



# Guildford County School

## SPECIALIST MUSIC COLLEGE

February 2024

# Newsletter



### **Learning and Teaching at County**

As the Assistant Headteacher in charge of Learning and Teaching, my job is to improve student outcomes. In short, I want the learning that takes place to be as consistently effective as possible.

Taking over the role from Jo Cole in September left some very big shoes to fill. The quality of education at County is in a strong place. So, the question that I had to find an answer to was, 'What Next?'

We are currently very fortunate in education that we now have access to a range of robust evidence, from both educational research and wider cognitive science, about how the brain learns. I wanted to take time to share some of the core principles that underpin what we do at County and why.

The definition of learning is simple: transferring new knowledge from the working memory to the long-term memory, so that it can then be recalled and applied later. To do this, there are generally agreed principles that, if followed, improve learning.

Firstly, we are trying to optimise what is known as

cognitive load. Cognitive load refers to the amount of information the working memory can process at any given moment. The range of chunks of information that a person's brain can process at any given point is typically between five and nine chunks. If the brain is asked to process more information than this, cognitive overload occurs, and this negatively impacts learning.

*There are three key levers we can pull to optimise cognitive load:*

Firstly, reducing the number of external distractions that do not directly contribute to learning (known as extraneous load).

Secondly, ensuring that the new information is linked to what is already contained in the long-term memory (known as germane load).

Thirdly, ensuring that tasks and instructions are as clear and simple as possible (intrinsic load). This does not mean to say that we want learning to be easy. Rather, it means we want all students to struggle on the right things, in the right manner and at the right time.

Crucial to all of these is engaging the brain as soon as possible in the lesson. We place a high

value on attention for learning. In all our lessons, students are immediately engaged with 'connection' tasks and there is a period of silence within the first five minutes of the lesson. This optimises germane load and sends a signal to the brain that learning has begun. From this point, lessons are all based on what is known as the 'Accelerated Learning Cycle'.

More information about this model can be found on the Learning and Teaching section of our website.

Having worked at multiple schools, I can say with confidence that the staff at County are incredibly committed to, and genuinely invested in, the success of all students.

Despite the high quality of education, we are always looking for marginal gains to improve outcomes. As with every aspect of school life, learning in the classroom is driven by our belief that

**'Better Never Stops'.**

*Ricky Cooper*  
Assistant Headteacher



# Spotlight on Lancaster



In Lancaster, we celebrate students taking on challenges, grasping opportunities to participate, being members of the Lancaster team and holding themselves to the highest standards.

In recent weeks we have been taking part in the House Basketball Competition and achieving some great team performances, with students from Yrs7 to 13 making sure that the Lancaster team had players on court, on the bench and in the crowd, roaring them on from start to finish.

This follows on from our House Public Speaking, House Drama and House Rowing events last term, where again the participation from so many Lancastrians was great to see.

We are now looking forward to House Quiz, House Winter Sports and House Art this term.

We have a great Sixth Form Team, with Erin and Chloe, our House Captains, ably supported by a host of sporting and artistic helpers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our Yr13 students for their support and wish them good luck in the summer exams and their futures beyond Lancaster House.

*Adam Daniels, Head of Lancaster House*

Year 9 Girls Basketball



**Two of our winning Lancaster teams**

**Come ON Lancaster!**



Sixth Form Boys Basketball

## Pathways to success . . .

We are delighted to share that our Yr12 cohort has embarked on their A Level journey with great enthusiasm and success. The start of the academic year has seen students eagerly adapting to the challenges and rigors of A Level study.

The transition from GCSEs to A Levels is a significant step, and our students have demonstrated remarkable resilience and dedication. They have shown a commendable aptitude in managing the increased workload and the depth of study required at this level.

We aim to support our Yr12 students by developing them across **3 Pathways: Academic, Future and Personal**. Through doing this, we hope to ensure our students are able to thrive, both during their 6th Form experience and when they leave us.

Our **Academic Pathway** has seen a focus on study skills, organisation, self regulation, and now, preparation for their upcoming mock exams. Looking forwards, we aim to continue to hone these study skills to ensure our learners have the tools to be self-motivated and effective.

This year we have grown the opportunities within our **Personal Pathway** through increased activities offered within 'Enrichment' on a Wednesday afternoon. On top of this we have enrolled all of Yr12 on a first aid course which also takes place during this enrichment slot. Further to this, all students have been engaged in Project 30, where they spend 30 hours across Yr12 volunteering, in order to develop their core skills and positively give back to the community. They should be very proud of their contributions.

