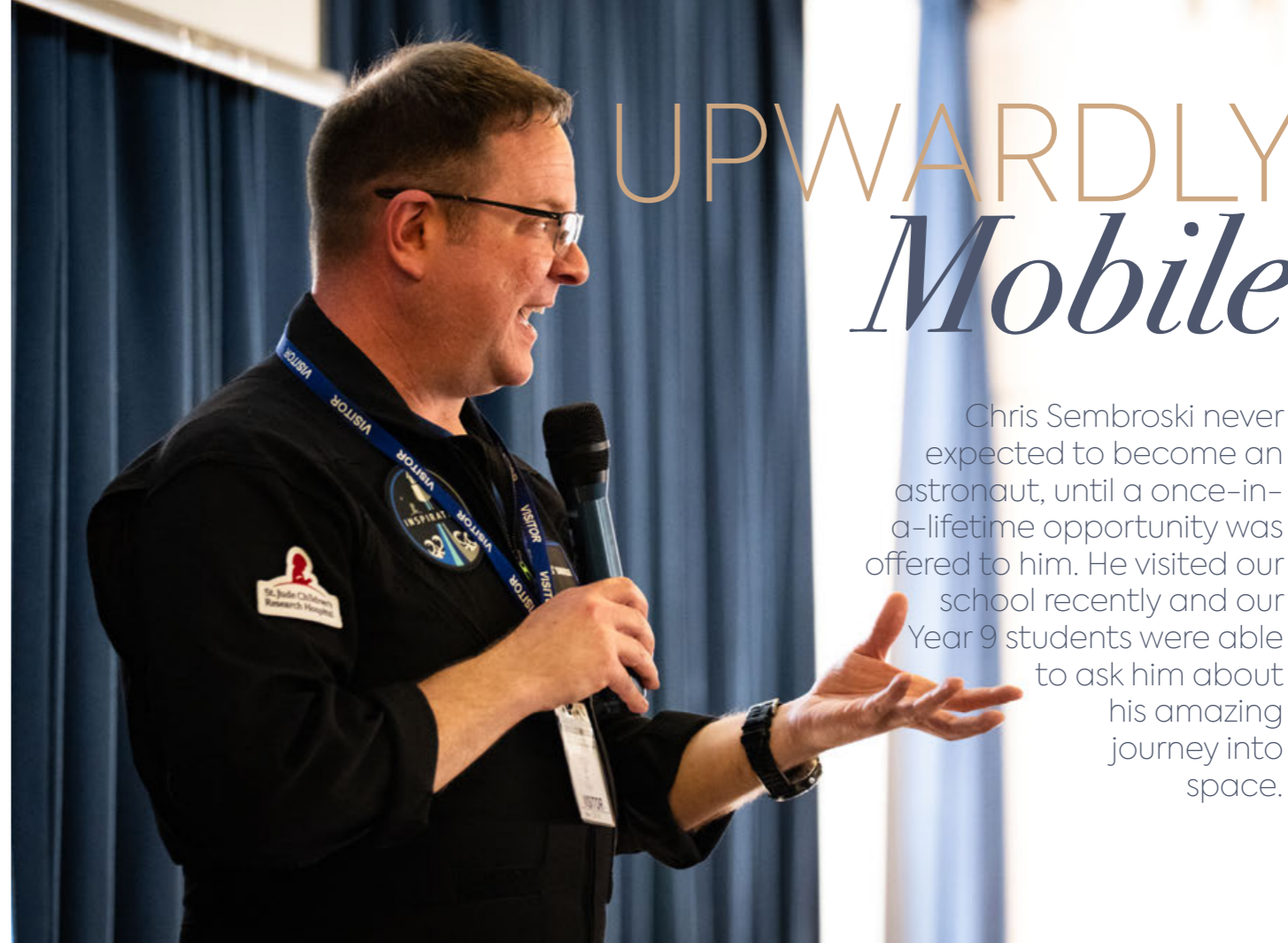
Recently, we learnt that Waddesdon students' attendance is significantly better than similar schools up and down the country. When young people - supported by their families, of course - attend school every day, they are more likely to feel valued. Rather prosaically, the words of the poem recall the phrase: "rise and shine". If we don't rise, we can't shine; if we are disengaged, absent or do not embrace the possibility of life, we diminish our potential.

Finally, at this time of year, many people's thoughts turn to the message of Easter. As our vicar, Revd. Caroline says in her thoughtful words on page 8, "God's answer to the darkness of Good Friday was not despair, but resurrection. In other words, the world began to rise and shine again." As we leave the period of Lent, which starts on Ash Wednesday with the reminder that we are born of "dust" and ends with the resurrection on Easter Sunday, I hope that the promise of the risen Christ, or your own personal beliefs, enable you to 'rise', to 'shine' for others and to embrace life in all its bewildering and wonderful fullness.

