

The King Alfred School Upper School Newsletter

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Hamlet on Hamlet

Upper School library was the only place "to be" for KAS Sixth Formers in January, where they had the opportunity to quiz actor **Benedict Cumberbatch** on his portrayal of one of Shakespeare's most iconic roles – Hamlet.

The Olivier Award winner took questions ranging from which production of the play he most admires, whether Hamlet really loves Ophelia, and whether he would do things differently if he were to play the role again.

Organised by English teacher **Carey Johnstone**, the Q&A was devised to develop students' critical thinking skills as part of their A level English studies.

Students compiled their questions in advance, and they were put to the actor by Year 13s **Ana G** and **Lois L**. "It's so helpful to get a critical perspective from someone who has played the part," Lois

VAPING

Dr Aric Sigm



shared afterwards. "We have to discuss interpretations in our essays, so it was interesting to hear how he understood the language."

Read the full story on our website.

Vaping awareness talk

We recently welcomed health education specialist **Dr Aric Sigman** into school, who spoke with Year 8 students about the dangers and impacts of

vaping. These included addiction, neurological changes, and negative effects on cardiovascular health, intellect and general well-being. Vaping is a "growing epidemic" according to the <u>British Medical Association</u>, most worryingly amongst young people – almost six times more 11-17 year olds now vape compared with ten years ago.

The talk is one example of the school's extensive Personal, Social and Health Education (PHSE) provision, a key component of the excellent pastoral care we believe is vital in supporting students' development into happy, confident young people.

Holocaust Memorial Day exhibition

Staff and students took time out of the school day on Monday 27 January to honour **Holocaust Memorial Day** at an exhibition curated by Year 12 and 13 students.

The display detailed the persecution of Jewish people during the Holocaust through facts, first-person testimonies and photos.

The film *La Rafle* was projected onto the wall and staff from our Music department provided moving backdrop music to create a contemplative experience (you can hear it in <u>this Instagram post about the exhibition</u>).

"We wanted to give people the space to take a moment and look at the displays in their own time," said **Frankie (Y12)**, one of the student curators.

The display also touched on other genocides around the world, such as those in Darfur, Cambodia and Rwanda.



DEIB workshops

Our DEIB team recently invited the **Every Future Foundation** into school to host workshops with Upper School students on topics such as racism, racial awareness and equity.

For younger year groups, the session addressed different types of racism, the impact of racist language, and how we are all responsible for creating an inclusive environment within the school.

Meanwhile, Sixth Formers explored how campaigns can bring about positive societal change regarding inclusivity and representation. Their ideas included how people of colour might be better represented in politics, ways to address unconscious bias within airport security,



and an inclusive film festival aimed at challenging racial stereotypes in film.

You can read more about KAS's commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging <u>on our website</u>.

Children's Mental Health Week

To mark Children's Mental Health Week (3-9 February), our pastoral care team devised a special events programme, sharing helpful advice on maintaining good mental health, highlighting emotional coping strategies, and encouraging students to support one another.

In addition to the highlights detailed below, Upper School Librarian **Jenny Monaghan** also curated a collection of well-being titles, listed on the next page.

Shaun Flores

Children's mental health champion **Shaun Flores** spoke with Years 9, 12 and 13 about the challenges he has faced in his life and the coping strategies

he has developed in response to them.

Shaun spoke honestly and engagingly about suffering a mental health breakdown, but how he was ultimately able to embrace personal difficulties as an opportunity for learning and growth.

"I found it really inspiring," said **Tierney C (Y9)**. "It highlighted how it's normal to face challenges, and how we should talk about them more," added **Eila ZJ (Y9)**.

Well-being activities

Year 7 and 8 students were able to select from a menu of activities designed to promote mindfulness and boost their mood. Options included yoga, tie-dye, board games, Lego building, pottery and walking Alfie the school dog on the Heath.



School Six callovers

Our panel of student reps, **School Six**, talked to all Upper School year groups about mental well-being in Callovers. In the interactive sessions, they shared details of positive practices they have in place to help manage their own mental health and highlighted the importance of regularly checking in with friends.

