

Park Life



1st Edition - Autumn 2023

All the people, so many people

Time to celebr(eight)!



School makes best progress in its history.

PARK House School has officially been recognised as 'above average' in this year's exam results.

Since 2016, secondary schools have been judged on something called a Progress 8 score, which basically measures the progress a student has made from the end of their primary education to the time they leave secondary, and this year Park House has emerged victorious.

According to data collected by the government following this year's GCSE exam results, the school scored +0.29 which means the group of students who just graduated from year 11 did so having made more of an improvement during their secondary career than the average across the country.

Mr King says it was the highest progress score in the school's history and was actually a larger improvement than the official scores suggested as it was a +0.34 improvement on last year.

He said the results were testimony to the huge commitment of the students and staff.

"I am absolutely thrilled with these well-deserved GCSE results. The hard work from students and staff, along with the support from their families has made this momentous achievement possible."

School News

Sandleford Development

More plans submitted

Written by Staff Reporter



The unbroken vista of farmland surrounding the school came a step closer to being paved over with up to 2000 new homes after yet another planning application was submitted.

The land surrounding the school has been under threat for more than a decade after it was included in a national plan to build more homes back in 2012 but, until now, the land has remained empty allowing the school to enjoy the rural landscape.

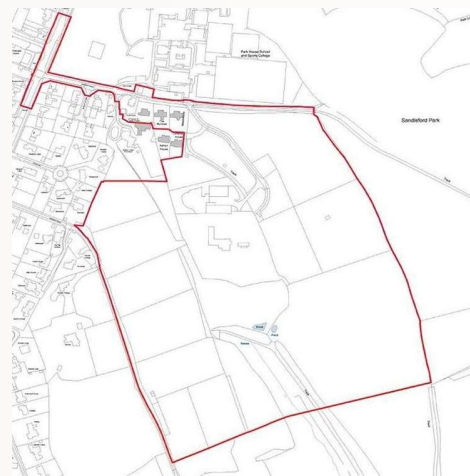
Four planning applications to build on the site had been rejected by West Berkshire District Council, the body which grants permission for houses, due to concerns regarding access and damage to the site, which sits within an area of outstanding natural beauty. However, last year, more than 1000 homes were given approval after the government minister in charge of house building got involved and overruled local opposition. Now, plans for another 360 have been submitted and the applicant, Bloor Homes, are awaiting a decision. An earlier application for 500 homes is still being decided.

Headteacher Mr King says he has mixed feelings about the development

“I understand that this proposed development has generated a fair degree of disapproval. In terms of how it will affect us at Park House, aside from losing the stunning scenery we currently have off the back of school, it will inevitably contribute further traffic to the area at rush hour times which I hope has been considered and there is a strategy to alleviate this.”

As well as houses, the plans for the site also include permission for ‘expansion land’ for the school to accommodate the 236 new students a public inquiry into the development anticipated moving into the school catchment area.

“With the prospect of more students coming to Park House from the development, developers are required via a thing called ‘section 106,’ to aid development of existing services in the area - schools being one of them. So, we would likely see some funding to add capacity,” Mr King explained. “Like many, I have mixed feelings about the development, but will try and dwell on the positives and what it may bring to the school.”



Sandleford was famously mentioned in the novel *Watership Down*, by Richard Adams, and was the site of the fictitious Sandleford Warren, the home of the book’s protagonists (rabbits).

Proposed site: The school appears at the top of the picture.

School News

Welcome to the wild!

Written by Staff Reporter



It wasn't the night hike we'd expected. Up ahead lights twinkled through the trees, flickering erratically, the bushcraft leader hastening his step, students exchanging worried glances. It was a plane crash, the leader announced, our teachers had been involved, they were all wounded, some of them mortally. It was a scene of utter devastation and horror - or would have been if Mr Hinton hadn't kept squeaking when someone accidentally stepped on him.

The crash was just one in a number of brilliant activities we experienced on the year 8 bushcraft trip organised by Miss Morgan and Mrs Rowland through the Active Learning Group at Blenheim Woods in Oxfordshire from Monday 18th to Wednesday 20th of September. An event attended by 128 students from year 8 and later 106 students from year 7, we spent our days engaged in a variety of outdoor activities and our nights huddled around the campfire and camping in yurts. Although, for many of us, it was our first real adventure away from home, we were too busy having fun building shelters, making survival bracelets or cooking smores on sticks to miss the comforts of home. It was an experience not many of us are likely to forget...

