

The termly magazine from Dragon School

Dragon Tales



Autumn Term 2024



HEAD'S WELCOME

Dear Dragon Families,

The Autumn Term started with fireworks and fanfare as Skipper's flung open its doors, and we finish the term with some fabulous authors ensconced in the Sadler Hall, making the most of this new fabulous facility.

The new Astro adjacent to Skipper's has seen plenty of action with our incredible girls' hockey teams, and the rugby season had some particular highlights in the second half of term, including our UIIAs becoming IAPS regional winners.

The ambition of our Dragons has been on show with an outstanding production of 'The Tempest', not to mention the C Block pantomimes which saw 'Beauty and the Beast' taking place on a deserted island – who knew?!

The end of term also sees our youngest Dragons take to the stage, often for the first time. It is very special to watch them begin their Dragon story.

It seems appropriate that we conclude this term focusing on our core aim to develop free-thinking, confident young people, with our Dragons coming up with numerous ideas as to how they might raise money for worthwhile causes at the Dragon Sale.

From all of us at the Dragon, we wish you a restful break with family and look forward to welcoming you back in the new year.

Emma Giddons



SOCIAL IMPACT



Our Social Impact Programme for the new academic year has gotten off to a busy start. Pupils from Reception to A Block, as well as staff across the school, voted for our three new School Charities of the Year: Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground (Pre-Prep), Firefly International (E-C Block), and the South Downs Trust (Upper School). E and D Block have already raised over £2000 for Firefly International through two successful fundraisers, and we're looking forward to lots of other year group fundraisers in the new year. In addition, our Prep school Home Clothes Day for Children in

Need raised nearly £1500. We were delighted to welcome over 60 children from Windale Primary to Skipper's for our first Gamelan Day of the academic year, and Pre-Prep students visited a local care home to deliver hand-made Christmas cards and sing carols with residents. As I write this, preparations for the 81st Dragon Sale are in full swing. The Dragon Sale is an incredible occasion that brings together our whole community for the greater good, supporting charities that work with children and families around the world. A huge thanks for your ongoing support.

AUTUMN TERM AT THE PRE-PREP

September saw both new and returning Dragons start the new school year with great energy and enthusiasm. All of the learning opportunities have been met with typical Dragon courage and curiosity, and the children have taken everything in their stride. Whether on the stage, in the pool, on the playing fields or in the classroom, they have given their all and should be proud of all they have achieved. I hope you all have a relaxing break and I look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

Annie McNeile, Head of the Pre-Prep



Reception. Our youngest Dragons settled into Reception and school life quickly, making new friends and becoming more familiar with the school environment. It really didn't take them long to find their feet. Learning started quickly, with the children participating in Phonics lessons from the second week of term and immersing themselves in focus texts each week ranging from traditional tales, animations to more modern classics such as *Stuck by Oliver Jeffers* and *Richard Scarry's Busy Busy Town*. Little City visited and transformed the Pre-prep gym into a role play city for the morning where the children could explore different occupations such as shopkeepers, café owners, managing the garage and construction site, and a laundrette. The children thoroughly enjoyed a day of imaginative play and learning.

The second half of term saw Reception explore various festivals and celebrations, including Diwali, Remembrance Day, Thanksgiving, Advent, all leading up to learning about the Christmas story and the performance of the Nativity play during the penultimate week of term.

Reception's first performance was a huge success, and I'm sure you were all incredibly proud to see your little ones onstage, singing and dancing, and delivering their lines.

Year 1 have thoroughly enjoyed exploring the woodlands at Muddy Dragons – climbing trees, swinging in the hammock and successfully searching for frogs, which was great fun. Back at school, the children were very excited to learn how to write letters and invitations, which they used to invite their grandparents to school to showcase toys from the past. This event formed wonderful memories for the children and grandparents alike. A trip to the Prep science labs saw the children testing a variety of food to see if they contained

carbohydrates, which was a big hit, as was the drive in the minibuses for the first time. While the children were in class, we were immersed into countries around the United Kingdom – England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. I think it was unanimous that trying local food was the best part, as well as learning about plants native to the UK. They concluded the term with huge amounts of Christmas cheer at their concert.

