

THE SPUR

ISSUE 1

AUTUMN TERM 2023

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RAYNES PARK HIGH SCHOOL

DEAR FAMILIES

At the end of a very long 15 weeks, I would like to thank the students for their hard work and achievements this term.

We have entered fully into the spirit of the festive season with students enjoying a traditional Christmas lunch, hearing classic Christmas songs at lesson changeover, raising money for 'Save the Children' by wearing Christmas jumpers and holding a bake sale for the school's nominated charity, Cancer Research UK.

As always, we have many success stories to share and good news items to celebrate together in our end of term newsletter and as we start to prepare for the school's goth

anniversary celebrations, we have reverted to calling this *The Spur* in recognition of the first newsletter published in 1935.

The end of term is a good time to reflect on and celebrate our students' achievements and we were delighted with the attendance at the three Awards Evenings we held at the school recently. Recognising effort and achievement in both subjects and sports was wonderful, as was our end of term assembly celebrating the successes of our four Houses whilst Year 11 received their mock

exam results and the Sixth Form enjoyed an afternoon ice-skating at Hampton Court Palace. It is a particular highlight for me to present Headteacher Awards to those individuals who go above and beyond, although it remains my privilege to walk through the school each day and see our students smartly dressed in their uniform, engaged in their lessons and displaying such a positive attitude to learning.

This term also saw us celebrate Jeans for Genes Day, Macmillan Coffee Morning, Children in Need, National Anti-Bullying Week, Black History Month and Movember, with a number of our male colleagues raising awareness of the work of this fantastic cause by growing a moustache. We were also delighted to formally open our new library and reading room, to further enhance our provision for reading and literacy. Thank you to those staff and students who have made all of these events possible and to you, our families, for your support at these events.

This year, over 200 Year 7 students joined the school in September. They have made a fantastic start at RPHS and have successfully completed their first term with us. The transition curriculum, now in its 5th year, has gone from strength to strength and we were really pleased that so many families could join us for the Showcase Evening in September and attend the Year 7 Progress Evening last week.

On the sporting front, our collaboration with Fulham Football Club has been successful in recruiting to the first Girls' Education Programme, and like the boys team, they are managing their studies and training commitment very well. We have also continued to develop our partnership with the Tim Henman Foundation, awarding scholarships for students to pursue an interest out of school, and we are looking forward to Tim officially opening our refurbished tennis courts next year.

Raynes Park High School continues to be a thriving community and I would like to thank the staff and governors for their dedication and commitment, as well as parents and carers for your continued support of RPHS. We have already achieved so much this term and it is now time for a well-deserved break.

On behalf of the staff, Governors and everyone associated with RPHS, I wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and my best wishes for 2024.

KJ Taylor

Miss K J Taylor
Headteacher

FOLLOW RPHS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

If you would like to hear about updates, see pictures and videos of special events and day to day life at Raynes Park High School, make sure you are following us on our social media platforms.

Scan the QR codes below with your camera phone or find us at @officialrphs on Twitter and Instagram and Raynes Park High School and Sixth Form on Facebook!



RAYNES PARK HIGH SCHOOL CHARITABLE TRUST

Our aim – raising funds to support Raynes Park High School students!

We are very pleased to report that the Nature Study Area continues to progress, and we are looking forward to using it for outdoor study in the spring. The gardening area is being extended further so that RPHS students can grow even more vegetables... and eat them!

On the performing arts front, the Staging and Drama Project has come to fruition, and we all enjoyed the School's terrific production of *Grease* in the summer. The development of the Performing Arts studio is also progressing – a major fund-raising campaign may be needed!

The Trust is able to make small grants. Staff/colleagues are invited to apply from the Trust to assist in learning projects. Details are included in the staff handbook.

Some businesses are keen to show a commitment to the community by making charitable donations. As the Trust is a charity, we can receive donations and the funds can support the school. If you have contacts in businesses which might support the school, please let them know we are happy to have donations.

The Trust is still looking for new volunteers to become Trustees, in order to ensure continuity in the future. Parents would be particularly welcome. The main commitment is to attend three meetings per year, usually around October, March and June. Our aim is to make the meetings brisk and business-like! If you are interested, please email RPHSTrust@outlook.com for further information.



Finally, no doubt many of you will be buying gifts online in the last few days before Christmas and by using the Easyfundraising website, the school will benefit financially. If you are able, please sign up and nominate the Raynes Park High School Trust and buy online – here is the link you need to participate:

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/raynesparkhs



Neil Jordan
Chair, Raynes Park High School Charitable Trust

RPHSTrust@outlook.com



Dance

As the Autumn term draws to a close, we would like to share some successes of the Dance department this term at RPHS.

Back in October we hosted our auditions for the 'RPHS Dance Company'. This is a dedicated group of students who demonstrate a passion for Dance and want to perform further. Seventeen students from Years 7, 8 and 9 were successful through the audition process and now meet every Thursday after school to work on their technical ability in Dance and to create performance pieces. We are hoping to represent RPHS at a Dance

Competition in the New Year and also take part in performance showcases and assemblies.

In addition to this, Dance Club, which takes place on Tuesday afternoon break, has large numbers of students coming along to create movement and share the enjoyment of dance with their peers. The club is open to everyone, and we welcome new members every week. After the Christmas break we have students leading workshops in 'Street Dance' and 'Cheerleading'.

Finally on Thursday 23rd November, RPHS hosted its Sports Awards evening. During the evening four students from Years 8 and 10

performed to the parents, teachers, award winners and special guests in a range of different dance styles. Daisy in Year 10 performed a contemporary dance piece, demonstrating a great range of technical ability and expressive skills, Alice and Kaylee in Year 8 performed a jazz dance, which they spent time after school creating and rehearsing, and finally Kaithlyn in Year 10 performed a ballet solo, showing her fantastic balance, flexibility and sheer talent in such a difficult style of dance.

Ms B Davis
Head of Performing Arts





Music

Our newly reformed school choir recently had the honour of performing at the prestigious Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4/5 Award Ceremonies, where our talented students showcased their excellent music abilities. We are very proud of their outstanding performance, highlighting the dedication and hard work they have put into refining their singing skills. Our choir is a dynamic enrichment activity that takes place after school every Monday, providing students with the opportunity to express themselves through the joy of music.

We believe in fostering a love for music, so we are thrilled that we are also developing our school band. The school band welcomes all students with instrumental skills so any student who plays an instrument is more than welcome to be part of this exciting musical journey.

Additionally, our keyboard club has seen an excellent turnout of enthusiastic students eager to develop their keyboard skills. This inclusive club is open to everyone, regardless of previous experience, and we are thrilled to witness the progress our students are making.

For those interested in enhancing their musical abilities further, we are proud to offer instrumental lessons through the Merton Music Foundation. These lessons provide personalised guidance and support to help students flourish in their musical pursuits.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the students who contribute to the musical richness of our school. Their commitment and passion for music are truly commendable, and we look forward to witnessing their continued growth and success in the world of melody and rhythm.