Dr Bettina Hohnen

Clinical psychologist and former KAS parent **Dr Bettina Hohnen** delivered a talk to Years 10 & 11 titled **'The Teenage Brain'**. She highlighted the pivotal changes in the brain from puberty onwards and the opportunities this period of development presents.

The talk covered finding a balance between helpful and unhelpful stress, the need to practice emotional discomfort, and how loving what we do makes hard things feel easier.



Bettina also shared helpful insights and practical tips in a special session for parents titled 'Raising Resilient Kids: How to Help Children Thrive'.



WELLBEING READING LIST

















Be You series by editors of Teen Breathe Magazine

- Breathe Out : a creative guide to happiness for teen minds by MIND
- The Wellbeing Journal : creative activities to inspire by MIND
- School Resource Leaflets by MIND





- You are a Champion ; You Can Do It by Marcus Rashford • Anything is Possible by Gareth Southgate
 - You have the Power by Leah Williamson



Issues Series with information from newspapers, magazines, government reports and charities

Students supporting students 🔆

At this term's **Student-Led Options Fair**, Year 11s nearing the end of their GCSE journey were invited to share their experiences with Year 9s, who were preparing to decide what to study for their own GCSEs.

The Year 9s had the chance to discuss specific subjects with the older students and learn more about school life in Years 10 and 11.

"The conversations I had have helped me decide what to do" shared **Filippo**. "I had a good chat about Geography and how useful it is to understand a place and its people when you travel, so now I'm considering taking that."

"Speaking to the Year 11s has also reassured me," he added. "Before today, the thought of going into Year 10 and starting my GCSEs was quite scary, but I'm looking forward to it now."

Year 11 **Ranya** was on the stall for Global Challenges, a school-directed course that introduces students to socio-economic, environmental and ethical challenges facing the world, and allows them to develop informed responses.

She said: "I liked helping Year 9s figure out whether it's a subject they would enjoy. They valued talking to someone more on their level [than teachers] who could share what it's really like to start GCSEs.

"My advice was that it's not as hard as you think it's going to be. There's obviously more work involved, but the teachers at KAS offer lots of support and ease you in gently."



Year 12s deliver PEP talks

In another example of students supporting students, this term a group of Year 12s delivered mental health lessons to Year 7 as part of our **Peer Education Programme** (PEP).

PEP is a transformative programme from the Mental Health Foundation, designed to equip young people with essential skills and knowledge to safeguard their mental health and support their peers.

Eight Year 12 students embarked upon the project in September, learning how to deliver a curriculum on mental health. This not only enhanced their own mental health awareness but also empowered them to make a positive impact on their peers. They learnt to approach sensitive topics with empathy and confidence, becoming trusted figures to the pupils in Year 7.

It also offered a unique opportunity for these students to develop leadership and communication skills.

After six weeks of training with Head of Year 7 **Claire Murphy**, the pupils delivered five lessons to small groups. Group size was limited to 10 to ensure a positive learning environment.

Felix E, one of the Year 12s who delivered the lessons, said: "Year 7 is a new phase of school life and an important one. The skills we teach can help with that transition."

He added: "The Year 7s really engaged with the process. Whilst they had heard of terms such as 'mental health', 'depression' and 'anxiety', they didn't necessarily fully understand what they were and how they can manifest."



Click to watch an overview of PEP by its creators, the Mental Health Foundation

Fellow Year 12 **Ella VR** said: "One of the activities involved them pointing at words to describe how they were feeling that day. They particularly enjoyed that one and it became a weekly habit."

Overall, the Peer Education Programme has been a resounding success, highlighting the power of peer-to-peer learning. It has strengthened the bonds within our school community and provided invaluable experiences for both the mentors and the mentees.

"It was nice building connections between year groups," Ella said. "I think that learning from fellow students made the information more relatable."

Feedback from the Year 7s was positive too. One said, "I have learnt a lot about mental health that I had never thought of before," whilst another added, "This experience has inspired me to do PEP in Year 12."

Well done to all of the Year 12s who took part in this important programme.