The **Future Pathway** is aimed at ensuring our students have the knowledge and experience to prepare them for life after 6th Form. This year we have been delighted to host many guest speakers who have provided valuable insights into a range of careers, and also shared ways to get involved in work placement opportunities. Yr12 students will continue to have many exciting opportunities and we look forward to their work experience week, alongside the launch of UCAS in the summer term.

As the year develops, we anticipate seeing continued success and engagement from our wonderful Yr12 students, across all 3 pathways.

*Chloe Kemp, Head of Yr12*

Academic

Personal

Future



We are delighted to have hosted a debut concert from our Folk Ensemble, as part of our Informal Concert Series. This was a spirited showcase featuring musicians from Yrs 9-11. The repertoire covered a range of folk music from across Europe, highlighting the diverse cultural influences that make up this genre. From lively jigs to soulful ballads, each student had the opportunity to craft their own individual improvised solo, which further enhanced this folk tradition.

We hope this will now become a regular annual event and a popular fixture in our musical calendar.

*Music Council*



# Folk Ensemble Concert

*Informal Concert Series*



February is LGBT+ History Month, and the whole school had an assembly about some aspects of this - with lots of input from the **Included** group, and co-presented by two of our fantastic Yr11 students, Olli and Nicole.

This website has lots of information <https://lgbtplushistorymonth.co.uk/>

The focus this year is **Medicine and the history of LGBT+ contributions to the world of medicine.**

Another website referenced in the assembly was **Stonewall**, which has a lot of information about the history of the LGBT+ community and the road to equality. <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

Our very own school library has a wealth of resources too.

# LGBT+ History Month 2024

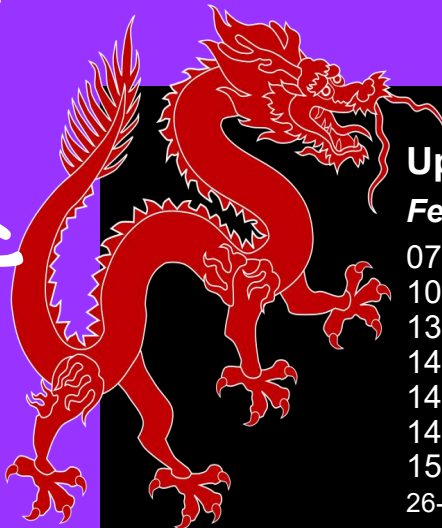
There are three more meetings of *Included@* this year ... All are welcome, so please do come along to join the discussions:

Spring Term 2	27th February	International Women's Day
Summer Term 1	16th April	Neurodiversity Week 2024
Summer Term 2	21st May	Multi-Culturalism

Our email address: [included@guildfordfordcounty.co.uk](mailto:included@guildfordfordcounty.co.uk) is still available to contact with any thoughts, concerns or questions around anything to do with inclusion and diversity.

Please also follow us on instagram [@guildfordcountyedi](https://www.instagram.com/guildfordcountyedi) for updates.

Lindsay Ammar, EDI Lead, Leadership Team



## Upcoming celebrations and religious festivals:

### February

- 07 Lailat al-Miraj *Islam*
- 10 Lunar New Year *Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist*
- 13 Shrove Tuesday *Christian*
- 14 Ash Wednesday (start of Lent) *Christian*
- 14 Valentine's Day *Christian*
- 14 Vasant Panchami *Hindu, Sikh and Jain*
- 15 Nirvana day *Buddhist* 25 – Lailat al Bara'ah *Islam*
- 26-29 Intercalary days *Baha'i*

Happy Lunar New Year to those that celebrate!



# Safeguarding at County

'Keeping children safe is our number one priority at County, and all staff work together to make that happen. Some of the key names and faces in this effort are below. If you have any concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, please contact one of the team listed. If a child is in immediate danger, always call 999. Lastly, if your child wants to speak to someone about something that is bothering them, but might find it hard to begin that conversation, they can email [me@guildfordcounty.co.uk](mailto:me@guildfordcounty.co.uk).'



**Jack Houghton**  
Deputy Headteacher  
**Designated  
Safeguarding  
Lead**



**Jemma Boddington**  
Senior Home-School  
Link Worker  
**Deputy  
Designated  
Safeguarding**



**Steve Smith**  
Headteacher  
**Deputy  
Designated  
Safeguarding  
Lead**



**Antonella Bosco-Reid**  
Senior Deputy Headteacher  
**Deputy  
Designated  
Safeguarding  
Lead**



**Daryl Bond**  
Assistant Headteacher  
Director of Sixth Form  
**Deputy  
Designated  
Safeguarding  
Lead**



**Helen Nurton**  
Assistant Headteacher  
**Deputy  
Designated  
Safeguarding  
Lead**



**Charlotte Barlow**  
Director of SEND  
**Deputy  
Designated  
Safeguarding  
Lead**

## Safeguarding News

### 'Safer Internet Day'

Every February sees Safer Internet Day, an opportunity to reflect on the dozens of incidents we deal with each year that see children get themselves into difficulty online.