Year 2 we have had a wonderfully immersive term – starting off with a trip to Windsor Castle to bring the topic of 'Castles' to life. The children loved learning all about the history of Windsor Castle and were fascinated by the King's residence. In the latter part of the Autumn Term, we have been studying 'Space', linked with the Orion and the Dark text. The trip to Winchester Science Centre and Planetarium was out of this world and their curiosity sky-rocketed with an outreach visit from Oxford University, who brought Goldilocks in Space workshops to the Year 2 team. A busy term was rounded off with the spectacular 'Stars' Christmas performance.

For Year 3, the term started with a focus on the Industrial Revolution and impact of the introduction of railways in Great Britain. A trip to the Didcot Railway Museum, a sketching walk to Summertown and a train-themed concert at the new music building at the Prep were amongst the highlights of the half term. In the second half of term, the focus turned to a new topic, 'Light Up the Night', whereby children learnt about the significance of light to religion and coastal communities through their new text, *The Mousehole Cat*. The Year 3 Dragons demonstrated lots of courage through their participation in House Captain interviews and sports fixtures, both at home and away. It was wonderful to see the children conclude the Autumn Term with their Christmas performance, 'Stars', at the Prep.





AUTUMN TERM AT THE PREP

E Block have settled brilliantly into life at the Prep, with highlights including a wonderful team-building day at Wittenham Clumps, where they did den building, orienteering and team games, and inviting a VR company into school so the children could experience up close the features of a polar biome. We have also had two authors in to read to the children and to talk to them about writing stories.

On the fields and in the pool, E Block have played in nearly 100 different sporting fixtures over the term! They also swam in their first relays.

The children had brilliant fun baking for the E Block Charity Bake sale which raised over £400 and saw the children professionally running the stalls... whilst eating some of the cakes!

Over 40% of the children in E Block have done some form of boarding or trial boarding and are always very excited to share their experiences in the mornings.

We leaned into the festivities towards the end of term, making

reindeer stables in Design, and, of course, the Christmas concert was a wonderful finale to a brilliant term.

Middle School's calendar has been awash with various events over the term. D Block enjoyed a fabulous Colour Run in the sunshine, raising £1805 for our chosen charities, exceeding their target by whopping 20%!

This was shortly followed by the annual extravaganza of Roman Day when slaves, gods and nobles alike gathered to immerse themselves in everyday life including following traditional recipes, developing Roman art and practising their Latin language skills.

All of Middle School enjoyed a talk by the author Abi Elphinstone, who has inspired a host of new readers with her adventure novels.

Many hours of practise were put in for the annual Battle of the Bands competition with lots of children taking their first steps into the camaraderie and crisis of being a band member.

Some D Block children were chosen to be part of a gamelan outreach project with one of the local schools we partner with,



exploring the tradition of Indonesian music and drama.

Many of C Block took part in the ISEB pre-tests, and it was testament to everyone that they remained calm and did their best to showcase their talents to their future schools.

C Block pantomimes are now a Dragon tradition and were an excellent precursor to our Christmas celebrations in school.

With form hockey, chess, netball and swimming fiercely fought competitions, as well as the collecting of pluses and kindness tokens, all of Middle School are looking forward to a relaxing break and a recharge for the New Year. The pace and energy of the Autumn Term 2024 has been fantastic for our Upper School children, with an excellent level of engagement and enthusiasm. The children have embodied our themes of "Respect", "Service" and "taking responsibility" and we have seen this actioned in classroom-based learning, co-curricular engagement, and going above and beyond to serve the Dragon community. B Block demonstrated this with their performance during a whole-school assembly in Anti-Bullying Week, which highlighted some very important key

messages. The Dragon Award Scheme is also still going strong with a large number of children signed up for service credits to support the Dragon Community – everything from ringing the school bell, tidying the changing rooms, getting lost property back to individuals, tidying the Art rooms, helping in the library and reading with younger year groups.

As always at the Dragon, pupil voice is very important, and the Upper School Council have been very proactive in understanding what the children in school enjoy and where they would like to see change.