UPWARDLY
Mobile

Chris Sembroski never expected to become an astronaut, until a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity was offered to him. He visited our school recently and our Year 9 students were able to ask him about his amazing journey into space.

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Felix: Chris Sembroski is an ordinary person who got the chance to go to space. When he was younger he always liked science and technology; he enjoyed building small rockets and learning how things worked. This interest in science later helped him become part of an amazing mission.

One day Chris saw an advert during an American football game. The advert said that someone could win the chance to become an astronaut. Chris entered, and after a long process he was chosen. Before the flight he had to do lots of training like a huge spinning machine that tested how much G-force he could handle. The training prepared him for the launch.

Chris flew to space with three other members. One was a very rich businessman who paid for the mission. Another was a woman who had a metal prosthetic leg. Another crew member was a woman who worked in science. When their spacecraft launched, the engines created glowing smoke that looked like a giant jellyfish in space. Chris could look through the cupola window and see the Earth.

I found that it was interesting to see that a normal person could grow up to be so inspiring and follow their dreams.

Sarah: On Thursday 5th, a well-known astronaut named Chris Sembroski, who came from SpaceX's 'Inspiration4' group, came and talked to Year 9 about his journey to space.

He first started talking about how he

got in, then about the people he did it with, and followed up with the rough preparation he had to go through with three others to confirm they were durable enough to withstand the intense G forces.

Finally, he talked about his experience up in orbit around the Earth. Personally, the most interesting thing I heard was how extremely intense the preparation



was that he had to go through. He had to climb a tough mountain, to ensure he and the team could maintain comfort and go through it, handling the lower oxygen and pressure. Overall, it was a really eye-opening talk, and I enjoyed it immensely.

Thea: Chris Sembroski was in the United States Air Force where he learned many of the technical skills that would help him in his future work in space exploration even though when he was younger, he made rocket ships like we see in films.

During his talk, Chris told us all about his experience in space as part of the Inspiration4 mission. This was the first all-civilian mission to orbit Earth. He

spent three days in space, orbiting Earth. His favourite memory was that his spacecraft had a huge glass dome at the top. From inside it, astronauts were able to look outside into space and see Earth beneath them. This gave them the incredible sensation that they were almost able to step outside and float in space. Chris also told us about all the hard work and preparation that had to be done before blasting off into space. This included teamwork exercises, climbing mountains in freezing conditions, and learning all about hypoxia, which is when the body has no oxygen.

This talk showed that even the biggest dreams can become reality.



Speaking of Art

I recently took part in the National Gallery Articulation Prize. This is a competition where students are asked to write a ten-minute presentation on an artwork of their choice. As part of the preparation process, I attended a discovery day at Waddesdon Manor where I practised talking about various art works.

I then began looking for the piece I wanted to focus on and came across the artist, Ivan Kramskoy. Looking at his work, I saw many portraits of the same woman, who turned out to be



his wife. However, one stood out for its emotion.

Knowing I could passionately talk about the piece I had chosen, I proceeded to the internal presentation within school. Fortunately, I was chosen to go to the next round that took place at the Milton Keynes Art Gallery. Eight other students from other schools and I took turns to present to an audience, including an adjudicator representing the National Gallery. After all the presentations, first,

Year 12's Niamh had the opportunity to express her love of art via the National Gallery Articulation Prize. As she told us, it led to discovering new art, and a new skill for talking for about it.



second and third place were awarded. I achieved third place and I am incredibly grateful for the experience I had. I have learnt to be confident in public speaking and learnt that the things I am passionate about can help me connect with others. I am also lucky enough to now be part of the National Gallery Articulation Alumni, which will provide me with opportunities in Art in the future.

I thoroughly enjoyed my experience with the National Gallery Articulation Prize and recommend taking part.



A team of sixth formers and GCSE students went to the model UN event hosted at Aylesbury High School. From my experience, as being one of the sixth formers who went, it was a very immersive and enjoyable experience where I was able to practice my debating skills and meet other people from schools around the area. We got the opportunity to debate over the recent political events regarding the bombings just as they were happening. This experience was so interesting, educational, engaging, and I was able to learn and grow a greater understanding from it. Everyone had a really fun time and I would definitely recommend it for anyone who's interested in debating, politics, and/or world issues. **Elodie**

On Sunday 1st March, our school's Model United Nations team had the exciting opportunity to take part in a competition hosted at Aylesbury High School.

From the moment we arrived, the atmosphere was full of energy.

The opening speeches were one of the highlights. Working with students from other schools to debate, negotiate and agree on key issues was both exciting and

We sent a team of debaters to Aylesbury to take part in a Model United Nations event, with one of our team, Year 13's Tamara, going on to win a Highly Commended Delegate award. Year 12's Elodie and Beth told us what they had all learned.

challenging. Although I felt a little nervous at first, it quickly became fun and engaging. We then returned to our committees to begin choosing our resolutions. Listening to points of information and speeches for and against each proposal gave us a real

insight into how international relations and diplomacy work in practice.