Mr W Mohanaraj
Head of Music

Drama

It's been a busy term in the drama department. In November a selected group of Year 9 students successfully took part in the Globe Theatre's Curtain Raiser Competition, beating competing schools from across London to win the chance to perform at the Globe Theatre in March 2024.

Two theatre practitioners from the Globe came into school to run an audition workshop with a selected group of students, who had to create a two-minute performance of the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet*. This was filmed and taken back to the board of judges at the Globe, who selected our students to perform their very own opening of the play *Romeo and Juliet* on stage at the Globe next year. This is a fantastic opportunity for our students, and we can't wait to see their performance next year.

While our Year 9's are working on *Romeo and Juliet*, our Year 8's are busy with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which they will be performing at the Exchange Theatre in Twickenham in March as part of the Shakespeare Schools Festival. We wish them the best of luck!

Following on from our performance of *Grease* in the summer term, we were delighted to see more than 200 students signing up and coming along to audition for our next whole school musical: *Footloose*. Rehearsals will be starting in the coming weeks.

Finally, our KS4 GCSE drama students went on a trip to see *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* which was a great success, with students writing theatre reviews for their final coursework component.

Ms E Pope
Head of Drama

LIBRARY LAUNCH

LIBRARY LAUNCH

This term the librarians and art department have been working incredibly hard to create our brand new two loor library, and December 14th saw its official opening.

When we returned to school in September, we were faced with plain walls and empty shelves, giving us a completely blank canvas to work from. The pupils created a system for shelving the books, grouping them by ability, genre and author, and created reviews to share their favourite novels. They designed displays celebrating all of their favourite library events, and also personalised posters where they shared why the library is such an important space for them.

The Sixth Form art students went above and beyond with their ideas and contributions. A beautiful mural now welcomes students as they enter, and we additionally have an intricate sculpture – inspired by the myth of Medusa – alongside thought-provoking photography and eye-catching genre posters which fill the walls. The younger years were also invited to be involved through creating book art in art club.

The upstairs space is where our reading intervention team is based; Mrs Hayles and Mrs Hallifax provide additional support to KS3 readers, and 24 computers allow for pupils to complete Bedrock literacy intervention, improving their reading skills.





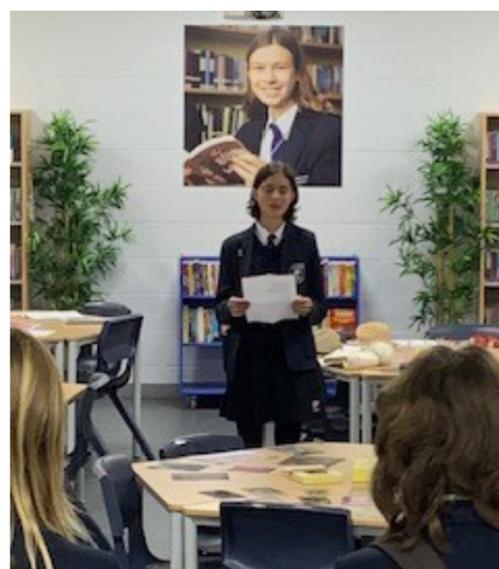
Opening day was marked with a series of events, starting with a visit by pupils from West Wimbledon Primary School, who joined us for a creative writing session led by our students.

We were also very excited to be joined by author Matt Oldfield, whose 'Football Series' of books has proved so popular with readers and football fans alike. Matt delivered inspiring creative writing sessions with our Year 7 and 8 students in the library, as well as a talk in the main hall. Students were also delighted that at lunchtime Matt held a signing session in the library, with copies of his books available to buy – a very popular choice!

The day ended with the official opening of the library, which included contributions from staff and students, and poetry readings from the team behind the creative writing magazine, *Titania*.

We would like to say a huge thank you to all the staff and students who have helped us to create such a unique space, putting literacy at the forefront of everything we do at Raynes Park High School.

Ms C Waterston
Head of Literacy and Librarian





We are delighted that we have a new student magazine, *Titania*. Started by students in Years 10 and 11, and created with the help of students in Years 7, 8 and 9, *Titania* is a literary magazine, featuring original poetry, artwork and creative writing, and showcasing the fantastic talent we have in the school.

A member of the team describes how the magazine came into being:

'At its core, Titania is the escapism that some students struggle to find elsewhere. We are the cracks in the pavement, the spells and enchantments weaved between pages, the songs that you're too afraid to sing anywhere else. Working on Titania has not only made me feel like a part of something unique, but has provided me with a creative outlet where I can express all my thoughts and feelings without being judged.'

Following publication of their first edition this term, the team are keen to encourage contributions from all Year groups.

Congratulations to Juliet in Year 8, who has been placed in the top 100 for The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2023! This is a fantastic achievement for Juliet, with her poem chosen from over 15,800 entries from as far afield as Romania, New Zealand, and Trinidad and Tobago. The top 100 winning poets were announced at a ceremony at Shakespeare's Globe on 5th October, and the winners all received a year's youth membership of The Poetry Society and a bag full of books. Here is Juliet's wonderful poem:

I Am Going To Make A Hat

by Juliet

*I am going to make a hat.
A hundred different parts all pulled together,
With red embroidery thread.
Buttons, so it stays together,
A key, so I'm never far from home,
Feathers, so it can fly.
Ribbon, so it feels nice when you hold it,
Sea glass, so it makes pretty colours in the light,
And a brass beetle, so it can remember him.
All arranged like a bouquet
On a green felt hat.*

I'm going to put it on.

*I'm wearing my hat
Wherever it shall take me
And we walk
Together
And the harsh winds whip my hair around,
But I don't care.
Because I'm wearing my hat
My hat takes me to the beach
We gaze out upon the great chalk cliffs
We look over the sun bleached sand.
I take off my hat
I set it on the sand
I look at it
I leave.*

I think the sea needs it more than me.





Thursday 16th November saw students, parents, teachers and guests gather in our main hall to celebrate the achievements of our KS3 students with our first Awards Evening of term. More than 80 students received awards for their Achievement and Attitude to Learning, alongside Head of Year Awards, the Headteacher's Award and the WH Auden Award. We were also treated to performances from the school choir – who led us all in a rousing rendition of the school song to close the evening – as well as a poetry reading from competition winner Juliet and a showcase performance of *Greased Lightning* from the cast of our summer production of *Grease*.

Mr King
Deputy Headteacher





On 23rd November we hosted our annual Sports Awards in the main hall – which underwent a magical transformation for the evening! Over 35 RPHS students received awards for their sporting achievements and their commitment to our sporting values of Pride, Participation and Performance, and it was wonderful to celebrate their successes with so many families, staff and guests, including Paralympian and gold-medal winner Corinne Hall OBE.

As well as sporting celebrations, we also enjoyed performances from four of our talented dancers from Year 8 and 10 to complete a wonderful evening.

