



CHARTERS
ALUMNI

March 2026

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Welcome

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Welcome to the Spring edition of our Alumni Newsletter.

As we head into a two week break and look forward to the promise of warmer days and more hours of light we're excited to share some of the latest news from Charters School with our valued community of former students and staff.

In this edition, we've included a variety of stories and updates, and we'd love to feature even more of your achievements and memories in future newsletters.

If you'd like to reconnect with old classmates or colleagues, share something you've been involved in, or offer inspiration to our current students, please do get in touch – we'd love to hear from you!

Connect via our socials or email marketing@chartersschool.org.uk to appear in our Summer edition.

Fab Four!

WE CONGRATULATE OUR SIXTH FORMERS WHO HAVE OFFERS FROM OXBRIDGE

We are absolutely delighted to share the wonderful news that four of our students have been offered places to study at the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge this September. Three current Year 13 students and one former student have shown exceptional resilience, curiosity and academic commitment throughout their Charters journey, and we couldn't be prouder of each and every one of them.



Billy has been offered a place to study Biochemistry at St Catherine's College, University of Oxford. Billy's passion for science and determination have truly shone through in his studies this year. Lottie will be heading to Peterhouse College, University of Cambridge, to study Design, bringing her creativity and flair to one of the world's most inspiring

academic environments. Lottie's artistic talent has long been evident – she was the winner of the Ascot Racecourse Art Competition in 2022. Sophie has secured an offer to study Economics at Peterhouse College, Cambridge, where she will delve deeper into the forces that shape global markets and decision-making. Jason, who left Charters Sixth Form last year, has also been offered a place to study Economics at Trinity College, University of Cambridge – a brilliant achievement and a testament to his hard work and intellectual curiosity. After taking a gap year to pursue his ambition of attending this prestigious university, Jason dedicated much of his time to studying Maths and Further Maths to strengthen his application.

This remarkable set of offers reflects not only the academic excellence of our students, but also the dedication and support of staff and the wider Charters community who have helped to nurture their ambitions. Thanks to the work of individuals such as Mrs Palmer-Garrett, who leads the Potential High Achievers programme, students are able to take part in a wide range of enrichment opportunities designed to extend their learning and prepare them for applications to Oxford, Cambridge and other top universities.

Well done, Billy, Lottie, Sophie and Jason – we can't wait to see where your talents take you next!

SIXTH FORM HIGHLIGHTS THIS TERM...

CELEBRATION BREAKFAST

Year 13 students with outstanding ATL grades enjoyed a celebratory breakfast as their time at Charters draws to a close.



EXTENDED LEARNING

Sixth Form Spanish students visited the British Film Institute in London to explore the dictatorships of Franco & Pinochet through contemporary cinema.

CREATIVE WORKSHOPS

A Level Art students took part in a fashion workshop by *Colours Immortalis*, designing entries for a Fashion Competition. The winning design will be made into a custom outfit for the student to wear at Royal Ascot!



INFORMATIVE TALKS

Year 12 students welcomed human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell, who shared lessons from nearly 60 years of activism & urged them to stand up for what they believed in.

CAREERS ADVICE

As part of National Careers Week, Year 13 students welcomed James Sunderland, whose career route has taken him from Army Colonel to MP, showing them that career paths are rarely linear.



Sixth Form News

WHAT HAVE OUR CURRENT STUDENTS BEEN GETTING UP TO THIS TERM?



COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Year 12 students spread some Easter cheer when they brought gifts & hand written messages to residents at a local care home.

OXBRIDGE PROGRAMME

Four Sixth Form students have offers for Oxbridge places thanks to the opportunities and guidance received via the Potential High Achievers programme.



REAL WORLD INSIGHTS

Year 12 students with an interest in law joined Oxford High School's online Law Conference hearing from leading legal experts on commercial, immigration & public law.

IMPACTFUL OPPORTUNITIES

Two Sixth Form students were selected to take part in the Holocaust Educational Trust's highly respected programme, Lessons from Auschwitz. They visited the the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum for reflection & learning.



LEADING THE WAY

HOUSE captains collected donated items of food which were taken to the Bracknell Foodbank to support those in need.

#ChooseCharters



#WriteYourOwnFuture

MARCH 2026

Could You Inspire The Next Generation?

TEACH SOUTHEAST INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME - 15 JUNE TO 3 JULY 2026

We are delighted to share an exciting opportunity for undergraduates currently in their second, third or final year of university who may be considering a career in teaching.