Play(doh)-based learning

This term in **Geography**, Year 9 students have been learning about erosional processes and the landforms that are created as a result of these.

To help bring the learning to life, subject teacher **Oliver Cairns** incorporated art into one of the lessons. Students used their creative skills to create 3D posters, using Play-Doh to model the landforms.

This fun learning activity helped the students to remember the order in which the landforms occur.





Use your feet, get a treat!

Every Tuesday, students are welcomed to school with a free cup of steaming hot chocolate (or orange juice in the warmer months).

The catch? They must have walked at least part of their journey to school.

Known as **'Transport Tuesday'**, the initiative aims to encourage our KAS community to consider more eco-friendly routes to school to help reduce their carbon footprint.

Other eco-friendly modes of transport such as running, cycling and scooting also qualify for a free drink, and reusable cups are preferred!

Members of School Six, our panel of student representatives, serve the drinks with a smile. Year 12 **Ella** said: "It's a lovely initiative to be involved with."

Honouring 68 years of KAS service

At this term's King Alfred School Society AGM, tribute was paid to two very special and valued members of the KAS community: **Sarah Phillips** and **Kara Conti**.

Sarah stepped down from Council after 28 years of involvement in the school's



Governance. Initially a parent, she joined Council in the mid-90s and was one of our longest-serving Treasurers. Sarah has devoted countless hours

to the school, crafting policies, supporting the finance team and navigating difficult decisions.

In his weekly email, Head **Robert** Lobatto said: "Her experience has been invaluable over the last ten years, helping me to stay connected to the ethos and history of the school, and always able to put in context any of our idiosyncratic institutional features. Whilst I am delighted that she will stay connected, she will be much missed in her role." Meanwhile, Kara stepped down as KASS President after 25 years –

bringing her total KAS service to some 40 years. During that time, Kara has chaired Council, taught Year 3, run KASparents, led our



brilliant TEDxKAS initiative, and been both a KAS parent and a grandparent.

Of Kara, Robert said: "Like Sarah, she has always been an important conduit to our past, whilst also remaining open and ready to embrace change. I have valued her camaraderie and energy, her guidance and support, and she will be a difficult act to follow."

At the AGM, both were presented with



flowers and a very special gift: a pewter brooch cast by current Year 12 students from one in the King Alfred archives dating back to around 1912.





ART, MUSIC & DRAMA

Wearable sculpture workshop

Year 9 students drew inspiration from modernist paintings, particularly abstract art, to design and craft wearable sculptures.

The pieces were created using materials readily available in the Art department, such as wires, wood, scraps of fabric and bubble wrap. Students had to work in small groups and adhere to strict deadlines to brainstorm, plan and execute their designs.

Of the process, **Eve R** said: "This project has been lots of fun. I've learnt how to manage my time as we have a lot to do in a short amount of time. Normally you do Art on your own, but working with someone else has been positive. Together we've come up with something we wouldn't have by ourselves."

Working to a deadline helped develop the students' problem-solving skills. **Tierney C** shared: "Our biggest challenge was bringing our design to life. We initially made a hoop skirt, but it didn't look right so we decided to revise our plan."

The decision paid off. "Seeing the finished product was the best part of the project."

Students also needed to be adaptable, as **Walter M** explained: "Our design isn't what we had in mind at the start. We didn't have enough felt to do what we had envisaged, so instead we used spraypainted bubble wrap."

As Sheryl Sandberg once said, done is better than perfect!



ART, MUSIC, DRAMA

"We all have an inner clown"

Year 12 students created and performed unique clowning sketches this term – much to the delight of the audience who filled our Black Box studio with laughter!

From a farcical argument over shoes, shared lollipops and feet stuck in stools to unmanageable lists of tasks, spaghetti in pockets and giant saws, they squeezed the comedy out of every moment.

The project was part of their UAL Level 3 Extended Diploma in Performing & Production Arts course.

Tommy D performed as his clown alterego, the Retired Regent Reynolds. "We had to work on being OK with people laughing at us," he said. "Once I got on stage and they laughed, it felt good."