Mr J Oldridge
Director of Sport & Community Partnerships





Our final Awards Evening of the term on December 7th had a suitably festive feel, with the Christmas tree looking magnificent in the main hall, and parents and guests being treated to mulled wine and mince pies in the canteen before the ceremony. Over 100 students were recognised for their Achievement and Attitude to Learning, and, with the return of some former Year 13 students, it was wonderful to see some familiar faces. A number of Special Awards were presented: alongside the Head of Year and Headteacher's Awards, we were delighted to present students with the Paul Vaughan STEM Award, the Claude Rogers Art Award, the Alex Knapp Music Award and the Milo Little Kindness Award.

Entertainment was provided by our talented singers and choir, and once again, we enjoyed a performance from *Grease*. As is tradition, the evening closed with a rendition of the School Song, accompanied on the piano by former student Alex Knapp – who also presented the award which bears his name. A very fitting way to round off what has been a wonderful Awards season here at Raynes Park.

Mr King
Deputy Headteacher



YEAR 7 TEAMBUILDING DAY



At the start of term – on a gloriously sunny day – our new cohort of Year 7's took part in a teambuilding day, designed to develop new friendships and foster team-working skills.

Grouped into their new houses, students enjoyed sessions creating artwork, followed by sessions of team games on the sports field. The day was rounded off by a special assembly with medals for the winning teams.

HUMANITIES WEEK



Humanities Week took place from 16th-19th October and saw students from across the Year groups getting involved in a wide range of events.

The week was planned to coincide with Black History Month. This takes place nationwide throughout October and is designed to raise awareness of historical figures who may otherwise remain unrecognised. Staff have been acknowledging Black History in lessons, for example in Geography, by considering how European countries have been shaped by immigration. Also on offer were online quizzes, research and writing tasks, and activities designed to encourage us to notice aspects of our surroundings which may often go unnoticed, for example, the many trees on the school site.

For Year 8 students, the highlight of the week was a visit from ZooLab. Fitting in nicely with the students' current ecosystems unit, the ZooLab ranger brought the tropical rainforest to life with a selection of animals which they were able to study, touch and hold. The presentation really helped highlight the significance of rainforests to the biodiversity and wellbeing of the planet.

Mr Collman would like to thank all staff and students for their involvement in the week's activities.

Mr G Collman
Head of Humanities



It was a great pleasure to support Burlington Primary School during its STEM week, which focused on 'Structures'.

Their Year 4 and 5 students had the opportunity to join our Science and DT departments in a very special set of lessons. In science, they focused on the very smallest structures, looking at atoms, elements and mixtures, to give a greater insight in to how the world is created. In DT, Mr Harris and Mr Robinson challenged the Burlington students to make the tallest paper totem pole. First the students were divided into groups of six and then they were taught key concepts about structures. They could then apply this knowledge to build and reinforce their own totem pole structures. Whilst this seemed relatively straightforward there were other challenges, such as the fact that students had limited materials with which to create the totem poles. They also had to design a totem pole that could withstand a wind test to be the ultimate winner.

When all the students had completed their designs for the tallest and strongest totem pole, two of the best designs were selected to compete against each other. The totem poles were tested rigorously and the results were absolutely amazing. It was clear that the students had really pushed their problem-solving skills and the enjoyment in the challenge was evident by all the amazing outcomes. The students were so impressive, there are certainly some engineers of the future at Burlington Primary School!

Mr R Harris
Head of Art & Design Faculty
and

Mr Oldridge
Director of Sport & Community Partnerships

SCIENCE UPDATE

It has been a very busy term in the Science department, both in and out of the classroom. In classrooms, the students have been doing a great number of practicals to enrich their learning and see the theory they have been taught. Alongside their lessons, there have been many trips and events to inspire students to continue their love for science beyond the classroom.

New Scientist Live

A-Level Biology and Psychology students attended New Scientist Live at The ExCeL, London. There were four stages with shows, presentations and lectures. The highlight of the speeches was a live stream to the International Space Station where students were able to have a Q&A with the ISS Chief Commander.

There were also lots of really exciting companies and universities presenting their own research and latest scientific technologies. Students got to build compounds, trial medical procedures and test their balance, contributing to studies at universities.



In2Science

A Level Science and BTEC Applied Science students in Year 12 had an assembly and workshop by In2Science, a company that empowers young people to achieve their potential through life changing opportunities that give them insights into STEM careers and research, and boosts their skills and confidence. The students will now have support from In2Science and the RPHS Science department to apply for these experiences that will look fantastic when applying for university or employment after Sixth Form.

'It was really interesting being able to practice taking and analysing samples for a virus. I loved being able to work completely independently and compare data with other groups to reach my own conclusions. It was a great insight into working in a lab in the future.'

Serra, Year 11

The students got the chance to analyse different blood samples, as if they were working in their own research lab.

The Science Museum

GCSE Triple Science students have been to the Science Museum for a work experience event co-created with Marvel Studios, the NHS, National Grid and several universities, where students got the opportunity to hear from a technician currently working at Imperial College London. The students were then given the afternoon to explore the diverse and interactive galleries, including the David Sainsbury Gallery of Technicians. It was an excellent opportunity for students to see where studying Science in Sixth Form and beyond can lead them.

'It has a great variety of themes and you realise how complex science is and how it is everywhere around you – from transport and clocks to transmission of data and statistics informing the NHS.'

Basma



Gardening Club

Gardening Club has been a continued success with students getting the garden ready for winter after a bumper harvest of pumpkins, potatoes and more.

STEM Club

STEM Club is a very exciting club that is gaining more members every week. Students have applied their scientific and mathematical skills to the designing and building of various structures, for example Aerodynamics, Building Bridges and even 'egg parachutes'. The latest design has been to build (and test) balloon-powered cars. Year 12 students have supported these sessions admirably, developing a diverse set of skills. One of the most committed students, Honey, said that

'I love STEM Club because it lets me explore all different kinds of science that I wouldn't always get to see as much of in lessons. I really enjoyed making the hovercraft vehicles, it was a great way for me to combine my love for Science and Art.'

Noah, a newer student to STEM Club has created his own model of a hydrocarbon using materials from home – we love the design!





King's College Aspirations

This term, we have been taking a small group of Year 8 students to Kings' College School to take part in the Science Aspirations Course. The students really enjoyed their experiences as you can see from their comments below:

'One of my favourite parts of the Science Aspirations Course at King's College was the flame tests we did in our last chemistry workshop, even though my group didn't do very well on the quiz at the end! The lab turned into a haze of colour – green, red and pink – as we mixed different unlabelled chemicals with fire to try and identify them. I think that my personal favourite was the copper sulphate, as it turned the flame a bright, emerald green, unlike anything I'd ever seen before.'