After lunch, the General Assembly took place in the main hall. Delegates from every committee and country came together, and this was the most exciting part of the day. The resolutions that had passed in committee were presented to everyone, with students raising points of information, debating passionately and voting on the final outcomes. It was amazing to see so many people confidently taking part.

Although some of the debates in the General Assembly became quite heated, this only made the experience more exciting to watch and be part of. I learnt a huge amount from the day, both about politics and about speaking with confidence. The award presentation at the end of the conference was a brilliant way to finish, and it was especially inspiring to see a Year 13 student from our school receive one.

Overall, it was an unforgettable experience and one I would strongly recommend to anyone thinking about getting involved in Model United Nations. **Beth**





CATWALK Culture

Our Sixth Formers took the expression of their diverse cultures into their own hands by organising and running their own Sixth Form Cultural Heritage Celebration. Year 13's Araba told us about how the event came together, and about its importance to our students right across the Sixth Form.

Sixth Form Cultural Heritage Celebration - what a time it was! Led and planned by us as students, we wanted to celebrate our diversity in

Sixth Form, explore and learn about others' heritage, our backgrounds and what makes us unique. The celebration was to encourage the bond between Year 12 and Year 13, through shared heritage and cultures. It was special because not only did we come together to be educated by our peers, but we also had fun!

As a first-time event, we needed a great team of student leaders to support each step of the way, and that came to fruition. The Waddesdon Way Student Leadership group called all to come along and brainstorm; little did we know, 30+ students were eager to

assist. From there, we became a team with a vision. The leadership and dedication were apparent; meetings, overflowing with ideas and students' input and participation, were increasing; we felt exhilarated. Once the dates and times were set, we could feel it coming together; it was just a matter of time and lots of hard work.

In our whole school assembly on the day itself, our Year 12s and 13s represented their home countries, informing all of us on their traditional dress, cuisine and even unknown facts.

The student-led assembly had an audience of Sixth Formers scattered throughout, wearing their heritage clothing. This was just a preview of the excitement waiting to happen.

When the 12:45 bell rang, students flooded towards the main hall, participants buzzing as well as the rest of our peers. Not only were we waiting for the fashion show that was told in whispers, but also for the snacks to come as we planned to sell cultural snacks requested by students. We began with an introduction from our hosts in Year 12, followed by a student in a lower year singing a song popularly sung in India in their celebrations. It was mesmerising and so beautifully performed! Kudos to her; she set the mood for the next hour.

Next came the presentations, with 15 countries represented, and an abundance of new facts as well as personal insights. 'The more you know, I say...!' Then it was CATWALK TIME: beautiful dress, colours, strutting, flag waving, pride, laughter and applause, with all participating students choosing a song to play while they walked the catwalk. With hands hurting from clapping, it put a smile on everyone's faces. From where I was, I'd not seen admiration and support like this in a while. It was almost over, but not until the Human Bingo was underway to encourage us to intermingle and talk to new people. The Photo Booth was very well used, with Mr Peck's arms starting to ache, but as always, he captured the heart of the event and many memories.

The celebration brought us all together as a Sixth Form community. Trading of cultures and knowledge of our travels, we learnt a lot more than expected during the event. I hope we get to expand on the day every year to come, even contributing more to our whole school event. A legacy was born: Sixth Form Heritage Celebration Day was a success! Thank you to all students involved.



More Photos





“God’s answer to the darkness of Good Friday was not despair, but resurrection. In other words, the world began to rise and shine again.”

Our Vicar, Caroline Wainman, invites us to think about the way that Easter - and spring - can offer us the surprise of hope after the darkness of winter.

From our Vicar

In her first audition on Britain’s Got Talent, singer Sydnie Christmas announced that she was going to sing *Tomorrow* from the musical *Annie*. You could see the reaction straight away from Simon Cowell who looked distinctly unimpressed. The expression on his face seemed to say it all: Really? That song? He then declared, “I hate that song!”

After all, when most of us think of the song “Tomorrow”, we picture the bright, bouncy version sung by a small girl with bright red curly hair and freckles, beaming out optimism as she promises that “the sun’ll come out tomorrow.” It’s cheerful, just a little bit cheesy and a little very showbiz!

But then Sydnie Christmas began to sing.

Instead of the version everyone expected, she sang it slowly and hauntingly. Suddenly the song sounded completely different. The same words, the same melody, but full of depth and emotion. The judges were captivated. She received four “yesses”, sailed through to the next round, and later went on to win the whole competition.

Sometimes, the most familiar things can surprise us. Easter is a little like that.

People often think they already know the Easter story. But the first Easter morning didn’t feel bright and cheerful at all. It began in darkness, confusion and grief. Jesus had been crucified, his friends were afraid, and hope seemed lost. And then, when no one expected it, everything changed.

Christians believe that on that first Easter morning Jesus rose from the dead. Where

people thought the story had ended, something new began. Light appeared where there had been darkness. Hope returned where it had seemed impossible.