The Internship Programme 2026, delivered by Xavier Teach SouthEast, runs from 15 June to 3 July 2026 and is designed to give aspiring teachers a genuine insight into life in the classroom.

This three-week placement provides a unique opportunity to become fully immersed in school life. Interns observe and teach lessons alongside experienced mentors, receive bespoke training, meet current trainees and Early Career Teachers, and gain a clear understanding of how rewarding a career in education can be.

Funded placements (£455 per week, on completion of the programme) are available for undergraduates studying secondary chemistry, computing, design and technology, languages, maths and physics. Non-funded placements are open to non-undergraduates, those considering a career change, and applicants interested in other secondary subjects or primary teaching.

Importantly, the internship also offers participants the opportunity to accelerate the interview process for the SCITT teacher training programme – providing a valuable head start for those ready to take the next step.

From Student to Staff: A Charters Success Story

At Charters, we are proud to support and develop the next generation of teachers – and we are equally proud of those former students who have returned to us as colleagues.

One such example is Richard Cumner, who was a student at Charters from 2003 to 2010 and is now one of our dedicated PE teachers. Richard's journey from student to professional is a powerful reminder of the lasting impact of a Charters education – and the fulfilling career that can follow.

There is something uniquely special about teaching in a school that helped shape your own ambitions. Former students bring not only subject knowledge and professional training, but also a deep understanding of our community, values and ethos.

Could This Be You?

If you are currently at university and curious about teaching, this internship could be your first step towards a career at Charters – and perhaps one day inspiring students in the very classrooms where you once sat.

We encourage you to explore this opportunity and consider the difference you could make.

For further details and to apply, visit: www.teachsoutheast.co.uk

Closing date: Friday 8 May 2026.



Take a Walk Down Memory Lane

WE INVITE YOU TO VISIT THE ALUMNI HUB AT OUR LITERARY FESTIVAL & SUMMER FAYRE



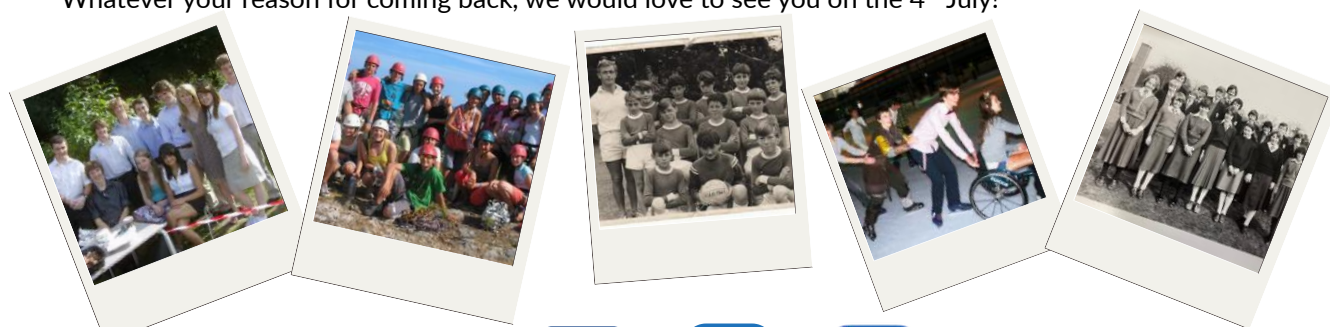
We are excited to announce that during this National Year of Reading, the **Charters School Literary Festival & Summer Fayre** will be taking place on Saturday 4th July, 12:00pm–4:00pm! This is set to be a fantastic community event, bringing together students, families, local businesses, and community groups – all in our beautiful school grounds. Funds raised will go directly towards supporting the school and enriching student experiences.

The afternoon will be a vibrant, joyful celebration bringing together the whole community, with a wide variety of stalls, family activities, music, refreshments and entertainment. Alongside traditional stalls and activities such as the bottle tombola, plant stall and bouncy castle, this year's event will also feature a Literary Festival, adding author talks, book-themed activities and creative experiences for visitors of all ages.

There will be an Artisan Marketplace where local talent can showcase and sell their craft. If you run a small business and would like to be part of our Artisan Marketplace, pitches are available for £50. This is a great opportunity to promote your products to a wide audience. Please contact friends@chartersschool.org.uk if you are interested.