Juliet

'One of the most memorable and interesting practicals that we did at the King's College Science Aspirations course was when we used red cabbage as an indicator to help us determine the pH of different

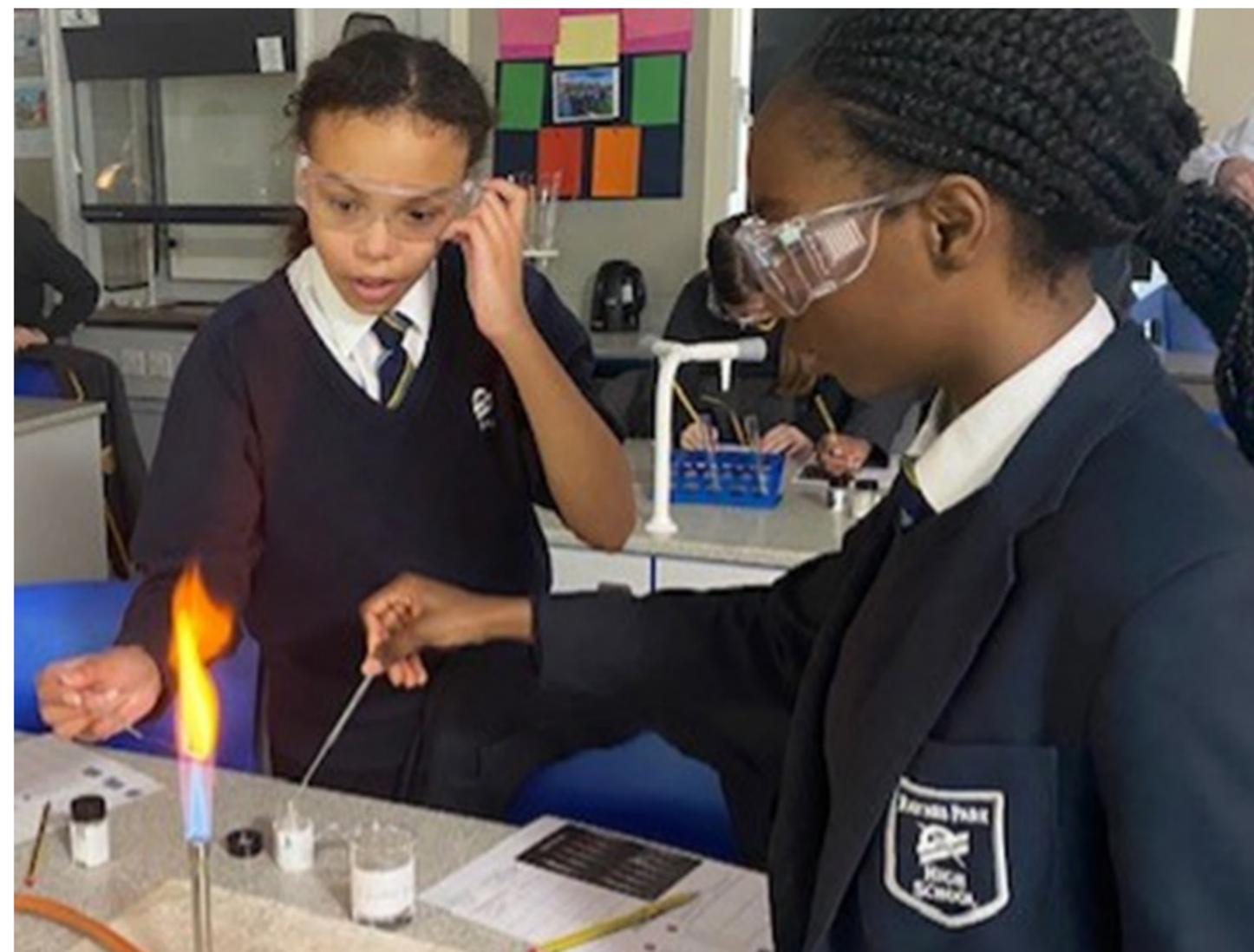
solutions. We were given some solutions ranging from very acidic to very alkaline and we added a bit of red cabbage to the solutions to find out their pH. The solutions changed to different colours of the pH scale, which showed us if they were acids or alkalis. We also had a fun competition where each team had to make a green, neutral solution by mixing acids and alkalis together. The group whose neutral solution was a green identical to the green of water with a pH of 7 won!'

Amal

'On the first week of the King's College course, we participated in an activity where we were given the chance to figure out how to make an egg drop without cracking using specific resources. It was a very fun time as I was able to have fun with my peers and I learnt something new about Science. In the end, our egg did crack, however it was an incredibly fun time and I wouldn't mind doing it again.'

Maame

Ms M Bowes
Head of Science





This term has brought a range of opportunities to the Raynes Park community. This has allowed many of our students to develop their workplace skills, alongside offering several local primary students the chance to experience the wonderful facilities here at RPHS.

Year 12 Sport Leaders

The Year 12 Sports Leaders supported their first Merton School Sport Partnership event of the year. This time it was the Girls Tag Rugby Festival, hosted at the Old Wimbledonians Rugby Club. The girls were the leads on six skill development activities in the morning and built up their confidence and expertise to be refereeing the full tag games by the afternoon. They were excellent motivators throughout the day and received amazing feedback from MSSP staff, teachers and the students. They did such a good job that they were asked to support the Football Festival the following week!

LTA Youth Programme CPD

We were very pleased to host the LTA Youth Programme CPD for local primary school

teachers at RPHS. To be able to share our brand new facilities with our local community is exactly the reason why we wanted the redevelopment. It was an informative and well run course with local LTA tutor Emma Wells. We are looking forward to hosting many more CPD and tennis opportunities at RPHS, with a Community Tennis Programme in the pipeline for 2024!

Merton School Sport Partnership Hockey Championship

It was our pleasure to support the Merton School Sport Partnership and Wimbledon Hockey Club, in delivering their annual Hockey Championships. It was a fantastic turn-out with 14 schools in attendance, playing some high level hockey on our fantastic pitch. Well done to Poplar Primary who were worthy winners after a tense penalty shootout in the final!



FOUNDATION MAKES A NOISE ABOUT BULLYING

Fulham Foundation Premier League Inspires

At the Fulham FC Foundation, we 'Made a Noise' about bullying. The Year 9 Premier League Inspires group were invited to Fulham's Motspur Park training ground to be a part of a workshop delivered by Fulham's Mental Wellbeing Practitioners. It was an excellent opportunity for our students to engage in mental health wellbeing and bullying topics, with the group giving some very mature responses to challenging topics. They even had the exciting opportunity to meet and quiz first team player Calvin Bassey who gave an insight into the mindset of a professional footballer.

Girls Football Festival

Our Fulham FC girls stepped up again to host the RPHS girls football festival this autumn, passing on some footballing expertise to the girls of Aragon, Burlington and Sacred Heart. It was a wonderful afternoon led by the Football Education girls who ran a carousel of football-related activities and then refereed the games as each school played each other in mini games. It was great to see the primary students learning

from their older counterparts – who knows, they might even follow in their footsteps! It was also another fantastic display from the sports leaders and a further opportunity to develop their leadership skills.

Aragon Primary School Humanities Week

We were very happy to invite Aragon Primary's Year 6 students to take part in a history workshop as part of their Humanities week. The focus was on World War 2 and Ms Stewart and the Humanities team took them on a tour of Merton during WW2 and the effects of the Blitz. The students were brilliantly engaged and scored very highly on the quiz. They then had to work effectively as part of a team to build their own model Anderson shelter – which I must say was a very difficult challenge to judge! It was a wonderful morning that gave the students an insight into a topic they will be covering in class in the New Year. Thank you to Ms Stewart and the Humanities team for offering such a great opportunity here at RPHS.

