



NEWSLETTER
Term 2 – 2024/2025

Dear Parent/ Carer,

With so much happening at the school, I'm going to struggle to fit it all into this newsletter, but I hope you enjoy the updates and stories below. It has truly been a fantastic start to the school year, and, as always, it has been an absolute pleasure to see our young people thrive and grow. Thank you for your continued support of the school.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

On behalf of everyone at the school, we would like to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Parent Governors

Our governing body plays a vital role in the successful operation of the school and trust, and this work can be incredibly rewarding.

We currently have a vacancy for a parent governor on our Governing Board.

If you are interested in education and feel you could contribute to this team in supporting the school, please contact rmartin@wrotham.kent.sch.uk (Clerk to the Governing Body) to express your interest and learn more.

Art and Design

Earlier this term, one of our talented artists, Bella, completed a mural design for Borough Green Medical Practice as part of a competition. Her work was selected, and they are now in the process of transferring her design onto a mural in the main surgery. Bella's artwork will be displayed for many years to come, creating a calm and comforting space for patients.

Well done, Bella!

Ofsted

As you may already know, Ofsted visited us in November as part of their routine inspection schedule. The last time we were inspected was in 2019, when we were rated as

Good/Outstanding. Since then, the education landscape has changed significantly, and the pandemic brought unprecedented challenges for all of us.

We are extremely proud to have maintained those high standards over the past five years and were delighted with the strong report we received. This achievement is a testament to the collective efforts of our students, staff, and parents. Thank you to everyone who supported us during this process—it is so important that this hard work is recognised.

Ofsted inspections are now more thorough than ever, with inspectors leaving no stone unturned to provide an accurate picture of the school and its work. This recognition reflects the outstanding community we have at Wrotham School and the success of our students.

Our next inspection is likely to take place in 2028, and we will continue to refine and improve our work in the best interests of our students. Long may this success continue!

The report is available on our website homepage.

Exam Results

Due to delays at the Department for Education, the 2024 GCSE results were not published in time for our Ofsted inspection. However, they are now available for public viewing and comparison with other schools.

Our 2024 results position Wrotham School at the top of local comprehensive school comparisons, demonstrating that our students consistently make progress that surpasses both local and national averages. This is evident in the Progress 8 scores, both overall and in individual subject areas.

The Progress 8 measure is based on how much progress students make from their starting point (Key Stage 2 SATs) to their final GCSE results. It focuses on eight core GCSE subjects, including English, Maths, Science, Humanities, and Languages. This measure highlights the value our school adds to students' success and achievement.

We are immensely proud of this accomplishment. You can compare our Progress 8 score with other local schools using the Compare Schools website. Across the entirety of Kent County, Wrotham School ranks as the 7th highest comprehensive school for Progress 8.

Congratulations to all the students who achieved these excellent results. It is worth noting that the 2024 GCSE cohort faced significant barriers, having been in Year 7 during the pandemic when schools repeatedly closed. Despite this disruption, they were not afforded any special adjustments or dispensations and sat full exams. Their resilience and determination are truly commendable.

Year 11 Update

We are excited to welcome Mrs. Blamire and Mrs. Bullock to the Year 10 and Year 11 team starting in January. They will join Mr. Scoville and Miss Milton as Co-Heads of Year, adding valuable capacity to the upper school team as we continue to support these year groups.

Drama

School Production “Emerald City”



Just a quick thank you and congratulations to the students and our performing arts team who worked so hard to put together the incredible Emerald City Production this week. I would like to extend this thanks to all of the staff and students who supported the production behind the scenes.



If you were lucky enough to see this year’s performance I am sure you would agree that it was exceptionally well produced, written and performed and thoroughly entertained all present. As always, this wasn’t just an “amateur dramatics” performance – it was clever, witty, well performed and accompanied.

These performances go from strength to strength, year on year, and I would expect nothing less from this team.

We have been incredibly lucky to have such a great team of talented performers and staff working on these productions they are unique in the fact that our performances are original, bold, and experimental and refreshingly brave.