Bushcraft trip

Alexander Cruickshank,

For me the best thing about the trip was either moments in the yurt or sitting round the campfire. I also really enjoyed it when the leaders told us we were going on a night hike and actually faked a plane crash with victims to practise the medical skills they'd taught us earlier in the day. At one point one of the bushcraft specialists gutted a salmon in front of us and accidentally squished an eyeball over his clothes!

Unsurprisingly, the worst things were the toilets but there were plenty of positive things as well. The trip taught me useful skills like how to put someone into the recovery position, other medical stuff, whittling, shelter building and fire making. I would definitely recommend this trip to other students. It was a fantastic opportunity for me to have some fun with friends, eat some good food, make some memories, and miss some days of school. (Whoops, did I say that out loud?)

Freya Clark

I would say the best bit about the trip was the time around the campfire: making smores, telling stories and NOT laughing at the camp leader's jokes (I mean he said it was horrible and we really should have listened). It was that or watching one of the camp leaders go crazy while slicing pizza.

Phoebe Gittins,

My favourite part of the trip was making shelters in the woods out of a tarp, some rope and two sticks. We got to learn lots of different techniques and knots. I learnt how to start and keep a fire going for a long time, however the smoke was really bad and made us all stink. I also learnt lots of first aid such as to always put yourself before the patient.

School News

Building work

Building Work Update

Written by Staff Reporter



The refurbishment of the Park House School site has been progressing well and is expected to be completed by January, Headmaster Mr King has confirmed.

The school was granted £5 million for a major revamp back in 2021 and, at the beginning of August 22, the builders moved in to start repairing the infrastructure. One of the first tasks was to replace the heating system and waterproof the roofs, which has now been completed.

Mr King says he is delighted with the progress so far. “We have made huge strides as a school in so many areas and we need the fabric of the school to match these improvements. I am determined to provide a school that all the students are incredibly proud of, and will be working hard to that aim.”

So far, the canteen, maths and science blocks have been repainted and new flooring laid, brickwork has been repaired, paving around the site has been re-laid and Velux windows have been installed in the maths block to offer more light. Preparations have also been made for the installation of new toilets in the MFL block and new cladding is being installed to smarten up some of the buildings.

Mr King says there is even more to be done.

“Once we have the go ahead for further developments the temporary buildings in humanities and science will become my key focus and see them replaced by a purpose-built teaching block.”

Concerns had been raised that building work around the site during term time might lead to disruption but Mr King claims the contractors have done their best to minimise this.

“The company we use are very used to working in schools and ensuring that the really noisy work only occurs during social time or after school,” he says.

Future building work is to include an improvement to the IT infrastructure, a redesign of the toilet areas, further fencing work along the Monk’s Lane field and the tarmacking of the carparks.

“Like any building project, there are snags along the way, but we have a great team of contractors, lots of support from the Greenshaw Learning Trust estates team and I’m delighted with the progress on the site so far.”

School News

Fun Fridays

Written by Amelie Jaggard



Students singing Wonderwall at the Fun Friday Karaoke

Fun Friday is going to get even...funner thanks to a new initiative by the temporary minister of fun, Mr Bale.

Since last year, Friday lunchtime has been a time for students to try out a range of entertaining activities and amusing antics, presided over and sometimes participated in by the minister, but now Mr Bale is handing over the baton to the students in an effort to think up some imaginative new challenges.

Students were recently sent a google form so they can enter their ideas which, if they reach the amazingly high standard that has already been set, might get used to entertain their peers and earn themselves five house points.

School activities

Mr Bale said: "Fun Friday is a great way to try something new, take your mind away from the academics and ultimately have fun."

A number of ideas have already been submitted but Mr Bale is hoping that even more students will get involved.

"Your voice is important," he says. "We want you to be heard so please complete the form and let us know what you'd like to do."

Recent fun Friday activities have included paper airplane making, bottle flipping, table tennis competitions, and paper ripping. One of the most popular activities was karaoke which attracted hundreds of students into the main hall.

"It was so brilliant to see all the students enjoying themselves," said Ms Meyer, an English teacher who often gets to watch the Fun Friday activities from her duties guarding the year 11 girl's toilets. "All the students were singing and jumping around and I couldn't count how many had managed to make it up onto the stage."

She said that, despite the large number of students in the room, she was really impressed with how well everyone behaved themselves.

"I'm partial to a bit of Disney so I enjoyed You're Welcome but the fan favourite seemed to be Barbie Girl. I'd never actually listened to the lyrics before but the students seemed to know all of the words."

If you have any ideas for fun Friday, check your school email for a message from Mr Bale and be sure to submit your ideas.

Students features

Rider hits it for SIX!

By Phoebe Gittins



Park House student is a cricket superstar in the making.

I spoke to Holly Rider about her incredible experience playing for multiple cricket teams, including the Southern Vipers!!