The writer Victor Hugo once wrote, “*Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise.*”

Those words capture something of the heart of Easter. The Christian story does not pretend that darkness doesn’t exist. The cross itself stands as a reminder that suffering, injustice and loss are real. But Easter proclaims that darkness is not the final word.

God’s answer to the darkness of Good Friday was not despair, but resurrection. In other words, the world began to *rise and shine* again.

Spring itself reminds us of that same truth. After the cold and quiet of winter, the earth wakes up again. The mornings grow brighter, flowers begin to bloom, and life slowly returns to the fields and trees around us.

Easter invites us to remember that hope can appear in surprising ways — sometimes when we least expect it. And just as the sun rises each morning, we are invited to look for the light again, and most importantly to bring a little of that light into the lives of the people around us.

As we head into the Easter holidays, may this season of new life and hope bring joy, rest and brightness to everyone in our school community.

Wishing you all a very happy and blessed Easter.

GOODBYE AND Thank You

A fond farewell and our heartfelt thanks to the staff members who are leaving Waddesdon this term. We wish you all the best for the future.



Ms Vijendran



Mrs Baker



Mrs Bradford



Mrs McSweeney



Voices from History

Our Sixth Form historians went on a sobering visit to the Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum. Year 12’s Lana and Scarlett told us about what it meant to see and hear the human stories behind the historical events.

A few weeks ago, we were offered an incredible opportunity to attend the Imperial War Museum in London. We were able to explore the Holocaust galleries, and increase our understanding for our coursework on Anti-Semitism, especially of those who suffered in the event. The Year 12 and 13s were fortunate enough to be given a tour about the lead up to the Holocaust and the impact it had. Both year groups found that this was really informative and helpful to fully understand the detrimental and tragic effects of Jewish suffering.

The exhibition we went to was new due to much more research having been done and more things having been discovered. It contains 11 rooms, all themed with different times offering a journey from pre-war life

into the Holocaust to evoke emotion and thought.

What we found most interesting were the first-hand testimonies which brought personal insight into the lives of Jewish people throughout the early 20th century. This helped us to examine the complex relationship between the events and the people involved in them, deepening our knowledge for our coursework and more widely. The vast range of historical items (with over 2000 sources, including books, photos,

and letters) really impacted us and reminded us that each person was a small part of something truly horrific.

Even though the exhibition was such a hard-hitting experience, it reminded us why history is incredibly significant. By connecting with the experience on a personal level, we were also able to gain a historical insight through research. We are extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to see this to be reminded of our privilege. Thank you to Mr McGregor and Mrs Branton.





SHOTS FIRED

Photo: Evelina, Year 10



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Our Photography students in Year 10 were able to perfect their skills in key areas of their craft on the streets of Oxford in February. Olive and Thea told us about a day full of photographic opportunity.

Year 10 photographers went to Oxford for a photoshoot to prepare for our mock exams. On the trip we visited the Covered market, the Bodleian

library, the famous Bridge of Sighs and Cornmarket Street. We thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity and managed to capture a lot of interesting photos.

This destination was chosen because of Oxford's beautiful, historic architecture and there were many tourists who we spoke to and took photos of.

During this trip we explored the themes of architecture, reflections and street photography. As well as this we explored techniques such as unusual perspectives, candid photography and layered reflections. For example, some of us were able to capture photos in

shop windows showcasing layered reflections.

We had to work more quickly than normal to try to capture moments in time, inspired by the photographer, Vivian Maier and many others. There were a variety of photo opportunities for everyone. We were allowed a lot of freedom in contrast to other school trips. We were reminded to be polite and show school morals to the members of public.

Overall, this trip was a great experience and we learned a lot.



GO ALL IN.

National Year of Reading 2026

READ ALL ABOUT IT

It was World Book Day recently, and 2026 is National Year of Reading. Our students helped to run numerous activities around the school and beyond, celebrating reading of all kinds. Year 12's Christina, Risha and Beth got involved and told us about the fun they had promoting their love for literature.

Christina: World Book Day has always been a highlight of my school experience - who doesn't love dressing up and getting into the literary spirit? But when you're in secondary school, it can be hard to recapture that magic. That's where Mrs Staiano comes in - she's the one who makes the ordinary... extraordinary!

Manal, Risha and I decided to get involved and worked with Mrs Staiano to create an engaging assembly following in the footsteps of Beth's awesome assembly celebrating reading. This year's World Book Day was extra special, as Mrs Staiano launched the

government's 'National Year of Reading' - the perfect excuse to 'Go All In'. We wanted to explore something that connects us all: reading. Whether it's lyrics or poems, we're all doing it, so we created a quiz pitting the two against each other - 'Lyric vs Literature' is the perfect way to celebrate.

If you're into it, read into it!