Mr John Oldridge
Director of Sport & Community Partnerships





We are proud to share the exciting events and activities that took place at our school to celebrate Black History Month during the month of October. This year's theme of 'Celebrating Our Sisters' aimed to highlight the incredible accomplishments and contributions of black British women throughout history and in contemporary society.

At the heart of our celebrations, we hosted a poetry competition that encouraged students to explore and express their thoughts and feelings about the experiences and achievements of black women. The event showcased the immense talent and creativity of our students, as they shared powerful and thought-provoking poems that paid tribute to the strength and resilience of black women in our society.

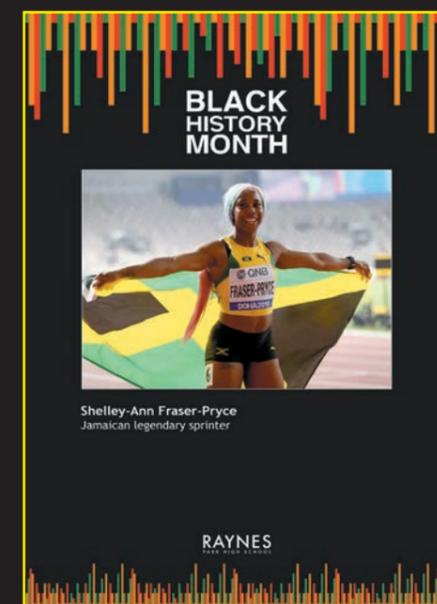
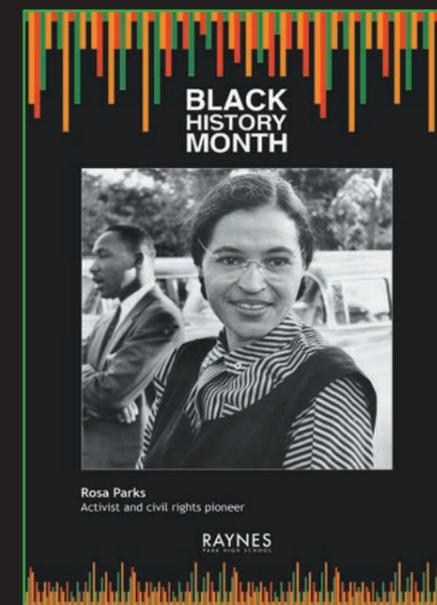
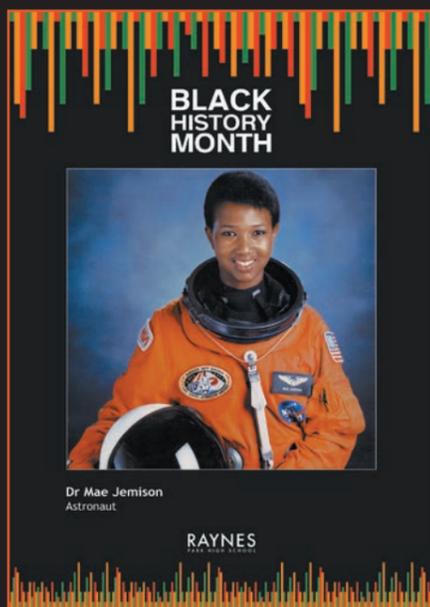
Our school embraced the rich and vibrant sounds of black cultural music during lesson changeovers. This provided a wonderful opportunity for students and staff to immerse themselves in the rhythms and melodies that have shaped and enriched black culture. The music served as a powerful reminder of the influence and impact of black artists on the global music landscape.

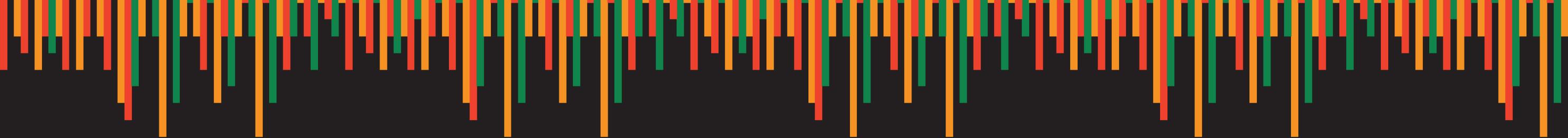
The school canteen proudly featured a selection of delicious black ethnic foods, offering students the chance to experience and savour the traditional flavours and culinary delights of black cultures.

We were also thrilled to welcome Underexposed Arts, who ran an engaging workshop with our Year 10 students during their drop down day. The workshop included a special guest appearance by actor Frazer James, who showcased the remarkable screenwriting project undertaken by RPHS students Kyreese, Liam, Bashil, Jamar, Renee, Hayley and Chichi. This workshop allowed our students to gain valuable insights into the world of screenwriting and filmmaking, and the Year group experienced the creative accomplishments of our students in the realm of visual arts and media.

Though Black History Month has officially ended, our commitment to celebrating and honouring the achievements and contributions of black individuals and communities continues throughout the year. We believe that it is crucial to recognise and uplift the diverse voices and experiences that have shaped our shared history and continue to enrich our lives today.

Mr M McCurdy
Assistant Headteacher





The Feeling Of Home

by Zoe

'The End.'

A breath of silence,
A moment of exhilaration, expectation-
The storm of the crowd,
Hands clapping in bursts of thunder,
Feet drumming like droplets of rain,
Wolf whistles flashes of lightning,
The darkness of the night, the theatre, lit up by the storm,
By those you love more dearly than life and those you will never meet-

The bows, brief, awkwardly enjoyed,
Twice for yourself, your cast,
Once for your tech, your crew,
And once for all of you,
Creators of something never to be experienced again-

Every show is different,
Each one a masterpiece of barely avoided disaster,
An artwork of not enough space,
not enough time,
A symphony of swear words backstage,
faltered lines onstage,
invented lines to fill the bars of silence,
But it is your masterpiece,
your artwork,
your symphony,
your chaos,
your triumph-

It bubbles in your chest,
All of you drunk on champagne you've never tasted,
Overflowing, babbling, every word useless and yet perfect,
To describe that moment,
that expression,
that line-

It is everywhere, this feeling of invulnerability,
As if the very sky is on fire and yet you are untouchable,
Like you are burning but unharmed,
Shot in a dozen places but not yet bleeding,
It is in the discarded costumes in every corner,
In the props left everywhere but where you expect to find them,
In the programme devoured, though it fails to capture this moment's enormity,
In those you know who came to watch, who come to find you backstage,
In the photos of each other, of hated costumes, of difficult props-

continued overleaf



Congratulations to Zoe in Year 11 and Clara in Year 10 for their success in the Wimbledon BookFest Young Writer's Competition.