Some of the cases we deal with see children experiencing significant harm. Often, prior to incidents, families had felt confident that they were being protective parents.

To get a sense of some of the risks of children having unfettered online access, we recommend parents and carers watch the videos available on the **Internet Watch Foundation's** YouTube channel, especially "**Home Truths**".

As a school, we try to be clear in our advice to families, saying that unless your child uses a smartphone for medical monitoring, you should:

- ⇒ **Swap smartphones for "brick" phones and location tags.**
- ⇒ **Strictly limit screen time, and supervise it.**
- ⇒ **Ensure effective filtering and monitoring programmes are used to control online access.**
- ⇒ **Conduct regular, thorough searches of your child's online activity.**

If you allow your child access to a smartphone, please regularly remind them that:

- ⇒ **They are responsible for any content on their phone.**
- ⇒ **They should not take or share sexualised or otherwise inappropriate images of themselves or others.**
- ⇒ **Anything they post online remains available to others forever.**
- ⇒ **A generosity of spirit, demonstrating kindness and respect to others, is just as important online as it is in the physical world.**

**Georgina Young**  
Head  
of  
Year 7



**Jon Thorpe**  
Head  
of  
Year 8



**Hana Stewart**  
Head  
of  
Year 9



**Sam Strong**  
Head  
of  
Year 10



**Jo Thomas**  
Head  
of  
Year 11



**Chloe Kemp**  
Head  
of  
Year 12



**Mark Grimmett**  
Head  
of  
Year 13





**Congratulations to Thomas Robinson, in Sixth Form, who was responsible for organising this event; he did an outstanding job!**

YR7 BOYS	WINDSOR	YR7 GIRLS	HANOVER
YR8 BOYS	WINDSOR	YR8 GIRLS	YORK
YR9 BOYS	YORK	YR9 GIRLS	LANCASTER
YR10 BOYS	TUDOR	YR10 GIRLS	WINDSOR
YR11 BOYS	TUDOR	YR11 GIRLS	YORK
6TH F BOYS	LANCASTER	6TH F GIRLS	YORK



## House Basketball - the results are in!



*Photography by James Anthony*



## Could your child be a model for a day?

Photographer, and County member of staff, James Anthony, whose photos of students taking part in school events and activities regularly appear in the pages of this newsletter, as well as on the walls at school, is looking for young people to be models for photo shoots to illustrate young people's interests and activities outside school.

So, whether your child has a passion for drama, sport, music, art, technology or something else, could they be a model for a day to show what their everyday life looks like?

If you would like to find out more, please email James Anthony [janthony@guildfordcounty.co.uk](mailto:janthony@guildfordcounty.co.uk) with the name and tutor group of your child, putting "Model for a day" in the subject line.

# A Window on Berlin with the History Department

2024



Day 1: After an early start and flight, the students had a jam-packed day with a 3 hour walking tour of Berlin. We visited sites such as the Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate, Checkpoint Charlie, and key locations from the Cold War, where we heard some incredible stories of escapes to West Berlin.



We also paid our respects at the Memorial to Murdered Jews and the Sinti and Roma Memorial. Later in the evening the students visited the top of the Reichstag Dome, where they had views across Berlin and also down into one of the Parliamentary sessions.



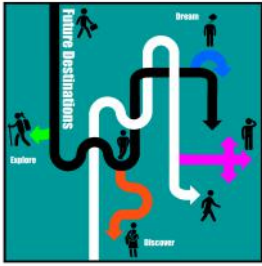
Day 2: We visited Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, where the students learned about the history of the camp (thanks to Miss Cole!), its victims and its liberation. Students were then able to enjoy lunch with free time and shopping in Potsdamerplatz. We then visited the fantastic exhibits at the Topography of Terror Museum, before enjoying some down time, and evening of bowling.



Day 3: Our final day began with a guided tour of the Berlin Wall, where students learned about the history of it being built and developed, the lives of people who had attempted to cross the Death Strip, and the impact on German families who had been divided by the wall. The last historical stop was to the graffiti art on the remaining sections of the Wall at the East Side Gallery. Some free time then followed, as well as lunch at Alexanderplatz. We then began our return trip home.