Following on from the amazing assemblies, Mrs Staiano, Beth H, Manal and I ran a bunch of awesome activities to keep the World Book Day magic going. Think: emoji book title challenges, shredded book guessing



games and a book quiz to test your literary skills. And crucially, sweets were handed out! It was a proper fun-filled, joyous time - if you missed it, you missed out!

The winner of the book quiz was Riley in Year 7, and for the shredded book, there were so many correct answers. So, we had to pull a name out of a hat. Congratulations to Adam also in Year 7!

Risha: In the afternoon of World Book Day, six Sixth Formers went over to the pre-school, Little Oaks, sat down on their tiny red and blue chairs and supported these early readers on their road to loving literature!

After listening to the book Mrs Staiano read to the class, we worked with our small groups to read to them. As someone who loves to teach and work

with young children, I really enjoyed it, even if it was hard to handle at first! After some time, the children were desperate to go outside on this bright sunny day and wanted us to go out with them.

Overall this moment was a phenomenal experience and I would love to do it again.

As Year 12's Beth tells us, she started our week by presenting an assembly about reading for pleasure. She's even written some reviews highlighting books you might like to read.

In my assembly, I spoke about what reading means to me and how my relationship with books has changed over time. I shared how I didn't always enjoy reading, but how discovering the right books in Year 8 completely shifted my perspective.

My assembly focused on reading

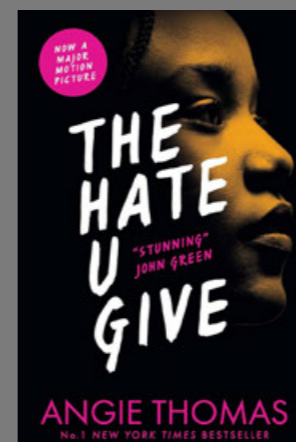
as imagination, personal discovery and how sometimes you just have to find the story that clicks to trigger an amazing world of reading.

My key quote from the assembly is: "Stories are not just entertainment. They are mirrors. And sometimes, they are megaphones".

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas

The Hate U Give is a powerful book about identity, belonging, and speaking up. It follows Starr Carter, a teenager navigating two very different worlds, whose life changes after witnessing a traumatic event.

The book explores important themes, whilst staying engaging and relatable. It's an emotional, but really interesting read which

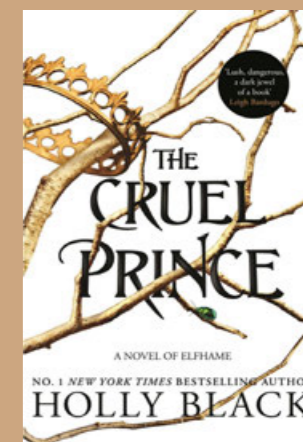


stays with you long after you finish it and one of my favourite books. It's the perfect blend of important issues and entertainment.

The Cruel Prince by Holly Black

The Cruel Prince is a fast-paced fantasy book set in a dangerous fairy world filled with political tension, ambition, and betrayal. The story's main character is Jude, a human girl determined to survive in a world where she doesn't belong and where she is currently shunned.

What makes this book so interesting is its complex characters and morally grey decisions. It's the



perfect book for readers who enjoy strong-willed protagonists, and unexpected plot twists.

We know that pupils (and staff!) can be inspired by what others are reading or recommend, so to mark the National Year of Reading our librarian, Mrs Staiano, has curated the ultimate list of joyful reading:





SIX PACK

Our new Sixth Form Heads of School have been announced. We asked them to introduce themselves, and to tell us about their vision as leaders of the Sixth Form.

Hello everyone! My name is Bella, and I am extremely excited to be your newly appointed Head Girl! I am so proud to be representing a school community that has provided me with countless opportunities and incredible support throughout my six years here at Waddesdon.



Bella

In this role, I want to be the same source of encouragement - supporting and inspiring students to ultimately create an environment where we celebrate everyone and recognise students for who they are, not just how visible they are in school. I have a clear vision for

the year, but I always want to ensure you feel represented. It's about making change for all of us - including you!

Please do not hesitate to come and speak with me if you have any concerns, ideas, or simply want a conversation! I'll always be around school or jamming in the music department, so you know where to find me.

I'm really looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible!

Hi everyone, my name is Adam and I am delighted to be your new Head Boy. I love music and getting involved in as many events at school as possible; events bring our community together which is really important. Although I only joined the school in Year 12, I have already taken part in the Big Gig and Open Evenings, as well as helping to lead our recent Sixth Form Cultural Heritage Celebration Day which was a great success.

I want everyone to feel like they have a place to use their voice in the school

and feel good about their school life.



Adam

Working together across year groups, we can make a lasting impact on the school and pass on a strong and lasting legacy to students in the future. I hope with your support we can achieve this! I'm looking forward to getting to know you this year and hearing all your ideas.

Hello everyone, I'm Bethel, and I'm so honoured and excited to introduce myself as your new Deputy Head Girl. It's honestly such a privilege to have been given this role, especially

as someone who is still quite new to the school. Even in the short time I've been here, I've already seen how welcoming, supportive, and strong this community is and that's something I'm really proud to now represent.