When did you start your interest in cricket?

I was first interested in playing cricket when I started learning in my back garden at home when I was 10. I started learning how to bowl with a tennis ball and really enjoyed it. I then joined Falkland Cricket club and played a few games with the boys before the Falkland girls section began the following year.

How old were you when you first joined Berkshire women's 1st XI?

I started playing for Berkshire when I was 11 and progressed through the age groups. I made my debut for the 1st team when I was 15 and I'm heading into my 3rd season with them.

What is your experience so far with the Southern Vipers?

I have been playing with the vipers for almost 2 years now having joined the cohort in January 2022. I love the professional set up with lots of training alongside specialist coaches within a group of players, who are very ambitious to progress far with their skills. Access to full time S&C, physios and psychologists allows you to improve your game holistically and I'm loving the friendships I have made within the team.

What is your preferred position and why?

I love batting the most. Every ball is different and you have an opportunity to take on the game and it's just fun scoring runs.

What do you think makes a good team player/captain?

I listen to people within my team and take on their advice while also sticking with my gut instinct when making decisions. I'm always there to support players within the team and motivate and encourage them while playing.

How can other young women get involved in cricket locally?

There are many clubs around now for girls to get involved. Falkland girls cricket club has training every Friday with many matches to get involved with for all abilities. Also go and watch! The Southern Vipers play at the Ageas bowl in the summer and the Falkland Women's 1st XI play every Sunday from June – September.



Teacher Feature

Mr Gianakakis

Written by Rueben Jaggard



A new person has hit the ground running in the English block. With a bushy beard and hair in a man bun, his name is Mr Gianakakis! Some students think he is a viking, whilst others think he is a man with outstanding facial hair. Teaching in E2, he does quite a bit of paired work, and loves Latin words.

We reached out to him for an interview and he accepted. So we have our list of questions and each have a reply.

Firstly, what got you interested in teaching?

Bit of a long journey for me, having been on two very different career pathways following uni. Starting off first in the city as a new business executive. Working in both London and then New York (my office overlooked Time Square!), I then made a career change, into the world of hospitality. Starting out as a bar runner and progressing up to managing bars and restaurants. COVID meant a lot of changes for everyone and I decided on my third and hopefully final career change. Making a snap decision to embark on teacher training and finally ending up here.

Secondly, is there a reason behind the hair in a man bun?

I don't trust barbers.

Understandable. What is your favourite part of English to teach and why?

I think I've said it before. But the words and how they're combined to tell stories through different mediums. Some animals can use tools. Logic (sorry maths and science!). Even some rudimentary language. But stories. Stories are definitely human. Helping students understand that they're the master of their own saga is a privilege.

Most importantly, who is your favourite author and why?

Aristophanes. Don't even need to think about that one. More of a playwright. His plays are hilarious and he spends a lot of time in them making this guy called Cleon look like an absolute idiot. Then there's all the poop jokes. Don't get me started on the poop jokes!

Fifthly, we asked a question that most people might want to know, which is what is your interesting hobby?

Not sure this is a hobby, but going out into nature and wild camping is my favourite way to switch off. Some gardening. Some baking. Three piles of books I'm currently reading. I like to keep busy. carpe diem (seize the day - side note. Please do not capitalise the c or the d! Capitals were only used when carving into stone!!!)

Lastly, favourite food?

This is tough! Can I do two? Sweet. The doughnut will always win. Savoury. Anything doused in Buffalo sauce!

I'd like to also add a shameless plug for the new (Latin focussed) club starting on Thursday 2nd November.

Dead Language Society will be every Thursday Lunch Time in E2.

Books and snacks

Written by staff reporter



A house. Yes, I knew what that was. Chicken legs. Ditto, that was fine for me. But the House with Chicken Legs? What was that all about? Happily, Ms Dolton, organiser of one of the school's newest clubs, 'Books and Snacks' was on hand to guide us through the unusually named novel.

The club has only been running since the beginning of term but has already proved to be popular with students and teachers. Every Wednesday, the group get together in the library and talk about books...and the snacks. At first, teachers were invited in to do a reading for the group but that quickly changed into teacher's talking about their favourite books and answering questions on it.

Ms Dolton says: "It's really important for students to see teachers – and not just English teachers - who love reading."

Recent visitors to the club have included Mr King, Ms Reardon and Ms Kirby.

After the presentation, the group then return to whatever book they've been reading - they have to read a chapter or so a week – and then they discuss a character or a situation in detail. They then spend time working on a craft activity with the aim of creating a display board for the library to help others become interested in the book. So far the group have read the aforementioned book – a Slavic inspired story about a girl who lives in a magical house that walks around – and *The Night Animals*, a book about a girl who uses her imagination to cope with a difficult family situation.