Our Upper School Dragons also enjoyed trips to Rome and St Ives, immersing themselves in art and culture, and this term saw an outstanding and sophisticated performance of 'The Tempest'. With the many Christmas-focused events in the final week, excitement has been high, with children having lots of festive fun, while supporting each other and the broader community. A steady stream of scholarships have also already been awarded to our A Block children, with a large number more being taken next term.

BOARDING LIFE



Our boarding houses have been filled with happiness and laughter this term, from both full and flexi boarders. The boarders in No 14 and Strads have been relishing their newly refurbished Houses, enjoying the luxurious comfort and wonderful facilities.

This term has been filled with highlights such as trips to Chessington, Laser Tag, the Cotswold Wildlife Park, Gravitee Golf, and the Social Sixes Cricket Café. They also had a roller disco, Halloween parties and a Winter Ball. The diversity of our boarding community has been celebrated through various

international evenings, where children had the opportunity to share their culture, food, and music. The festive season brought various celebrations, including trips to the pantomime, along with impressive House performances at the Christmas Miscellany. The term wrapped up with lively House Christmas parties with an inflatable photo booth, disco, House Suppers, and the Boarders' Carol Service at St Andrew's.

Boarding continues to be the heart and soul of the Dragon, and the warmth and sense of family within the community will continue to be celebrated.



DRAGON QUEST

This term has seen some exciting new ConQuests added to the mix of our brilliant co-curricular Saturdays. We've made use of Radley's amazing squash courts with Mr Watson and Mr Smith passing their knowledge of the game to a new generation. We've embraced the fast-growing game of padel with coaching from Smash Padel coaches. We've been training to survive a zombie apocalypse at Ridgeway adventures, by learning to shoot crossbows, throw axes and fire airsoft pistols, while also learning to dodge the laser maze.

The quality of West End Dragons continues to impress; there can't be many prep schools that have such amazing performances of pupils directed by pupils. Dragons in Space remains a must for anyone interested in science and space, with new additions to the repertoire including coding rocket launches and creating satellites.

Many dice have been rolled in the ever-popular Dungeons and Dragons groups.

We love a niche sport, with spikeball, quidditch, handball, ultimate frisbee and lacrosse all being played this term as well as some of our martial artists progressing onto their next belt. We have enjoyed a myriad of creative activities from pottery to manga to scrapbooking and modern art. Dragon Hits and Dragon Rock continue to be popular options, as well as new kid on the block: Film Scoring Dragons.

Quest Prime continues to prove popular with the touch rugby, football, yoga and netball all proving great fun (and exercise). We think Quest Prime should be on all of your new year's resolution list!



ARTISTIC DRAGONS



This term in the Art department has been a journey of creativity across all year groups!

Our Upper School artists began with an inspiring trip to St Ives, immersing themselves in the town's artistic heritage. They explored galleries, engaged with local artists, and drew inspiration from the breathtaking coastal scenery. Highlights included visits to the Tate Gallery, Barbara Hepworth Gardens and pottery workshops at the Bernard Leach Foundation, which provided hands-on experiences to enrich their personal studies and broaden their artistic perspective. They even managed a few ice-cold swims in the sea!

In the classroom, A Block explored the intricacies of natural forms, crafting cactus sculptures and observational studies of fruit and vegetables using various mediums. They then turned their attention to mechanical objects, dissecting gears and tools to uncover their aesthetic potential, creating intricate paper and wire sculptures.

B Block's focus on architecture began with studies of buildings and urban structures, culminating in Oxford skylines inspired by John Piper. They expanded their scope to cultural art, producing striking Japanese notans, Ming vase oil pastels, and textured continent designs infused with cultural fabrics and materials, highlighting art as a universal language.

C Block turned to landscapes, experimenting with techniques inspired by Winslow Homer and Kurt Jackson to convey the beauty of both the serene countryside and bustling urban scenes. Their work captured the diversity of terrains and deepened their appreciation of natural elements.

D Block honed their skills in portraiture, producing tonal studies and works influenced by Picasso's cubism and Klimt's distinctive style. Using various mediums, they explored shading, composition and colour to portray human expressions and capture the essence of their subjects.

E Block focused on colour, studying hues, warm and cold, tint and shade and gradients. They created vibrant pieces such as colour wheels, watercolour jewels, and cherry blossom artworks. These studies showcased their understanding of the visual spectrum, laying a strong foundation for future artistic growth.