Being part of this school has shown me just how strong our community is, and I'm determined to build on that by making a positive impact. I'm passionate about making sure every student feels heard, valued, and included. I want to help create an environment where everyone feels confident to be themselves, take opportunities, and succeed both academically and personally.



Bethel

As deputy Head Girl, I hope to bring fresh ideas, encourage more student involvement, and strengthen the connection between students and staff. Most importantly, I want to be someone you can come to whether you have a concern, an idea, or just need someone to listen.

I'm really excited to get to know as many of you as possible over the year. Please don't hesitate to say 'hello' or start a conversation, I'm always happy to help wherever I can. I'm looking forward to an amazing year ahead with all of you!

Hi everyone! My name is Sophie and I'm incredibly honoured to have the privilege of being your next Deputy Head Girl at Waddesdon! Having attended since Year 7, I know how welcoming Waddesdon is with its familial and flourishing community. In this position, I'm also lucky enough to have the wonderful opportunity to work alongside other amazing students as your new Head of School team, to help support all of you, listen to your ideas and make a change.

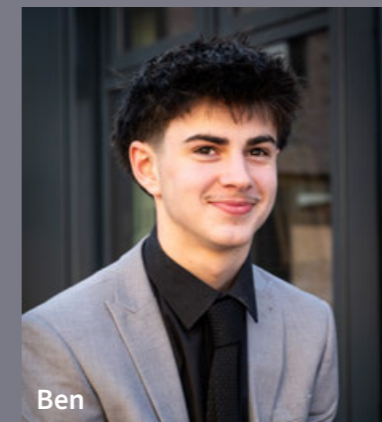


Sophie

School can be difficult sometimes. The highs and lows, the build up of stress and the communal conflicts as well. Sometimes it can simply be a little too much. Whether you're in Sixth Form with exams looming over you, or maybe you've only just started in Year 7 and are struggling to find your feet a bit, I'm here to help! If you want someone to talk to about your problems, or if you want someone to talk to about your latest accomplishments, or even someone to share some of your favourite music to (one of my favourite topics), I won't be far.

The Heads of School look forward to the future: we have many plans to strengthen our community and to help reflect on everyone's unique abilities more. Your time at school is some of the most important (and best) days of your life, so let's make it filled with memorable moments!

Hello Waddesdon! I'm Ben and I am super excited to be your Deputy Head Boy. I am especially excited to be representing this amazing community. I will strive to be as approachable as possible around school, and I will always be available for any questions,



Ben

new ideas or even just for a chat with anyone - from lower years right up to

Sixth Form and including teachers. Having been at Waddesdon school for 6 years, lived here for 17 and worked for Waddesdon Manor for 6 months, I think it's safe to say I know the ins and outs pretty well.

As Deputy Head Boy, I really want to make sure the student voice is heard. Whether it is big ideas or small changes, I'm here to listen and help bring your thoughts to action, so please do not hesitate to come say hello if you see me around. I am looking forward to a great year!

Hey everyone, my name's Kavinu and I'm ecstatic to be appointed as your new Deputy Head Boy! Alongside our new heads of school, we have so many things we are super eager to achieve while here. My goal while in this role is to bring all threads of the Waddesdon community together (including teachers!) with things like charity concerts and student led events. My main value is communication because without voices, who are we? And trust me, my voice is something you can hear from miles away!



Kavinu

From becoming the lead in the school show and now being deputy head boy, I want to give back to the community which has made me feel so welcome ever since joining as a new student. I want to make everyone feel like they can be in school and not resent a moment of it, because let's be honest, in reality we are so grateful for the things it's taught us and the friends it's given us.

I'm not that much of a writer, but if you come and talk to me I can assure you I will talk your ears off and then some! Anything this role has to throw at me I know, with the help of everyone here, I can handle. Because remember, we are Waddesdon! 🙌

▶ PLAY TO WIN

THE **BIG GIG**
26

▶ Waddesdon welcomed the Big Gig to the stage in February, showcasing the huge talent, hard work and dedication of our best musical performers. Year 7's Rafi and Josh were taking part for the first time and their performances rocked our audience. Mr Judson asked them what the experience had been like for them.

On a cold Thursday evening back at the start of February, our musicians played a sold-out show to an audience of over 300. The Big Gig 2026 was the best yet, with performances from GCSE and Sixth Form musicians, as well as songs from the Rock Band, Worship Band, Jazz Band and headline set from the Funk Band.

It was an incredible night, with one of the highlights being debut performances from two newbies in Year 7 who have already made a huge impact on the Waddesdon Music scene. Ladies and gents, we present to you ... Josh & Raphael

What were you doing and how did it go?

We performed "You Give Love A Bad Name" by Bon Jovi for the rock band and "Grateful for..." by Natalie Layne with the worship band.