Thank you for all of those who attended and supported this amazing work.

Little Fish Drama Company



Back in November, we were delighted to welcome the Little Fish Performance Workshop, who delivered an engaging session addressing a wide range of topics relevant to the Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4.

Using a dynamic blend of music, imagery, poetry, and storytelling, the production encouraged the audience to reflect on themselves and the choices they make. This interactive play actively involved students in discussions and debates on important issues, including friendships and family relationships, personal safety, peer pressure, consent, and age-appropriate sex and relationships.

The topics were explored from the perspectives of both young people and their parents, providing a well-rounded view of these crucial matters. Feedback from students and staff was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the workshop's success in sparking meaningful conversations.

Bravery Award



In early December, I had the immense honour of supporting our students as they accepted a Chief Executive Special Recognition Award at the Kent Fire and Rescue Service Awards event. This award was presented on behalf of all students and families affected by the bus crash in May, recognizing the extraordinary bravery they continue to demonstrate every day.

The award is a testament to the resilience, courage, and compassion shown by all the young people on the bus that afternoon, both during the incident and in the months since. It also acknowledges the outstanding bravery and dedication of the emergency service workers who responded on the day.

This prestigious award will be proudly displayed in our school reception area as a reminder of the strength and unity of our community.

Sporting Success

Boys Football

Football continues to be a huge strength across all year groups at the school. We remain unbeaten in the Maidstone Schools Premiership in Years 7-10, with outstanding performances from all age groups.

The Year 7s have made a great start and comprehensively won a local tournament against Malling, Aylesford and Holmesdale. They won all 12 games and only conceded 1 goal throughout the tournament.

Our 6th form team is currently sitting in 2nd place in their league, showcasing great teamwork and skill against a number of private and grammar schools.

Most impressively, our Year 8 and Year 10 teams have both advanced to the quarter-final stage of the Kent Cup. Making it to the last 8 out of over 200 schools is a fantastic achievement in itself but both squads will be hoping to progress even further. The boys

continue to demonstrate incredible determination and talent, and we look forward to seeing how far they can go!

Girls Football

The girls' football season kicked off this term, and our Year 7 team has quickly established itself as a group to watch for the future. Their impressive display on the pitch showed great promise, and we are excited to see their development in the coming seasons. We are confident that this team will only continue to grow stronger!

Basketball

Our basketball squads have been training hard in preparation for the upcoming Maidstone Schools Tournament. The team is focused on improving their skills and tactics as they gear up for this competitive event. We wish them the best of luck as they head into the tournament, and we are excited to see their hard work pay off!

Netball

Our netball team achieved an impressive 2nd place finish in the Maidstone Schools Tournament, narrowly missing out to Invicta Grammar in a thrilling final. The girls showed tremendous skill, determination, and teamwork throughout the tournament, and their strong performance is a testament to their hard work and commitment.

Cross Country

In the Maidstone Schools Cross Country Championships, 50 of our students represented the school, demonstrating exceptional motivation and resilience. We are proud to announce that five students have qualified to represent the district at the upcoming Kent Championships. Congratulations to these athletes, and best of luck at the next level!

New Build



If you've visited the school recently, you will have noticed the rapid progress of the new build, which remains on track to meet its targets.

This year has been a period of significant transformation, with both construction and demolition taking place. We've moved into our temporary accommodation, witnessed the first steel framework go up, and seen the English block and other buildings demolished to make way for the new facilities.

The temporary classrooms are a considerable improvement on the old English block, providing modern amenities including digital screens, upgraded bathrooms, food technology spaces, and study areas. Everyone has settled in well, and lessons are running smoothly in the new environment.

Now that the main construction site is fully established and secured, we anticipate far less disruption moving forward. Work will progress quickly on the fenced-off site, with no further changes for students or staff expected until later stages of the build.

Literacy – Writing Competitions

Congratulations to the following students who were highly commended in our Winter Wonderland writing competition! The entries were of an exceptionally high standard, showcasing wonderful creativity.

All winners have received Creativity and Communication character strengths and have been entered into our end-of-year Literacy Awards raffle.