The competition is open to all schools across the Borough of Merton, and with more than 70 schools taking part, we are very proud that Clara was the joint KS3 winner, while Zoe was awarded the KS4 runner-up prize. Their winning poems follow.



continued from overleaf

*A futile attempt to catch the uncatchable,
A feeling felt by so few, for such a short time,
Lost in your blankets and dreams,
Replaced by the slump of finality the next morning.*

*You can never catch that feeling in the same way again,
You can never perform that show the same way again,
You can never know your lines,
your cues,
your props,
your costume changes, the same way again,
You can never know this cast the same way again-*

But you try.

*It is in every new show you perform,
In every song you hum,
In every movement turned into dance,
In every in-cast joke,
In every show you ever see-*

*That insatiability.
That search for something felt but once,
The reason every scriptwriter scribbles,
every dancer learns their movements,
every crew member learns their cues,
every actor learns their lines-*

To us?

*To put on a show,
To find that feeling?*

That feeling is what it means to be home.



A Voice Made Of Stardust

by Clara

*I have sat down to dinner with the moon
And kissed red hot flames,
I have sprinkled sugar on stars before eating them
And held hands with the ocean as we danced,
But this.*

*This is the first time I have ever understood what they mean when they talk about 'home'.
I tell her this and she laughs, kisses me.
God.
I love it when she kisses me.*

*Her eyes are the windows to a house made of memories,
Her freckles the notes to a melody of stars,
Her hair a silky curtain to be hung in the living room
When guests are round.*

*Where ever did you get those curtains? they'll ask
And I'll smile knowingly
Because they wouldn't believe it.
When she sings the birds stop to listen
And the whales cry fat, mournful tears*

*Because somehow she has the ability to tell the world exactly what it is to feel love and joy and pain
In a single song.
She smells of lemons and rain, and hope and beauty and the promise that life can be good and will be good
Because every night I am falling asleep in her arms,
In the arms of a beautiful girl with a voice made of stardust.*

And I am home.

*I tell her all of this aswell
And she laughs again;
Kisses me again.*

*What about me? Am I your home? I ask.
The stars are my home, she replies.
Because whenever I look up at them I am reminded that somehow,
Somewhere,
You are looking up at them too.
I laugh, nestle against her.*

*As long as we're under the same night sky, I'll be okay, I whisper.
And for the first time in a long time, I am telling the truth.*

And I am home.

WELLBEING IN SCHOOL



How have we been promoting wellbeing in school?

Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing continues to be a large priority for us at RPHS and we continue to work closely alongside local external agencies to provide 1-to-1 and group support to students of all Year groups.

In September we restarted our school's LGBTQIA+ club, this takes place on Fridays during 1st break in the library and is kindly led by Ms Sleet. This club is a safe space where all are welcome so please feel free to drop in should you ever want to! Thank you to Ms Sleet for leading on this.

Peer mentoring also restarted this term and we want to thank all students who are involved, particularly the mentors for all of their hard work and engagement with this. We are incredibly proud of you! Thank you so much also to Mr Wheel and Ms Thumwood for leading on this.

In September, a number of students also began working with the Sistem Arts programme outside of school. These students have been working closely alongside each other and students from other local schools to devise a piece which they performed live for audience members earlier in December. A huge shout-out to all of the students who took part in this!

In October and November, Joshua Eldridge, a Clinical Psychologist from the NHS, visited us to deliver introductory sessions and assemblies to Year 11 and Sixth Form students on the topic of Exam Stress. Joshua will be back in next term, alongside some of our Educational Wellbeing Practitioners (EWPs), to deliver bespoke Exam

Stress Workshops to particular Year 11 and Sixth Form students. If you would like more information on how to attend one of these, please let Ms Yusuf know. If you would like to ever make a referral for EWP intervention for anxiety and low mood, please feel free to use the following referral link: <https://forms.office.com/e/Ha1dWq3Q5C>

In November, as well as taking part in drop-down lessons surrounding Exam Stress, the Year 11's also took part in a drop-down day focusing on the key topics of Relationships and Consent. The feedback from this drop-down day was extremely positive and we are so impressed with some of the conversations that this encouraged. Thank you so much to all teachers who assisted in the delivery of this!

Finally, at the end of November, all Year groups took part in completing Wellbeing questionnaires. These questionnaires have been reviewed by the Inclusion and Safeguarding team here at school and students may receive follow-up conversations in January, so that your Year team can see how best to support you in school, if needed. In the interim, should you ever want to access some support please do reach out to your tutor, Year team or a member of the Safeguarding team via the Worry boxes, ShoutOut link, in person or via the Safeguarding email address at safe@raynespark.merton.sch.uk

December started with a bang here at RPHS and the run up to Christmas brought with it a heap of fun and educational activities, alongside drop-down days. On the 7th and 13th December we hosted drop-down days for our Year 9's and 10's,

covering many important topics. The LMK (Let Me Know) charity delivered workshops to our students on issues surrounding healthy relationships; St Giles Trust joined us to deliver an assembly on the topic of County lines, gangs and grooming; and finally the Daniel Spargo Foundation gave an assembly to students on the science and impact of substance misuse and risky behaviours. We are incredibly grateful to be able to work so closely with these external agencies and were very excited to host these drop-down days, covering such important subjects for our students.

Support available over the holidays

Understandably the holidays are an exciting time for many young people, however for some this period of time can be stressful and difficult to get through. We want you to know that you do not have to suffer in silence and that there is support readily available should you be interested. Please see below for a list of helplines and websites to visit for some support over the winter break.

Please also see the mental health page on our school website for further support. This can be found under the student welfare tab and features a great selection of resources which can be accessed by students, parents and carers.

Ms Selin Yusuf
Student Wellbeing Manager

Where to get support for you or a friend when you are not in school

For support with mental health & wellbeing



kooth
Free, safe, and anonymous counselling support for young people
www.kooth.com

TALK TO US
OFF THE RECORD

In non-covid times they offer face to face counselling in Merton, Croydon & Sutton. At the moment they offer a text-based counselling service or telephone/videocall counselling.
www.talkofftherecord.org

childline
ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME
childline.org.uk | 0800 1111

Childline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. So you can talk to us any time. When you call us on **0800 1111** you'll get through to a counsellor, they're there to listen and support you with anything you'd like to talk about. Or you can have a 1-2-1 counsellor chat online. They can provide help and support for people up to their 19th birthday.

For support in a crisis



NHS
South West London
CAMHS
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Crisis Line 0203 228 5980
For young people or parents/carers worried about a young person's mental health.
Open: Monday to Friday 5pm – 11pm, Saturday, Sunday, and Bank Holidays 9am – 11pm.



YOUNG MINDS
Crisis Messenger
Young People can use the Young Minds Crisis Messenger by texting 'YM' to 85258



powered by **shout** 85258
Call us free 24/7 on **116 123**
samaritans.org
or contact Samaritans 24/7 on 116 123

For support in an emergency

In an immediate health or mental health emergency, contact **999** or attend **A&E**



Sixth Form Basketball vs. Rutlish at RPHS

For the Year 12 and 13's first game of the season, they had a tough home draw against a local rival. Thankfully, despite late changes to the team, the group gelled quickly, matching Rutlish basket for basket in the first half. The third quarter was where we really stepped up the tempo and stretched the lead to eight points with one quarter to play. A notable run of six consecutive points from team captain Damari was something that really got the crowd involved. That crowd support was vital for the final quarter and a comeback from the visitors, who, with two minutes to play, had tied the game. However, with nerves of steel, Damari again sunk both free throws from the line to move us ahead by one and win us the game. Even a last-second foul call couldn't help the away team as they missed both shots to change the end result, 28-27 Raynes Park! Man of the Match for a great defensive debut: Cem!