Josh: "Both went great! I did rhythm and a little bit of lead guitar. For the worship band I did percussion."

Rafi: "I did lead guitar for rock band, and I played drums for worship band. I felt I did the best I could, and the crowd enjoyed the music which is the main thing. On worship band I played the drums; the whole experience was amazing."

What did you do to prepare?

We practised a lot for both performances. Every Tuesday we practised "You Give Love A Bad Name" and we had Alex cheering us on the whole way. Every Thursday we practised "Grateful for..."

Josh: "I think the whole experience and practising was very hard, but you've got to trust the process."

Rafi: "It required a lot of self-discipline and self-control to learn the song and turn up to the rehearsal, as well as a lot of planning."



More Photos





What did you enjoy about the experience?

We both really enjoyed it and would 100% do it again.

Josh: "The whole thing was so flipping good! Mr Judson's and Mr Dimond's support was amazing, and I loved the whole experience. The adrenaline of being on stage was out-of-this-world and terrifying."

Rafi: "I was lost for words when I got on stage; I thought it was just awesome! A massive thank you to Mr Judson and Mr Dimond for the whole thing. It rocked!"

Many thanks to all the parents and friends who came to support, as well as staff members who gave their evening to help make it run smoothly.

The standard of musicianship at Waddesdon continues to improve and as younger performers have the chance to see some incredible playing and singing from older students, things can only get better! The Funk Band set at the end of the night was a real highlight, with an apex performance of Raye's 'Where Is My Husband?' finishing the show.

Seeing Josh and Rafi own the stage with the rest of the Rock Band was also exceptional and if this is a taste of how the next generation of musicians at Waddesdon might turn out ... as the great sage Yazz once said, "The only way is up ... baby!"



Shaping the World

As our Year 9s travelled to London's Science Museum, Jess considered how our modern world is transformed by innovation and by the Science, Tech, Engineering and Maths that lie behind it.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) are really important for our modern world. They help change things like healthcare, transportation and communication.

New discoveries in medicine, renewable energy and artificial intelligence are not just great ideas, they are useful tools that make our lives better and help solve problems around the globe.

On Monday 2nd of February, we went to the Science Museum in London. It showed me how the subjects we learn in school connect to real life inventions.

As I walked through the museum I saw amazing things, like old steam machines, space capsules and tin robot displays. It was clear that

progress comes from being curious and trying new things.

Watching students and teachers interacting with the exhibits made me realise that STEM is super important, not just for making money, but also for inspiring future problem solvers.

The museum had a lot to say about space travel, with detailed displays about missions from NASA. It showed how countries work together and how Science helps us to explore beyond our planet. There were hands on activities that let visitors feel what engineers go through when they design planes and energy systems, turning raw material into real experiences. By showing both past successes and new technologies, the museum highlighted how STEM fields change to meet society's needs.

This experience helped me understand how new ideas start, get tested and eventually turn into solutions that change lives. In a world which relies on more and more data and technology, places like London's Science Museum are crucial for making STEM interesting, accessible and essential for our future.





Our Music and Music Tech students became DJs for the day on a workshop designed to get their skills up to scratch, as Year 8's Leo told us.

ALL MIXED

Many people think DJing is just playing a bunch of tracks and pressing a few buttons, but there is so much more to it than that! The two main parts are: the technical side which involves beatmatching, equalization of EQs and phrasing and the 'art' side which relates to reading the crowd, knowledge of music and how tracks fit together.

The best way to understand DJing is by going to a workshop or taking lessons as these can build your knowledge of mixing tracks and

help you bridge across musical genres or discover a new hobby. There are organisations which come into schools to give workshops and assemblies to try to promote DJing and offer lessons to support time-keeping and rhythm skills.

On the Decks came into Waddesdon in March, providing a workshop which covered music production and mixing drum & bass and house music.

I am having lessons with OTD and I am thoroughly enjoying them. In

the lessons I am DJing drum & bass and in the coming months I will be performing my first set in a club environment (Unit 9, Milton Keynes).

I am planning to take Music Technology as one of my GCSEs and hope that the course, alongside DJing, will help me to gain an understanding of music production which is something that I am really interested in. I am grateful to Mr Judson for organising this opportunity for us in school.



Strings ATTACHED



Waddesdon held its first orchestral concert in decades, one we hope will be the first of many more classical music events. Year 12's Bella gave a solo vocal performance, and she told us about an evening full of the highest quality performances.

Last night in the Sixth Form auditorium we were treated to Waddesdon's very first orchestral concert. From Hans Zimmer's Pirates of the Caribbean to Bizet's Toreador, featuring a professional tenor, we experienced an evening filled with the incredible talent of so many young orchestral musicians and soloists.

Classical music is something that is declining rapidly in society, which made it even more inspiring to see a state school performing such a fantastic repertoire at such a high standard.

A huge thank you to Mr Dimond for organising the event and for his constant encouragement and support – we really appreciate everything you do.