- Indi P
- Gracy O
- Lyla WL
- Noah K
- Manav P
- Leo L
- Amelia B
- Jessica R

Keep an eye out for a new and exciting writing competition next term!

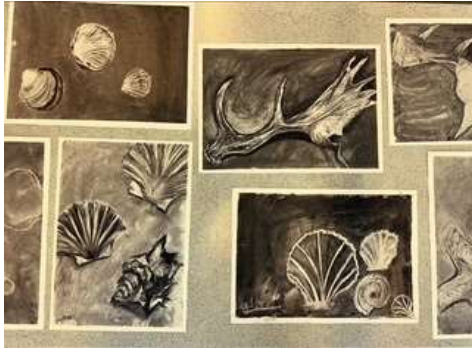
Well-being Team

It has been another busy and productive term for the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team at Wrotham School. We have delivered one-to-one counselling and psychotherapy for staff and students across the school as well as a number of group sessions around transition, anxiety and emotional regulation. Three new Trainee Counsellors started with us in September; these Trainees are all training locally to become qualified counsellors and provide additional support for staff and students in school.

Our students continue to benefit from a number of brilliant external services such as the HERA project from Salus which supports young people with understanding healthy relationships, one-to-one mentoring delivered by the Young Lives Foundation, and the Risk-

it programme aimed at risk reduction and raising awareness with young people of how to manage potentially risky situations.

Art Therapy



Our art therapy groups have continued this term with both lower school and upper school students benefitting from this intervention which is aimed at showing students how they can use art and creative activities to support their mental health. Here are some examples of the fantastic pieces that have been created by students.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Award



Wellbeing Team



kentmentalwellbeingawards.org.uk

WINNER 2024

A huge congratulations to our MAC team for being awarded the Kent Mental Wellbeing Award, which will be presented at a local awards event in October.

If your child has ever been supported by this team, you'll know just how deserving they are of this accolade. The MAC team has worked tirelessly to support the mental health and wellbeing of students and staff during some incredibly challenging times.

We are incredibly proud of the important work they do—this recognition is truly well-deserved. Well done to all members of the team!

Careers Update

Guest Speaker: Professor Jo Delahunty KC

Speakers for Schools chose Wrotham School to host an inspirational talk by Professor Jo Delahunty KC, one of the country's leading barristers. Jo, a specialist in Family and Child Protection Law, led the team representing 77 families at the Hillsborough Inquests—one of the longest in modern history. She was the only silk from Family law to participate, due to her expertise in handling medical evidence. Given the nature of her work, the talk was attended by Year 12 and 13 students with support from our Wellbeing Team.

Jo has had an extraordinary career, breaking barriers in her campaign against gender inequality and advocating for better mental health support within the legal profession. Her talk was particularly inspiring, especially considering her background—she has ADHD, comes from a single-parent family, attended comprehensive schools, and was the first in her family to stay in education beyond 16.

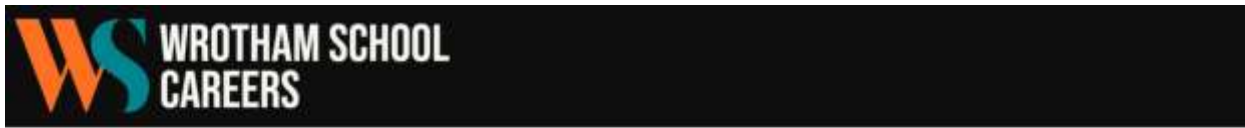
Her message to students was clear: be open to opportunities and don't let what you don't know hold you back. She shared how taking risks and seeking help have been key to her success and emphasised that embracing your own identity is a strength, rather than trying to fit in. Students praised how relatable Jo was, with many expressing their gratitude for her generosity in staying after the talk to answer questions. Year 12's Ella even had the chance to try on the silks and horse-hair wig!



Events in Terms 1 and 2

We are thrilled to have offered students a wide range of opportunities to engage with employers, universities, and apprenticeship providers during terms 1 and 2. These activities were tailored to different year groups and included our first-ever international speaker! These events help students explore various careers, understand the skills needed for

success, and gain insights directly from professionals in diverse industries, inspiring them to set ambitious career goals.