Write stuff

Another core module of the UAL Level 3 course sees students devising original plays. This year, our all-female Year 13 cohort crafted a drama set in a sexual health clinic, which addressed issues around female friendships, interactions and judgements.

Their play, *It's Coz We're Women*, was performed over two nights at the Etcetera Theatre Club in Camden. The twist? The audience was split, with men and women invited to different performances.

Rosy J, who served as lead writer, explained: "We wanted to create different experiences for both ourselves and the audience. It was interesting to perform the play to a group of men and see what they laughed at or were shocked by."

Unplugged 2025

The annual Unplugged concert took place in the final week of this half term and was as fantastic as ever.

Students from Years 6 to 13 took to the Main Hall stage, performing everything from golden oldies to modern covers and even some original compositions.

Music Technology teacher **Dan Aarons** said: "Thanks to everyone for attending Unplugged. It was another wonderful night of music and togetherness, showcasing all the fantastic, talented performers at the school.

"Both students and staff have put so much into this, resulting in joyous performances of an extremely high standard."

Many thanks to parent **Sonya Walzer** for the professional photos of the evening.













ART, MUSIC, DRAMA









Holy foley!

Year 7 students participated in a sound workshop run by **Matt Cargill**, our sound technician, earlier this term.

They learned about Foley sound – the custom-made sound effects that are added to movies, TV shows, video games and the like – in preparation for writing and performing their own radio plays.



CHOICE, EXPLORATIONS & GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Explorations in Year 7

This term's enquiry question: Is space exploration ethical?

As part of their **Exploration in STEM** (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), students have been learning about NASA's Mars Perseverance rover and its role in the Mars Exploration Project.

One lesson saw them build their own mini rovers using Lego Education 'Spike' sets.

They programmed the rovers to navigate around obstacles using Python, an intuitive drag-and-drop coding language based on Scratch.

In addition to developing their knowledge in the STEM fields (particularly algorithms, programming and data), this fun learning activity helped students to think critically and solve complex problems.

Working in pairs also provided them with opportunities to develop their communication and collaboration skills.

"It was quite hard because sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't," said **Anoushka D**.

"It was frustrating when it didn't, but then felt good when you finally got it right."

Her partner on the task, **Willa F**, added: "I enjoyed doing it with Anoushka because we could figure it out together. This project has been really fun."

Take a look at one of the rovers in action <u>here</u>!



CHOICE, EXPLORATIONS & GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Explorations in Year 7

This term's enquiry question: Should we fear or embrace AI?

Year 7 began this term's Liberal Arts Exploration with a talk from **Miles Berry**, Professor of Computing Education at The University of Roehampton.

The lively session covered how AI works, its uses, and its implications for individuals and society.

Discussion points included:

- The ethics of using AI when doing homework;
- Ways in which AI might aid revision;
- The environmental impact of generating AI responses;
- Reasons for AI applications having age restrictions;
- How AI perpetuates bias;
- Why thinking for yourself is essential for learning.



As part of this Exploration, students will also consider the enquiry question from various angles, including how different artists have used technology in Art, how to write dystopian fiction in English, and how AI can be used to influence thinking and promote ideas in Humanities.

Explorations in Year 8

This term's enquiry question:

How can the natural balance be restored?

As part of their Explorations study of 'Systems', Year 8 built terrariums – an eco-system in a jar.

Student **Hugo C** said: "The ecosystems in our jars have everything needed to stay balanced.

"It's been really interesting learning about the different systems we have on earth and thinking about how humans influence them."



Teacher **Hannah Sheath** explained: "This activity gave a very visual representation of how a simple system works.

"We'll go on to look in more depth at other systems, what impact it has when they are out of balance, and how to restore the natural balance."

SPORT

Year 9 boys secure second 🍸

Our Year 9 boys finished second by the narrowest of margins at the ISA Nationals Under 14 Football Tournament in January.

The team travelled to Nottingham University for the event, which saw some 20 teams battling it out for the trophy.

The boys came top of their group and didn't concede a single goal, with two nilnil draws, and a 1-0 and 2-0 win. With **Rudy L**'s strength and **Paul M**'s defensive prowess, nothing was getting past our wall!