For our ex-students, the highlight of the event will be our fantastic **Alumni Hub** where you will be able to look through old memorabilia, photos, trophies and publications from the past six decades. Whatever decade you were at Charters, why not make a real day of it? Maybe you could arrange to meet your old school friends, bring along your grandchildren for an ice cream, or maybe you'd like to relive old memories of winning a race at Sport's Day.

Whatever your reason for coming back, we would love to see you on the 4th July!



Connect with us by clicking the icons:



From Charters Sixth Form to Company Founder, Managing Director, and Owner

BE INSPIRED BY STEPH ESSEX - FOUNDER OF FLYHAWK



International Women's Day took place this year on 8th March, and celebrated the remarkable achievements of women across our communities.

One woman we are very proud to call one of our own is Steph Essex, the Managing Director and Owner of Flyhawk, the No.1 teamwear brand for women's sport.

Steph attended Charters between 1999 and 2006, and as her company celebrated its fifth birthday, she kindly took some time away from her office to bring us up to speed on her journey since leaving Charters Sixth Form.

What is your background - what did you study at university and were you always interested in sport?

My background is mainly in elite netball, having played at both Super League level and for England Under-21. However, I have always enjoyed a wide range of sports. While studying at Charters School I played football, cricket, tennis, hockey and rounders, alongside my main sport, netball.

In addition to sport, I have always had a strong interest in design. For my A-Level Graphic Design project, I chose to rebrand the Netball Super Cup, combining my passion for sport with my interest in graphic design. I later attended the University of Bath where I studied Civil and Architectural Engineering. One of the key reasons I chose Bath was because it had the best high-performance netball programme in the country at the time. While there, I trained and played alongside some of the most successful netball players in the UK, including Serena Guthrie MBE, Stacey Francis-Bayman, Pamela Cookey, Tamsin Greenway and Eboni Usoro-Brown.

How did you start your career?

After graduating from university, I began my career working for a new event called the Bournemouth 7s Festival, which has since grown to become the world's largest sport and music festival. The event combined elements of a traditional music festival with competitive sport taking place throughout the day.

Working in this entrepreneurial environment gave me valuable experience, and during my time there we created a small sportswear brand. This was where I first learned how to design sports clothing. In 2019, after ten years working with Bournemouth 7s and following the sale of our sportswear brand, I decided to step away and take some time to travel.

However, during my time off, the COVID-19 pandemic began and I returned home. With a lot of free time during lockdown, I developed the idea for Flyhawk, a female-focused sportswear brand. Flyhawk was officially launched in January 2021 in collaboration with some of the biggest names in international netball.

What challenges have you faced?

One of the biggest challenges when launching Flyhawk was dealing with the impact of Brexit, particularly the new rules surrounding importing and exporting goods. We had to spend a significant amount of time understanding and adapting to these regulations to ensure the business could operate effectively. Another major challenge has been managing rapid business growth. Last summer the company expanded very quickly, which sounds positive but can also create difficulties. Rapid growth means managing increased workloads, hiring new staff and ensuring customer expectations are still met. Often, businesses must invest in systems and infrastructure before they are truly needed in order to cope with future demand, which can also be a financial risk.

What is your greatest achievement?

My greatest achievement is launching my own business and reaching the five-year milestone. Statistics show that only around 40% of businesses survive beyond five years, so this is something I am very proud of.

I am also extremely proud that the brand is making a positive contribution to women's sport by supporting female athletes and helping to grow visibility and opportunities within the sport.

Click on the image below to watch Flyhawk's inspirational video.



Marathon Man

JAMES BENNIE ON HIS THIRD WORLD MARATHON WHEN HE TAKES ON LONDON IN APRIL

James Bennie is on a mission. This year, our incredible Head of Design & Technology is taking on one of the world's most iconic races - the London Marathon to raise funds for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, helping ensure more young people can take part in this life-changing programme regardless of financial barriers. The DofE experience gives students the opportunity to develop resilience, confidence and independence through volunteering, physical challenges, skills development and expedition. For many young people, it becomes one of the most formative experiences of their school years. Did you know Charters runs the 4th largest Duke of Edinburgh programme in the South East? We are proud to provide opportunities to our students that build resilience, confidence, motivation and lifelong skills.



This year's race will be particularly special for Mr Bennie. Not only will it be his first London Marathon, but it also marks his third World Marathon Major, following his impressive run in the Berlin Marathon last year and the gruelling TCS New York City Marathon, that he completed in sub 4hrs the year before. He aims to complete all of the original 6 Major Marathons to achieve The Six Star Medal Abbott World Marathon Majors plus the 7th Major, Sydney!