Your Careers Curriculum Journey

- **Year 7 and 8:** exploring interests and motivations and developing a broader understanding of the world of work
- **Year 9:** building aspirations and exploring careers opportunities in more detail, including challenging stereotypes
- **Year 10:** developing self-presentation skills and understanding what employers want
- **Year 11:** making plans and applications for post-16 learning
- **Sixth form:** preparing students to make good choices, engage in work experience and understand personal development

Year 10 Civil Service Challenge

In September, Year 10 participated in our annual Civil Service Challenge, which focused on teamwork, communication, creativity, and problem-solving. Students explored different civil service departments and their role in supporting democracy and British values. The finalists were judged by a panel from the Department for Work and Pensions, who were highly impressed with the quality of the entries.

WROTHAM SCHOOL CAREERS Year 10: developing self-presentation skills and understanding what employers want

Nominated Teams:

CAL 10Y1 – Lacey, Orla and Evie	ANO/RCL 10Y5 – Tanem, Almee, Matilda and Ava	Wildcard 1– Dan, Ollie and Terry
LBU 10Y2 – Caitlin, Jean-Loic, Emilia and Emily	JWO 10Y6 – Chloe, Toko, Amy and Eva	Wildcard 2 – Gracie, Harvey, Ellis and Oscar
SWI 10Y3 – Cristina, Max and Jack	JCA 10Y7 – Harry, Gideon, Landen and Sam	Wildcard 3 – Isla, Zoe, Oliver And Louis
KWI 10Y4 – Connor, Grace and Lily		

Congratulations to the winners from 10Y2: Caitlin, Jean-Loic, Emilia, and Emily, as well as the runners-up: Isla, Zoe, Oliver, and Louis.

Year 13 Maidstone University Fair

Year 13 students attended the Maidstone University Fair in September, where they had the chance to speak with representatives from around 50 universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, Kent, Greenwich, medical schools, and arts universities. This event offered a wealth of information about higher education options and career pathways.

Year 8 Enrichment Project

In October, Year 8 students in Mr. Boudreau's enrichment class learned about the vital work of charities. They created their own charity ideas and pitched them to a judging panel, which included Mr. Cater, Mrs. Hollinshead, and Henry from Hemsley Conservation Centre, who spoke to students about his conservation work.



World Space Week: Year 12 and 13 Chemistry and Physics

In October, Year 12 and 13 chemistry and physics students attended a live lecture for World Space Week, delivered by a Professor of Astronomy from the University of Sussex. The lecture focused on how astronomers use computers to simulate entire universes.

Criminology Workshop with Kent Police

Also in October, Year 13 criminology students had the opportunity to work with Kent Police and they had an in-school visit from a Detective Chief Inspector. The workshop focused on their 'Crime Scene to Courtroom' unit, with the DCI discussing real-life case studies and theories they had been studying in class. It was fantastic revision for the students, and their well-considered questions and discussions were a reflection of the high quality teaching and learning that goes on within the social sciences faculty at Wrotham.



Art Design Competition with Maidstone United FC

Year 7, 8, and 9 art students participated in a kit design competition set by Maidstone United FC in October and November. We were excited to see so many creative and motivated entries, and we look forward to hearing about the results!

Year 9 Careers Sessions

In October and November, Year 9 students attended careers sessions that are designed to help them make informed GCSE choices later this year. They were very lucky to have these opportunities, featuring three incredible speakers:

Sgt Paul Garvie from the British Army discussed the range of careers available through apprenticeships, with over 100 roles including combat, engineering, HR, medical, and more. Steph Burns, a pilot with EasyJet, joined us all the way from Berlin! She shared her journey to becoming a pilot, despite being told it wasn't for her.

Steev Goodwin, a computer games developer, explained how GCSE maths skills are used in his daily work and how maths can lead to unexpected career paths.