The boys faced Princethorpe in a tense semi-final, which saw goalie **Elliot L** saving everything that came his way. Extra time was followed by penalties, with Elliot saving all three spot-kicks he faced, leaving **Jago D** to slot home the winner and send our boys into pandemonium!

Despite ultimately suffering a close 1-0 defeat in the final, Head of Sport **Tom Franklin** commended their performance, saying the boys should take great pride and heart from their efforts. Well done!





Elsewhere in football...

Our super-keen Year 8 girls comfortably finished second in their six-team league, losing out on the top spot to a well-drilled and physical Archer Academy. As well as being hungry for success, the team have also shown exemplary sporting behaviour. Meanwhile, our Year 10 boys comfortably topped their league, winning every game, scoring 13 goals and only conceding three.

Netball news

The end of January saw the Year 7 girls win their fifth game in a row in both the league and friendlies. The team has shown amazing consistency this term; training numbers continue to impress and the results go hand in hand with the amount of time and effort they have put into improving. Keep it up, team!

Elsewhere, our Year 8s competed in an ISA netball tournament, where we were able to enter two teams because the numbers at training have been so good. Both teams did exceptionally well, finishing in strong positions in the group stages but unfortunately falling at the knockout hurdle. Despite this, great netball skills and fair play were shown by all involved!



Basketball buzz ዙ

Numbers for basketball in Years 7, 8 and 9 have been soaring. The boys are seizing and relishing every opportunity to practice!



All three age groups have been entered into leagues of six or seven teams, making flawless starts by winning their opening matches. Here's to further success and enjoyment of the sport!

Runners rack up the miles

Well done to all the staff, students and parents who braved the wintery weather this term as part of our 'progressive marathon'.

Meeting in Golders Hill Park on Friday mornings before school, participants followed a different route each week, with their distance recorded.

The aim is to have completed the equivalent of a marathon by the end of Summer Term!

CAMPS & TRIPS

Sixth Formers see politics in action

A group of KAS Sixth Formers took a trip to the Houses of Parliament in January as part of their Politics A level studies.

Students were given a tour of Parliament, as well as the opportunity to watch a debate take place within the House of Commons. They also participated in a fun workshop, which saw them split into groups and tasked with creating fictional political parties.

Year 12 student **Evie P** shared: "I found the opportunity to witness a debate in the House of Commons the most interesting aspect of the trip, as I was able to learn more about how politicians engage in discussions when they disagree on legislation decisions.

"It was also helpful in gaining a better understanding of the history of the building itself and the transition from a monarchy to a democracy."



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CAMPS & TRIPS







"Listening to comments similar to those screamed at participants of the 1960 sit-ins on our visit to the National Center for Civil and Human Rights brought to life how hard it would've been to face discrimination without retaliating." **Cyrus, Year 13**

AND REAL PROPERTY AND IN CALL

"We were inspired to fight injustice"

In December, Year 12 and 13 students travelled to the United States to learn more about the history of the Civil Rights Movement and its legacy in contemporary America.

Along with teachers from our History and Politics departments, the Sixth Form students journeyed from Alabama to Washington DC, visiting many prominent sites, cities and museums on the Civil Rights trail during the week-long trip.

They also had the opportunity to talk with and hear the stories of people with firsthand experience of the movement.

These included the trip's coach driver, Willie, a Vietnam veteran whose grandparents were born into slavery in 1865; their Selma tour guide, **Barbara Barge**, who was 15 years old when Martin Luther King led the march across

the Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965; and **Dr Alvin Edwards**, the Pastor of Mount Zion First African Baptist Church, who spoke of his experiences of racism at high school.

Year 12 student **Markos B** said: "Their advice and encouragement about how we as young people can fight for justice was a trip highlight for me.

"Learning about history through books and films is one thing, but hearing it through the words of the people involved was a truly unforgettable experience."

Enjoy these pictures from and student quotes about the trip, and read more in our <u>online news story</u>.