Together, these efforts have produced a rich tapestry of artistic expression, blending natural and mechanical forms, architecture, landscapes, portraiture, and colour studies. Well done to all our Dragons for their dedication and creativity!



MUSICAL DRAGONS



The Autumn Term began with all whistles and bells at the launch of the new Music and Performing Arts building, affectionately known as Skipper's. The Dragon community were out in force, being entertained by Big Band, a visit from some very special guests, and then treated to a tour of the building with every area alive with music and drama.

After a rip-roaring visit by the Brass Funkeys saw the school treated to an illustrated tour of jazz history at the beginning of term which served as inspiration for the excitement of Battle of the Bands, our Head of Music Tech spent weeks of his Bun Breaks setting microphones up or supplying leads for guitars to facilitate the children's musical creativity. The result was well worth it as it was one of our most slick efforts to date. The adjudicators Ben Weston (Stowe School) and Bobby Simms (international music producer) were given the very hard choice of selecting our winning bands which could have gone in several different directions. In the end they went with The Clan (1st), Highway to Rock (2nd) and Live (3rd) who

will get a studio session at Stowe School with the Head of Popular Music.

The second half of term began with our moving Remembrance Service, made all the more poignant with the return of our piper, Douglas Mackintosh (OD). There was also a successful Gamelan Day early on with the whole event being housed within Skipper's for the first time; 50 Windale children took part alongside 30 Dragons with one boy saying, "This was the best school trip EVER!"

The term closes with our Christmas concert season, which is a musical and joyful blur of concerts and services. Our year group concerts have gone well with highlights being a humorous and lively E Block Strings, the Oasis medley by Middle School Choir and 'Baby, it's Cold Outside' by the combined wind groups of Upper School. Our Carol Concert at St Edward's and our traditional Carol Service in St Andrew's brings our musical last two weeks to a grand conclusion. There is a Christmas event for all tastes here at the Dragon!



DRAGONS ON STAGE



This term has been an exciting beginning to the year for the Drama department, with over 200 children involved in performances of all shapes and sizes.

The highlight of the term's Drama was the Upper School play production of 'The Tempest'. The production was a daring and creative adaptation of this Shakespearean classic, set not on an island, but in a post-apocalyptic dystopian wasteland. A magical soundscape underplayed the entire piece, which also saw live feed being used for the first time on the Dragon stage. Including a cast and crew of 60 pupils, it was very well received by the audience who found the adaptation both alluring and stretching. The matinée performance was attended by C Block, who studied the play in English lessons in preparation for the production and wrote reviews after the production. Congratulations to all of the production team involved and special thanks to Mr Bailey for his innovative vision.

C Block's "devised" pantomimes returned again for their fourth year in a row – "Oh yes, they did!" These short performances were created by seven different Drama classes of C Block, and this year included a "setting" for the pantomimes. Examples included, 'Snow White' set in a nursing home, 'Robin Hood' in a doughnut shop and 'Aladdin' in space. All 130 pupils in C Block performed in this production to an audience of approximately 500.

B Block Drama classes performed in the term's CHE Anti-bullying Assembly. This term's theme was 'Choose Respect' and the 50+ B Block pupils created two pieces that delivered this message. These creative performances were watched by the Dragon School pupils.

The pre-prep Years 2 and 3, and Year 1 performances were once again a huge hit and gave a great opportunity to our Dragon youngsters. Well done!



As the weather in the Autumn Term turns from summery to much colder, wetter and harder terrain, we are always proud of our Dragons for getting out there, come rain or shine, and giving it their all. The new Astro has been a brilliant addition and the children have loved the use of this facility.

This term saw 56 teams (from A to E Block) playing 447 matches in rugby and hockey – no small feat! Alongside this, we had five very successful cross-country meetings that involved large amounts of boys and girls from A to E Block. Our swimmers from U9 to U13 also competed in several galas throughout the term.

A particular congratulations is due to the U11A boys who won the IAPS Regional Rugby Festival!



We have been so impressed by the children's sportsmanship and team mentality, and sport at the Dragon continues to thrive in skill and performance, as well as in the teaching of life lessons and the importance of teamwork.