Wimbledon Ball Boy and Girl Update

Students have been working hard since September to secure their spot at this year's Wimbledon Ball Boy and Girl trials in January. We had a good turnout for initial trials and as competition has increased, we are really seeing these students develop key skills for the programme. Along with physical discipline, they have also demonstrated great mental capacity to understand the rules of the game and know when to act in important moments. We have loved the commitment from those attending training and wish those that are selected in the final group all the best in their January trials for the Wimbledon Ball Boy and Girl programme and the Wimbledon 2024 Championships.

Mr J Wheel
Head of Sixth Form

Cross Country

In October, our cross country team delivered an outstanding performance at the Merton Schools Cross Country Championship, showcasing their dedication and prowess. Out of the 15 students initially selected, a remarkable nine earned the opportunity to represent Merton at the prestigious Surrey Cross Country event. This impressive achievement not only highlights the team's exceptional talent, but also their commitment. Congratulations to the cross country team for their well-deserved success and recognition on the larger stage, and good luck to those who are competing in January for the next round.

Rugby

Rugby is on the rise! This year has seen a great turn-out of new rugby players with over 30 students regularly attending training on a Friday. There has been a real influx of raw talent from Year 7 and they are building a team ready to compete. There has also been a rejuvenation of the team in Year 9, with many players returning and bringing new faces. There have also been discussions regarding a new partnership with local side Old Emanuel RFC to support the developing teams and get them 'Rugby Ready'. This is all very exciting and with games in the pipeline for the New Year, 2024 looks like it will be a great year for Rugby at RPHS.

Mr J Oldridge
Director of Sport & Community Partnerships

U16 Boys Basketball

Harris Merton hosted the annual borough competition on 23rd November. With the Year 11 students busy with their mock exams, the majority of the team was formed by Year 10 students. The boys gave a good account of themselves throughout the afternoon, and showed improvements across their range of fixtures. They ended up finishing in fifth place. Special mentions must go to David C, who was a stand-out player on the day, and also Corey L, who as a Year 9 student playing up, showed great positional awareness and physicality to defend Year 11 against some talented Year 11 students from the other teams.

Mr J Sanderson
Head of PE



Girls Football

Training sessions take place every Monday with the support of Mr Prichard, Miss O'Brien and our Fulham FC Coach John, and have been really well attended, especially by our Year 7 girls. Great work, girls, keep it going!

Our Year 8, 9 and 10 girls entered the Borough Football Tournament held at Harris Academy Merton on the 16th November. We played extremely well throughout the competition and finished a creditable third out of the seven schools that competed on the day. We conceded the fewest goals out of all the schools and we were very well organised, but unfortunately just could not find the breakthrough we needed in a couple of the games.

Looking ahead, the Year 7 and 8 'Town Cup,' League fixtures will be taking place in the New Year, while the Year 7/8 Girls Borough Football Tournament will be held on the 26th February. Proud as always! Onwards and upwards in the New Year.

Mr L Prichard
PE Teacher

Year 9 Boys Football

Firstly, I would like to say a big well done to the continued commitment and dedication of the Year 9 group. Weekly training sessions continue to be very well attended with up to 50 players turning out and training hard each and every Wednesday after school.

So far this season, we have played in the Surrey County Cup. We unfortunately lost 2-4 to Cheam High School but the team showed true grit and hard work to score two late goals to make the final 10 minutes a nery one for the Cheam back line. We were dominant in the second half following our team talk and the boys should be proud of this.

We have also played friendlies against Chessington School and Hollyfield School. Our visit to Chessington was a mixed set of results with one victory 3-2 (thanks to a late penalty save from Euan) and two narrow defeats in the five-a-side competition. Our match against Hollyfield ended in a 2-6 defeat. The boys put in a spirited second half performance after trailing 1-4 at half time. Return fixtures have been organised for the New Year.

Further fixtures are already being confirmed against Rutlish, The Hall School Wimbledon, Harris Wimbledon and Southborough School, so we have lots to look forward to for our team!

Mr L Prichard
PE Teacher

Year 8 Boys Football

Following a narrow defeat against Glenthorne in the Surrey Cup with a score of 3-2, the U13 team have displayed remarkable resilience and skill in their subsequent matches. Their recent victories against Chessington, concluding with an impressive 5-0 triumph, and Hollyfield, which ended with a convincing 3-0 win, underscore the team's determination and exceptional performances. The collective effort and skill displayed by each player have contributed significantly to the team's success, marking a commendable turnaround after the initial setback.

Mr M Bishop
PE Teacher

Year 7 Boys Football

Enthusiasm and dedication have been in abundance this year, with over 30 students regularly attending training every Monday after school. Unfortunately, the results are yet to follow. In their first outing of the season, the boys came up short in the first round of the Surrey Cup. The team showed determination and never gave up, but ultimately lost 7-0 to a talented Turing House side. The second fixture saw some heavy squad rotation in order to provide as many of those that are showing commitment to after school training the opportunity to represent the school in a competitive fixture. We hosted Chessington School, who ultimately proved to be tough to break down, and the boys ended up losing 9-0. While this was a tough start overall, we can take lessons from the results, and we have plenty of fixtures in the coming months for the team to apply these.

Mr J Sanderson
Head of PE

U13 Boys Cricket

The U13 Boys Cricket team travelled to Rutlish for the indoor Borough competition on the 22nd November. Unfortunately, what was scheduled to be a competition between four schools saw late drop-outs from two of these, meaning that the chance to progress to the London round relied on our students beating Rutlish in a one-off game. The team gave their best efforts, showcasing fantastic teamwork, respect and a general positive attitude, but ultimately were overpowered by some fantastic batting from Rutlish, who ended up taking the win. Good luck to Rutlish in the next round, and well done to our boys for their efforts.

Mr E Forrester
Joint Head of Year 8



Netball

Netball is on the rise at Raynes Park, with the highest turnout of students to the Wednesday after school club in four years. Unfortunately, due to issues with extreme weather, two borough netball competitions had to be postponed for the Year 10 & 11 team and the Year 8 team. The girls are still training regularly and very eager for the new match dates early in the New Year.

However, the Year 9 tournament went ahead at Ricards Lodge and the team put in a fantastic effort. A lot of the team were new to netball this year, but they worked exceptionally as a team and never gave up. Big shout out to Anna, our goal attack and Amelie, our wing attack, who are both extremely dedicated to training and the team.

Our new Year 7's experienced their first borough netball tournament, again at Ricards Lodge. They performed fantastically well and came in an honourable 5th place out of 10 teams entered. Notable wins included 6-2 against The Hall School, and they also beat Harris Merton. This is a team with huge potential, who I know next year will come back fighting. Big shout out for Mollie, our captain, and Ava, with some incredible shots scored!