"Reading allows you to explore other worlds and live other people's lives," Ms Dolton says. "It's a past time that, due to an increase in the use of screens, we're starting to neglect so anything that helps promote it is good."

The school provides water or juice and biscuits to those who attend and students can borrow a copy of the text from the library.

One student who attends the club says that she enjoyed listening to other people's perspectives of the things they had read together.

"It's amazing how differently people interpret things, even when we're all reading the same text. It's nice having a small space outside of class where we can all just chat about our ideas."

The club takes place every Wednesday lunchtime in the library and is open to all – chicken legged or not.

Book review

The Book Report

By Alexander Cruickshank



Book name: Skulduggery Pleasant

Author: Derek Landy

What is the book about:

When her uncle dies, 12-year-old Stephanie Edgley, meets a dead detective named Skulduggery Pleasant, who (unwillingly) takes her along on a case to save the world. They're in a race against time to stop the villain and save everything they know but, with Stephanie's inability to do magic in a magical world and a powerful foe rising quickly, they've got their work cut out for them.

What I thought of the book:

I enjoyed the book thoroughly and really loved the way it kept me on the edge of my seat.

The fact that I've read this book before and still love it should speak volumes and my only criticism is that it's too short - I tore through the book in a few days. Luckily for me, it's actually part of a series so, if you love the concept as much as I did, you'll find there is much more to keep you entertained.

One thing that I loved about the Skulduggery Pleasant is his tendency to make wisecracks, and be slightly narcissistic while keeping a straight face. Though now I think about it, he is a skeleton. Hmm...

I also enjoyed Stephanie's blunt acceptance of the new world she finds herself in, and the way her character develops over time.

The main theme is probably good against evil.

The first book is probably for people aged 9 or 10 and up, though the further on in the series you go the higher the recommended age though you would probably be fine to read the whole series at that age, as long as you don't mind a little bit of gore.

I would have liked more of a display of different and interesting types of magic and magical abilities. I would also have liked to see more of the world this book is set in.

I would recommend this book to fans of books like Artemis Fowl, Percy Jackson and Alex Rider. Or, if you like any other books with a kind of "hidden world" theme, you will love Skulduggery Pleasant.

Short Story



The Ghost kidnapper?

By Phoebe



Ever since I was little, I had always felt like there was another presence in the room. There seemed to always be a creaking noise, but no one else could hear it. It may have just been my pet hamster Hammy or maybe a ghost, but does anyone even believe in ghosts?

One day I was taking my five month old labrador retriever (Lola) for a walk into town when I saw a flash of black and brown. Was it a dog? It was so fast and indistinguishable, I had no idea.

I walked past the bakery and saw a floury white loaf of bread and then I blinked and it was gone. I decided to walk home after that. When I got I put Lola in her pen and climbed the stairs to my room. I got into bed but I couldn't get to sleep. It may of just been that it was the middle of the day or because of what happened earlier. I played with Lola for the rest of the day until my dad called me for dinner. He told me that my mum was in London for work so it was just me and him. Once I finished my soup, I went up to my room I change into my PJ's. I got into bed and went to sleep. At about 10pm I woke with a start! A door had slammed with a bang. I looked out of my bedroom window and say a white veiled figure disappearing out the garden gate.

Winter chills

I shouted for dad but he couldn't have heard me as he didn't come. As soon as I checked all the doors and windows were locked, I ran upstairs into my parents room and pulled the covers off but dad was gone! It must have been the ghost, I thought, it must have taken him! I grabbed my phone and called 999. I asked for the police.

"What has happened?" the operator asked, voice grave. "What's your name and address?"

"Stay where you are. Someone is on their way."

About five minutes later I heard the sound of sirens cutting through the air. They pulled up on the driveway and got out. As they walked towards the house I ran downstairs. I fumbled to the unlock the door. Slowly I came back to reality and opened the door. Then camouflaged in the blackness was a kind woman with straight brown hair and bright green eyes dressed in police uniform. We sat down on the sofa and I explained to her what had happened. As I talked, the panic rose in my throat.

What if the ghost had got him? I thought. What if I could have stopped it! Guilt rose inside me like a black blossom and my lungs felt tight in my chest.

"He's gone", I wailed. "Gone and it's my fault!"

Suddenly, a sharp knock ripped through my air. The woman rose quickly and flung open the door to reveal...my dad!

"Sorry," he said. The colour draining from his face at the sight of the police woman. "I remembered it was Halloween and we didn't have any sweets. I thought it might be fun to dress as a ghost. I hope I didn't scare you."