The congregation at Mount Zion First African Baptist Church embraced us as if we were one of their own. Their actions served as a reminder that we must show small acts of kindness and generosity whenever we can." Xavier, Year 13

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Wateria



HERO







"As we walked over Edmund Pettus Bridge, having heard the stories of those who lived though the civil rights marches in the 1960s, we were inspired to fight injustice whenever we see it." **Rosalind and Sofia, Year 13**

OLD ALFREDIANS & DEVELOPMENT

Here's to the Class of 2024!

Thank you to everyone who attended the Class of 2024 A level certificate presentation in January.

We were so pleased to welcome our newest Old Alfredians and their families back to KAS to celebrate this important achievement. Well done, Class of 2024! Bright futures lie ahead for you all.

After the presentation, the Class of 2024 was joined by other recent leavers from 2020-2023. It was a lovely evening bringing together many from the KAS community.

From fundraising to illustrating...



Two new episodes of Alfredian Voices: What I REALLY Learnt in School are now available.

Episode 9 features **Ian Lush OBE (OA 1978)**. Recorded on Zoom during the pandemic, Ian reflects on his challenging but fulfilling time as CEO of Imperial Health Charity and Chair of NHS Charities Together. He shares his experiences managing a charity campaign amidst unprecedented circumstances (as Chair, Ian led the charity's national fundraising campaign with the late Captain Sir Tom Moore, helping to raise over £155 million for the NHS). He also reminisces on how his 14 years at KAS taught him to be part of a community. "It was very much about wanting to make a difference," he says.

In Episode 10, **Helen Craig (OA 1950)**, renowned for co-creating the *Angelina Ballerina* children's book series, reminisces on her school days and the major influences that shaped her career as an artist. From vivid memories of KAS at Flint Hall Farm following evacuation in World War II to the later years in Golders Green, Helen recalls how her formative years at KAS contributed to her becoming a children's book illustrator.

You can <u>listen to both episodes – and all</u> previous instalments – on our website.

"It's not a career – it's your life"

Independent film producer **Phil Hunt** led a Connections Series Talk this term.

Phil, a current parent and the founder of Head Gear Films and Bankside Films, spoke with Sixth Form students and staff about his experience in film production. His words of advice included: "Don't think of it as a 'career' – it's your life." He also encouraged students to achieve their ambitions, saying: "The education here at King Alfred allows you to be a free thinker. You've got to believe in yourself!"

His enthusiasm for life and career must have rubbed off on **Eve Hobsbawm (OA 2022)**, as she is now on Phil's team at Head Gear Films. A great example of our KAS Connections coming full circle! Thank you, Phil, for sharing insights into your life, work and passions.



Could your expertise in a particular industry benefit KAS students? If so, please reach out to our Development Office to discuss coming into school to give a Connections talk. Email <u>development@kingalfred.org.uk</u>.

WWW.KASCONNECTED.ORG

DUSTRY

KASConnected.org is an online community, forum and engagement platform that allows Old Alfredians and KAS students to benefit from networking, internship offers, work experience, mentoring and job opportunities from across the KAS community.

KASConnected.org brings together our KAS community to help educate beyond KAS, so that students and Old Alfredians can thrive at School and beyond.

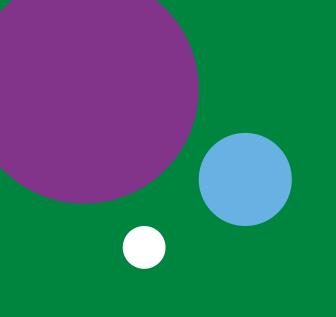




<u>Term Dates</u>

Monday 17 - Monday 24 February (INSET day)	
Tuesday 25 February – Friday 4 April	
Monday 7 – Tuesday 22 April (INSET day)	
Wednesday 23 April – Thursday 10 July	
Monday 5 May	
Monday 26 – Friday 30 May	
<u>Key Events</u>	
Tuesday 25 – Friday 28 February	
Monday 3 March	
Wednesday 5 March	
Thursday 6 March	
Wednesday 12 March	
Thursday 20 March	
Saturday 22 March	
Wednesday 26 March	
Thursday 27 March	
Thursday 27 March	
Wednesday 2 April	







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