One of the greatest things you can give a child is opportunity, and the music team provide opportunity after opportunity for students who might not have otherwise experienced the joy of playing in an ensemble.

It was truly a great evening, and I hope it's the first of many more orchestral concerts to come.





Having a Ball!

The honour of Waddesdon was at stake when a team of our staff Netballers took on teams from other schools in the area. Ms Olaley was the organiser of the event, and she told us how this challenge came about - and who came out on top!

This year, to mark an important personal milestone, I was determined to fundraise for two incredible charities. As a keen and regular netballer over the past two years, I'd come to know many other teachers and staff members who also enjoyed the sport. That sparked a spontaneous idea: why not bring staff from schools across the local area together for a friendly netball tournament?

What began as a passing thought quickly grew into a fully-fledged event complete with teams, umpires, medals, and a fantastic charity raffle organised by the wonderful

Mrs Bridges, Mrs Staiano, and myself.

Bringing the Tournament to Life

The event came together surprisingly smoothly thanks to passion, teamwork, and the unwavering support of colleagues. Through perseverance and networking, we secured over 20 raffle prizes ranging from beauty treatments and spa days to family outings. We also registered six school teams: The Kingsbrook School, Aylesbury Vale Academy, Aylesbury High School, The Gateway School, John Colet, and of course our very own Waddesdon team.

Our squad included: myself, Mr Taberer, Mrs Cook, Mrs H Duggan, Miss Banks, Mr Hyde, Señor De La Gaurdia, Mrs Bridges, Mrs Staiano, Ms Ogden, Miss Turner, and Mr Bray. Twelve staff members in total, some of whom had never touched a netball before. The commitment was clear from the

start, with everyone giving up the final evening of the half term to take part.

Match Day Magic

The day itself was incredible. With limited time to prepare, the Waddy team had our first and only training session in the hour before the tournament began. The brilliant Mrs Cook brought us up to speed, teaching footwork, positioning, court rules, and giving us time to practise attacking and defending strategies. By the end of the session, we looked like a team who'd trained together for at least two weeks... not one hour.

As the music started and the atmosphere built, unfamiliar faces began to arrive through the Sports Hall doors. Soon the hall was buzzing with excited players warming up,



stretching, practising drills, and passing the ball. After weeks of planning, my idea of a staff netball tournament was finally happening.

On-Court Highlights

Waddesdon played the opening match against Aylesbury Vale and, after securing a win, spirits were high. We won another game later in the tournament and lost three. The real joy, though, was in playing against other schools and witnessing the incredible effort and talent on display, especially from those who hadn't played in years, or ever before. It was genuinely heart-warming.

Our team performed brilliantly throughout, showing resilience, communication, and a strong sense of unity. We finished a proud fourth place, with the final standings decided on match points and goal difference. Competing against mixed-gender teams

added to the fun, unpredictability, and sheer enjoyment of the sport.

Fundraising for a Cause

Beyond the netball, the event had a meaningful purpose. Thanks to generous donations from local businesses and the enthusiasm of staff and spectators, our charity raffle raised funds for Tramshed and The Sickle Cell Society—two organisations close to my heart, supporting disadvantaged young people through theatre and the arts, and families affected by lifelong illness. We were thrilled to raise nearly £350 for each charity.

A Community Triumph

A huge thank you goes to everyone who took part, donated prizes, or cheered from the sidelines. This wonderful blend of sport, teamwork, and community spirit made the tournament a true highlight of the school year and helped mark my milestone perfectly,

while giving back to important people in the community.

A final thank you to the site team for their support, to Mr Abbot and the PE department for allowing me to host the event at the school, to our umpires who did so well keeping us teachers/staff in check, Mr Wynn for managing the scores and the leader board and to Mrs Bridges and Mrs Staiano for their invaluable help with the raffle, which alone raised roughly £183. I am incredibly grateful to everyone who got involved and cannot wait for the next one.

Congratulations to the winners of the tournament, The Gateway School, and to the runners-up, John Colet School, who took home the annual shield and team medals. The Umpire's Player of the Tournament was awarded to Zoe (C) from The Kingsbrook School.



Mr Dipple is back with another intriguing inquisition to interrogate your mathematical mastery!

Congratulations to Meher Prakash in 7BJU who sent me a wonderful solution to last term's puzzle. It wasn't the most elegant way of solving the problem but I absolutely loved it. The factors of 1,000,000,000 I was looking for were 512 and 1953125. Well done, Meher!

This term I'd like you to write out all of the numbers from one to twenty in number order, smallest to biggest. Then, write them out in alphabetical order. What is the only number in the same position in both lists?

Entries to me on Teams or via email please. Good luck!



WADDESDON ART & DESIGN EXHIBITION

WEDNESDAY 3RD JUNE

20216

4-7pm

CREATIVES.WADDESDONSCHOOL.COM

ART & DESIGN | GRAPHICS | MEDIA STUDIES | PHOTOGRAPHY

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