Pictures and puzzles

Sudoku

WARNING! answers on the next page!

6				4			1	
4		8	3				6	
2	1	3			9			
9								
						6	3	
7	4	6						1
		2				7		6
			7					8
5							4	

Word Search

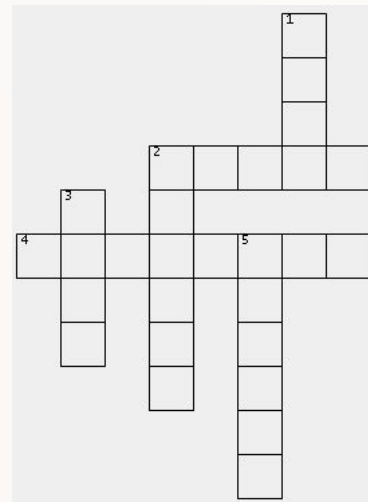
Eleven words to find. All school themed.

i g a q j a q d d l c y d f u
w i q x o m c d l h j b o r x
i t w i s a o o a g r m o e n
e y h r e s v f v n s h q n e
j n a o p e f y n i y v r c z
m b g m h e w g e k p u n h y
r m u l y o r x p r z e w l r
t f w g i e n e s m i l o h d
y f f o n s o t l c q s r c t
d n o u d i h j s u s l s s k
i s a r p v x w z o r n a k k
r d s d c r o t a l u c l a c
c h k o t v l c z m g r w e s
n e i m a t h s g w p o f l d
t r e b l a i j t x w z b z s

Winter warmers



Crossword



ACROSS

- Four teachers have this last name
- The last name of a teacher which is also a rank in the army

DOWN

- The teacher whose last name is a plant
- The red house
- Teacher with a last name like a roll of hay
- The house that won last year

Answers

6	7	9	2	4	8	3	1	5
4	5	8	3	1	7	9	6	2
2	1	3	6	5	9	8	7	4
9	3	1	5	2	6	4	8	7
8	2	5	4	7	1	6	3	9
7	4	6	8	9	3	5	2	1
3	9	2	1	8	4	7	5	6
1	6	4	7	3	5	2	9	8
5	8	7	9	6	2	1	4	3

A 20x20 grid of letters with a crossword puzzle pattern. The grid contains black squares and white squares. The letters in the white squares form the words "RELUR" and "MATHS".

F	S	I	V	B	Q	H	K	C	A	Y	B	R	M	Y	L	I	N	Y	H
K	X	C	S	A	S	E	K	Z	D	E	R	W	U	T	Z	A	A	R	H
I	N	G	I	I	P	E	D	G	U	F	X	V	D	M	I	U	A	O	J
N	N	Y	L	E	L	V	B	S	N	F	V	R	E	L	U	R	Y	G	M
G	S	G	N	E	N	T	G	W	P	A	L	H	S	P	E	C	K	P	Y
L	N	I	A	H	N	C	M	A	T	H	S	J	G	S	T	D	Y	X	C
E	N	F	O	N	M	T	E	Y	G	C	T	L	D	F	M	K	W	M	X
L	M	Y	P	S	A	N	C	W	W	E	O	X	A	Z	E	S	D	V	C
H	G	G	H	O	S	C	G	S	D	R	O	L	I	F	Y	E	J	L	E
K	P	L	X	H	Y	D	Z	J	O	E	B	P	C	N	H	F	G	T	B
B	X	E	I	G	A	T	Z	J	O	E	T	F	O	R	C	X	T	N	D
N	H	Q	S	W	A	P	B	J	R	D	J	X	L	Z	C	A	V	S	D
R	Q	Z	E	O	A	E	I	T	M	J	Z	U	E	C	B	U	D	I	I
T	O	T	V	N	J	N	F	S	A	J	W	L	V	E	E	G	S	Y	E
H	N	Z	W	M	C	C	H	S	K	D	S	J	O	K	S	Q	C	D	K
P	Q	F	O	X	J	I	M	Y	R	Q	K	Z	S	J	J	K	P	M	V
I	H	W	W	B	X	L	S	E	W	Q	I	Q	B	P	J	F	H	B	L
K	G	Y	K	T	U	H	M	P	X	P	G	G	C	X	H	Q	B	C	T
F	N	A	N	Q	O	T	X	P	R	I	D	V	A	H	R	A	W	Z	R

If you would like to write for the paper or you have an idea please email hmeyer@parkhouseschool.org or come to journalism club every Thursday in CR1 or CR3.

Answers to crossword

2A Jones

4A Marshall

1D Tree

2D Joseph

3D Bale

5D Albert