After London his journey continues as later in 2026 he will head across the Atlantic to run the Chicago Marathon as well. All of this comes during a milestone year as he celebrates his 50th birthday, making 2026 a year of endurance, adventure and personal challenge.

James' goal is to raise £2,000 to support students who might otherwise miss out on the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Donations will help cover participation fees, essential kit and expedition costs, ensuring that more young people can experience the challenge and reward that DofE offers.

If you are able to support Mr Bennie and this fantastic cause, please consider making a donation and helping him reach his £2,000 target. Every contribution, no matter the size, will help ensure that more young people can take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and benefit from the confidence, skills and friendships it builds.

[DONATE
HERE](#)

We wish James the very best of luck as he takes on the streets of London this spring – and we'll all be cheering him on every step of the way.



Sporting Heritage

SPORT HAS ALWAYS BEEN AT THE HEART OF CHARTERS

Football, netball, hockey, rugby, cricket, athletics...the list goes on. Charters school has a rich history of sporting excellence and this is a tradition that carries on today. Our school has produced countless County players, International representatives and Olympians, alongside many thriving sports teams and outstanding individuals.

Our Olympians include Sophie Christiansen who has represented GB at five Paralympic Games, and is an eight-time gold medallist. Her first Paralympics was Athens 2004 while incredibly she was still a student at Charters Sixth form. The post-box outside Farrow and Ball in Sunningdale was even painted gold in her honour after winning gold at the London 2012 Olympics! Harriet Taylor, another former student represented GB in the Women's Four (W4) rowing squad at Tokyo in 2021 and won bronze in the Women's Eight at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Hattie was first picked to represent Great Britain in 2015 when she won bronze as part of the Women's Eight at the World Rowing U23 Championships.



The power of sport can open many doors. One of our former Head Boys, Josh Mingoia, is currently studying at the University of Manhattan on an athletics scholarship. His drive and dedication has meant he is able to study for a Major in Biology with a minor in Neuroscience, whilst also enjoying a sport he loves. Tom Hateley has only recently retired from a very successful career as a professional footballer; starting at Reading FC he also played in Cyprus and Poland. In the latter, he won the Ekstraklasa (the top division in Polish football) with Piast Gliwice during the 2018–2019 season and retired from professional football in 2024.

These are just some of the outstanding sporting students that have passed through our doors. Many more have competed across all sports at every level over the past six decades, and even though we are no longer a designated Sports Academy, the love of physical activity and competing is still firmly embedded here.



One of the organisations helping our aspiring young people shine, is the Ascot Fire Brigade Trust (AFBT). This local charity have supported talented students for more than ten years by providing annual bursaries to help manage the financial burden associated with elite sport. Their help is invaluable and can be used for equipment, treatment costs, or travel expenses which enables our students to focus on their chosen sport.

If you know of a past student who is excelling in the world of sport, please get in touch. Their story could be inspirational for our current cohort & we would love to publicise their journey in the next edition of the Alumni Newsletter.



Spring Concert

AND THE MUSIC KEEPS ON PLAYING ON AND ON...

Each year our incredible termly music concerts are a joy to hear and the Spring Concert didn't disappoint. With students from all year groups taking part, it was truly a wonderful experience for those who attended and for staff who enjoyed the melodious rehearsals in the weeks leading up to it.

One of the most striking features of the evening was the versatility of our performers. Many students took to the stage multiple times, switching seamlessly between instruments and ensembles, and moving across a wide range of musical genres—from musical theatre and pop to jazz and film scores. With a varied programme and performances woven thoughtfully throughout the evening, each act brought its own unique energy and character to the stage.

Among the many highlights, the Chamber Choir delivered a moving rendition of *Send in the Clowns* from *A Little Night Music*, written by Stephen Sondheim, alongside a heartfelt performance of *Chasing Pavements* by Adele. The Barbershop Boys charmed the audience with *Mambo Italiano*, made famous by Dean Martin, before showcasing their rich harmonies in the classic ballad *Danny Boy*.

Every single student put their heart and soul into the concert and that shone through.

We thought we would end this term's newsletter with a selection of images from past concerts. If you were part of the Music family when you were at Charters, maybe you'll be able to spot yourself.

Wishing you all a very Happy Easter.