Sixth Form Careers Fair in London

In November, 50 Year 12 and 13 students visited the 'What University and What Career Live' event at London Olympia. They explored a variety of university options, attended CV and interview clinics, and engaged with exhibition stands focusing on STEM, creative careers, and studying abroad.



Year 11 and Year 13 Careers Guidance

Year 11 students have been making excellent progress in exploring post-16 options, with support from the Year 11 Team and Mrs. Hollinshead, our level-6 qualified careers adviser. One-to-one guidance meetings have been taking place, and if your child has not yet had their appointment, it will be scheduled for term 3.

Mrs Hollinshead has already seen the majority of Year 13 students at least once, since a lot of them are working hard on their university and apprenticeship applications. A reminder that the 'equal consideration' deadline for university is 29th January at 6pm – students will need to submit by 22nd January to guarantee that their reference will be completed in time. Parents and carers are welcome to email Mrs. Hollinshead with any questions. We highly recommend the parent and carer section of our careers website, with lots of information and resources to support your conversations at home.

<https://www.wrothamschool.com/careers/advice-for-parents/>

Year 10 English Lesson with Soil Scientist Lizzie Sagoo

In their English lessons, Year 10 students have been working on their skills in transactional writing. Linked with themes from their exam texts, they have explored the ethics of science, debating whether the benefits of pushing boundaries outweigh the risks. To bring this

discussion to life, Lizzie Sagoo, a soil scientist, spoke about the ethical considerations in her work; she has been working with the government to find alternative fertilisation methods since nitrogen-based fertilisers can be used in chemical warfare. This session highlighted how the skills developed in English can support careers in STEM fields.

Alumnus visit



We were excited to welcome a visit from Mel Richardson at the end of term 2. Mel studied at Wrotham School and we were so proud to see that she was awarded an MBE for 'Services to Aviation' earlier this year. What she actually did to earn that award should make us really proud because it is a fantastic example of the character Wrotham School students consistently show.

She works for British Airways and runs their entire Emerging Talent programme. She has worked incredibly hard to ensure that pathways into aviation are more inclusive and open to people from any background, with a focus on helping young people at the start of their careers, but also career changers. This includes helping them get access to work experience, apprenticeships and paid-for training for all areas of the industry, including pilots. The aviation industry took a huge hit during the pandemic and her work has helped it to recover in a way that encourages diversity in every respect.

Mel is working with Mrs Hollinshead and getting involved with our career programme so she came in for a planning session, but no alumnus visit would be complete without a little tour to see how the school has changed (and is changing), and to see some of her teachers. She also took time to talk to Millie in Year 13 who is applying for an apprenticeship at British Airways. Mel started her own career with an apprenticeship at 18 and was very generous with sharing her advice.

If any of our students are interested in exploring the opportunities with British Airways, they should explore their work experience programmes including Speedbird Z which is online and acts as a great taster of the different opportunities available. <https://careers.ba.com/work-experience>; <https://careers.ba.com/emerging-talent>

Year 10 Visit from Norwich University of the Arts

In December, Year 10 had an in-person visit from Norwich University of the Arts (NUA), who spoke about careers in the creative sector. Students learned about the many well-paid and interesting jobs in this field and asked questions about university life and studying at different types of institutions. On the same day, NUA ran a workshop with Year 11, 12, and

13 art students, focusing on portfolio best practices. Students had the opportunity to mark real portfolios, which was a valuable experience and has already had an impact on their own applications and interviews.

Year 13 Construction Industry Talk with BAM

Year 13 students also had the chance to speak with two trainees from BAM, the company building our new school. Amelia, who chose an apprenticeship, and Euan, who took the graduate route, shared their career journeys. Amelia works as a document controller at the Wrotham School construction site, and Euan is a trainee social sustainability coordinator. Both trainees discussed the benefits of different career paths into the construction industry, providing valuable insights for our students.

We look forward to more exciting careers events in the coming months and encourage all students to take full advantage of these opportunities!

Attendance

As part of our areas for improvement identified by Ofsted, I would like to remind parents and students of the importance of good attendance. While we do everything we can to support families in maintaining strong attendance, we also need your help.