Thank you so much to the wonderful Yr11 students who came with us – you were probably the best group we have ever taken on this trip!  
Rosie Marsden  
Head of History & Government and Politics



The past few months have been a whirlwind of activity in **Future Destinations**, as we strive to guide and empower our students on their journey towards bright and promising futures.

**Yr11: Empowering Students with Support and Insightful Presentations**

Our Yr11 students are proactively shaping their future paths with the support of our dedicated team. Through a series of meetings, discussions and external presentations, our students are gaining valuable insights, which guide them in making informed decisions about their academic and career aspirations.

**Unifrog Careers Tool: Equipping Yrs 8,9&10 for Success**

We are thrilled to announce that students in Yrs 8, 9, and 10 have had the fantastic opportunity to explore the Unifrog Careers Tool. This resource empowers students to explore diverse career paths, ensuring they are well-prepared and informed about the multitude of possibilities that await them.

**Enlightening Sixth Form Feature Lectures: Broadening Opportunities**

Our Sixth Form Feature Lectures are progressing weekly to illuminate the minds of our students, providing them with knowledge and expanding horizons of opportunities. These sessions are designed to inspire and guide students as they navigate through their future journey choices and pathways.

**Yr12 Work Placements and Collaborations: Real-world Experiences**

Yr12 students are focussed on securing work placements for July. We are excited about the collaborative opportunities with AON and NCS that offer enhanced benefits for both Yr11 & Yr12 students, as well as many more opportunities.

**Journalist Programme with Newsrop: Nurturing Future Journalists**

In partnership with Newsrop, we launched a Journalist Programme catering for budding journalists, eager to explore the world of media and storytelling. This initiative aims to foster the talents and passions of aspiring journalists within our school community.

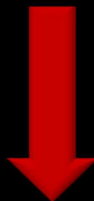
**Networking Opportunities with Torread: Expanding Learning Horizons**

Our budding pilots have had the privilege of networking with Torread, seizing the opportunity to broaden their horizons and enhance their understanding in various fields. These experiences play a pivotal role in shaping their knowledge and skillsets for the future.

As we continue on this journey, the Future Destinations team remains dedicated to providing unwavering support, valuable resources, and exciting opportunities to all our students.

*Huda Gay, Future Destinations Leader*

**Future Destinations**



**Friends of GCS**

Thank you for your donations of **Second-Hand Uniform** ready for our sale on the 24th Feb 10:00-11:00 - we really appreciate having such a generous school community.

Over the next few weeks, we will be asking for your support with our biggest fundraiser of the year, our **Easter Raffle**. Last year, the raffle raised over £2,000 and there were 20+ fantastic prizes won. The money raised by the raffle makes a significant difference to the financial support we are able to offer school each year. Any tickets you feel able to purchase will make a difference, and/or perhaps you could ask whether any companies that you work for, or with, might be willing to donate a prize. Tickets will go on sale online from the last week of February and will be drawn virtually on the 24th of March.

We also have our **Quiz Night** to look forward to next half term, on the 23rd of February. Sign up as a team or an individual for a fun and sociable night - all welcome.

Booking form: <https://forms.gle/Y9E6KfPAYe6Upq79>

**Next Open Meeting:** 5th Mar 19:30 Sixth Form Block and on Zoom.

*Have a lovely half term, Amy and the Friends of GCS Team*  
[guildfordcountyfriends@gmail.com](mailto:guildfordcountyfriends@gmail.com)

**Dates for the Diary:**

Fri	9th Feb	Half Term
Fri - Sat	9th - 17th Feb	Ski Trip
Mon	19th Feb	INSET
Tue	20th Feb	Lower School Concert
Wed - Fri	6th - 8th Mar	Wind in the Willows Production



At County School, we open the doors and offer a warm welcome to our community, with lots of exciting clubs on offer. So, if you want to try something new, have the opportunity to meet like-minded people and perhaps get fitter ... come in out of the cold and join in the fun! We have clubs galore - visit [www.guildfordcounty.co.uk/1168/local-community](http://www.guildfordcounty.co.uk/1168/local-community) for more information.

This month, the Pauline Quirke Academy of Performing Arts (PQA), launched a new Saturday afternoon session at Guildford County School, welcoming students aged 6-18.

PQA provide fun and engaging sessions in Musical Theatre, Acting, Film & TV, with students split into groups according to their age and taught by specialist, expert teachers to help achieve their very best. For more information, please contact [ben.lewis@pqacademy.com](mailto:ben.lewis@pqacademy.com)

*Helen Smith | Sports & Community Lettings Officer*  
 01483 504 089 ext: 246

**Lettings**