Ms C McCourt
PE Teacher



Year 10 Boys Football

A spirited and competitive fixture in the Surrey Cup has been the only fixture played so far this term. Two brilliant long-range efforts from David and Bashil couldn't turn the game in RPHS' favour for what was a real tussle against a strong Richard Challoner side. RPHS was pushing late into the game to get an equalizer, when Challoner got a runaway goal and put the tie out of reach, finishing 4-2. The team showed real determination and we are sure that they will pick up some good results in the remainder of the year.

Mr J Oldridge
Director of Sport & Community Partnerships

REMEMBRANCE DAY 2023

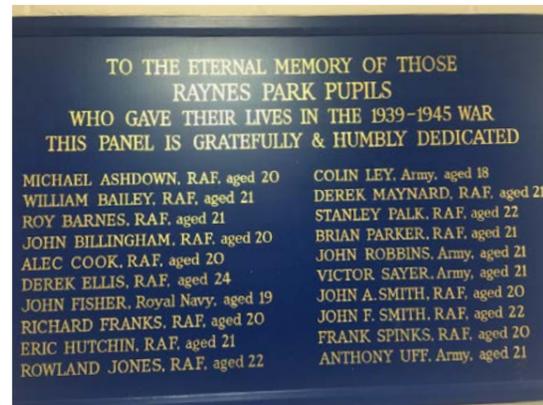
On 10th November the school marked Remembrance Day with a two-minutes' silence and an extended assembly for Year 7.

Students learned of the origins of Remembrance Day, previously known as Armistice Day: the ending of World War One. Many were shocked to discover that some of those who experienced the horror of the trenches were little older than themselves. We took time to reflect on the losses from World War One and many subsequent conflicts.

A particularly poignant moment saw students take the places of the twenty boys from our school who lost their lives in World War Two. After announcing the names and ages of the fallen, the students silently departed, leaving their seats empty for the remainder of the assembly. In this way, their names live on, ensuring they will forever be remembered.

Year 7 students were joined for their assembly by former school staff and alumni. A version of the assembly was also delivered to Years 8–13 throughout the week.

Mr G Collman
Head of Humanities



NEWSOMS

MILTONS

GIBBS

HALLIWELLS

HOUSE UPDATES

As we wrap up an exhilarating Term 1, our students have truly embraced the spirit of competition and sportsmanship within the framework of our House system.

The term kicked off with the highly anticipated Cross Country event. The competition saw a remarkable display of stamina and determination from our students, with many earning the honour of representing our school at the borough competition. We're thrilled to announce that not only did our participants excel at the borough level, but several of them have also advanced to the London Youth Games competition. Congratulations to all the students who showcased their prowess and dedication during this event. After tallying up all of the results across Key Stage 3 and 4, Gibbs emerged as the winners of this event. Halliwells secured a well-deserved second place, closely followed by Miltons in third, and Newsoms in fourth.

Benchball took centre stage during KS3 PE lessons, in Autumn Term 2, adding an extra layer of excitement to our sporting calendar. Newsoms, determined to redeem

themselves after a fourth-place finish in cross country, rallied together to claim victory in the competition. Halliwells secured the second spot, Gibbs secured third place, and Miltons finished fourth.

These events not only fostered healthy competition but also encouraged teamwork, collaboration, and school spirit. Congratulations to all our students for their remarkable efforts, and a special shout-out to Gibbs and Newsoms for their outstanding achievements in Cross Country and Benchball, respectively.

We look forward to further engaging activities and competitions in the coming terms, including competitions within a wide range of areas and subjects.

Heads of Houses

Do you shop online?

The school can get a donation when you do, for free!

Raynes Park High School Charitable Trust raises funds to support our students. The Trust has funded several projects including funding equipment for the Duke of Edinburgh Award as well as small grants to individual students. The trustees are keen to do more and need funds to do so.

One way you can donate to the Trust without it costing you anything is to shop online via 'easyfundraising' which turns your everyday online shopping into free donations for the school. There are over 3600 retailers including many big names such as Amazon, M&S, Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Tesco, John Lewis, Ebay and Argos and many specialist retailers.

So next time you want to do some online shopping please go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/raynesparkhs and click 'support this cause' then register for easyfundraising and find the retailer you want. Once you have chosen your retailer you will go to their website as normal to make your purchase. The retailers then make a small donation to the Trust. The size of the donation varies with the retailer – but every little helps!

It will cost you nothing but will help the school. You will get reminders once registered with easyfundraising.

Please give it a try!



Join



Shop



Raise



easyfundraising feel good shopping

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/raynesparkhs

Support this cause

1

Visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/raynesparkhs click 'support this cause' and register

2

Choose your retailer and shop as normal

3

Retailers will make a small donation to the Trust at no extra cost to you



NEWS FROM THE GOVERNORS

THE SPUR

RAYNES PARK HIGH SCHOOL

The Governors would like to congratulate both students and staff for making it through the first full term of this academic year. A big well done to our new Year 7 students who have successfully transitioned from primary to secondary education and become an embedded part of the Raynes Park High School family. Governors would also like to especially acknowledge the newest members of the Sixth Form, doing well on their new pathways.

There have been lots of achievements this academic year already. When governors visit the school, we continue to see excellent learning in lessons, which is enabled through excellent learning atmospheres, driven by Miss Taylor, her Senior Leadership Team, and the passionate and committed teaching and support staff.

The range of extracurricular activities attended by students continues to enrich the experiences of the young people at Raynes Park High School. The school is enhancing the lives of our students, expanding their cultural capital and helping to shape a school community which is inclusive of everyone and understands true British values.

Governors were pleased to attend November's Remembrance Assembly and would like to thank all the students and staff who were involved to make it such a reflective experience.

Governors would also like to thank the staff who made the Awards Evenings a great

success – and of course to all students who were celebrated for their achievements. Governors are confident that this year the success of our students will continue and exceed last academic year.

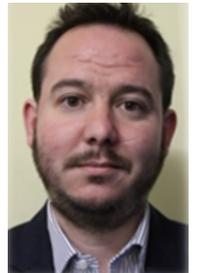
There is much to look forward to in the Spring and Summer terms. Intertwining the hard work expected of all students, especially those preparing for their public examinations, governors look forward to welcoming former British Tennis number one Tim Henman to Raynes Park High School to formally open our brand-new tennis courts. Governors are also looking forward to seeing the Fulham Football Club partnership continue to develop, with more students expected to join in the new year, and a thriving girls' team.

Governors would like to thank Miss Taylor and her Senior Leadership Team for all their hard work, and we look forward to fully supporting you in 2024 and beyond.

We wish all the staff, students, and their families a wonderful Christmas break. Governors are excited to see the school grow from strength to strength in the new year.

Best wishes,

Dean Murphy
Vice Chair



Find out more about the work of our School Governors here:

www.rphs.org.uk/31/governors

CONTACT US:

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Do you have a story you'd like to share in our next newsletter?

Please e-mail newsletter@raynespark.merton.sch.uk