Since the pandemic, average school attendance nationwide has dropped by 5%, equating to nine additional missed days per child each year. Over the course of their education, this totals approximately 45 extra missed days per student.

National attendance figures for the week before Easter were 89.6% in secondary schools, meaning that more than 10% of education is being missed annually. This equates to roughly 19 days—or 3.5 weeks—of lost learning per year.

At Wrotham School, our current attendance rate is 91%, compared to 95-96% four years ago. These absences are not due to school closures but represent missed learning days caused primarily by term-time holidays, school refusal, and sickness.

This is deeply concerning, as the cumulative impact on young people's education is significant. Students who miss even short periods of school often struggle to catch up, as the pace of learning moves forward, leaving them behind.

More troublingly, this trend has not been observed to the same extent in grammar or private schools. This disparity is frustrating and misleading—it does not reflect how much our families care about their children's education.

I understand that term-time holidays, the cost-of-living crisis, and changes since the pandemic have created new challenges for families. However, I want to stress the critical importance of ensuring your children are in school whenever possible. Consistent attendance not only enhances academic performance but also helps develop social skills that are vital for future success.

We will be working closely with parents in the New Year to address this issue and improve attendance rates. Thank you for your continued support.

Character Day



On Friday, 13th December 2024, we hosted our very first **Character Day!**

On this special day, all students stepped away from their regular timetables to participate in a wide range of activities and experiences designed to develop key character skills. With over 40 activities, trips, and visits to choose from, there was something for everyone.

Highlights included:

- **Sports and Physical Activities:** Ice skating, trampolining, netball, football, outdoor 5K runs, yoga, boxing, Frisbee golf, and cheerleading.
- **Creative Pursuits:** Sweet bag gift-making, TikTok choreography (led by a choreographer who worked on the film *Wicked*), baking classes, Christmas wreath-making, crochet, cross-stitch, knitting, decoration-making, figurine painting, and film-making workshops.
- **Social and Recreational Activities:** Monopoly, chess, Mario Kart tournaments, board games, and local walks.
- **Unique Experiences:** Jujitsu classes, afternoon tea visits, and golf.

The feedback from students and parents has been overwhelmingly positive, and we are delighted that the day met its objectives of encouraging students to step out of their comfort zones and try new experiences.

We're excited to announce that Character Day will become a regular feature in our calendar moving forward!



Christmas Dinner



On Thursday, 19th December, we held our annual Christmas Dinner for students in the main hall. When I first joined the school in 2012, this event catered to 300 students. Since then, it has grown into a festive meal for over 700 students and remains one of my personal highlights of the year.

Sitting down together with friends to enjoy a festive meal and celebrate the season is a real privilege and never fails to put everyone in the holiday spirit. Long may this tradition continue!

A huge thank you to our incredible catering team for their remarkable achievement in serving this many meals within a two-hour window—it is greatly appreciated.

Social Media and Mobile Phone Policy

For parents and students who are new to the school, I feel it is important to reiterate my stance on social media and mobile phone use both in and outside of school.

We continue to spend an unreasonable amount of time addressing issues stemming from the misuse of these tools. Social media remains the single biggest threat to the safety and wellbeing of the young people in our care, and unfortunately, the problem shows no signs of diminishing.

What may seem like an innocent and inevitable part of modern life is, in reality, a complex and often dangerous space, with risks evolving faster than we can keep up with.

You can find our e-safety policy here:

[Staying Safe Online](#)

If you ever need advice or support in managing your child's social media use, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Prison Island

On 11th December, over 90 Year 8 students enjoyed a well-deserved reward trip to Prison Island (Escape Rooms) in Maidstone.

The venue features 23 escape rooms offering a mix of physical and mental challenges, providing students with an excellent opportunity to develop teamwork, communication, and creativity skills.

Staff at Prison Island were so impressed by our students that they contacted me afterward to compliment the group on their behaviour. Well done to everyone who attended!

Once again – Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Kind regards

Mr M. Cater
Headteacher
Wrotham School