

19th April 2024

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Dear Parent/Carer

Term 4 - Newsletter 2024

We hope you and your family have had a good Easter break.

Thank you for your continued support of the school, we are pleased to share with you some of the wonderful experiences of our students over the last term and update you on events taking place in school.

Year 11 and 13 Exams

It is now the final stretch for our GCSE and A level students and all indications from their mock exams shows us that their hard work and effort will serve them well this summer as they start their final exams.

The students have attended after school and holiday revision sessions throughout the term and over the Easter break and have worked hard to focus their revision and prepare for the final exams.

Thank you to all involved.

The staff and students are working all out to ensure they are fully prepared and ready for this crucial period in their school lives and we look forward to celebrating their success this summer.

Social Media and Mobile Phone Policy

I have always been upfront and clear on my views of social media and mobile phone use in and outside of school. We still spend an unreasonably large amount of time dealing with the issues arising from misuse of both. Our recent student voice activity has only confirmed this concern. Social media continues to be the single biggest threat to the safety and wellbeing of young people in our care, yet we still see these used and accessed widely and without moderation.

You can find our new and updated mobile phone policy here:

<https://www.wrothamschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/MOBILE-PHONE-POLICY-2024-draft.pdf>

This document reflects the government's views and guidance on using mobile devices in schools and has been formed from staff and student feedback on the issue.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

We have just finished the first 4 week cohort of an in school CBT group put together by our Psychotherapist team for students who require this support. We collected anonymous feedback at the end of the first run of sessions and were truly overwhelmed by the positive feedback we received.

'I enjoyed having somewhere to talk about my problems without people judging me.'

'I have learnt how to cope with my anxiety by finding the negative thought and changing it into a positive one.'

'Something I have enjoyed is knowing I am not alone and that other people experience anxiety like me.'

'Something I will take from group is the coping strategies.'

'Something I have learnt is how to recognise my thoughts.'

'I most enjoyed learning the techniques and just being in group.'

'I will take forward everything I have learnt because it is helpful.'

Cohort 2 will start next week and this will be ongoing. If you feel your child would benefit from mental health and wellbeing support from our highly qualified team, please do not hesitate to contact the school safeguarding team at safeguarding@wrotham.kent.sch.uk

We also run lunchtime wellbeing clubs that are open to all at the following times:

- Lower School - Wednesday - 11:45- 12:30
- Upper School - Thursday - 1:00 - 1:45

These sessions are run by Collette Lambert, our qualified Psychotherapist, and will cover general advice and support for wellbeing and positive mental health.

Attendance in Schools

Since the pandemic, average attendance in schools has dropped by 5%. This means that on average 9 **more** days of school are lost per child each year of school. Over the course of their main schooling this will mean on average 45 more days are lost, per child.

Nationally attendance in the week before Easter was 89.6% in secondary schools.

In total this means over 10% of education is being missed each year, totalling 19 days/3.5 weeks per year, per child.

Wrotham School is no different and sees the same data and trends at our school.

Our attendance is currently 91% - 4 years ago this would have been 95 or 96% (there have been no school closure days this year for bad weather or strike action which wouldn't be counted either way).

These are scary statistics when you consider the damage this is causing to young people and their education. No amount of catch up of intervention will help this.

More frustratingly, this impact has not been seen anywhere near as strongly in grammar or private school. I hope that you find this as disturbing as I do as it suggests that our children/parents care less about their child's education than those families and I know this is not the case!

Even more worrying is when you consider this as a % and many of our students have 100% attendance meaning others attend school even less than this.

I know parents get grumpy when I turn down term time holiday requests and I also accept that the world has changed since the pandemic/cost of living crisis. But I would just like to reinforce how important it is to ensure your children are in school as much as is possible. By doing this we maximise and improve both learning and social skills that will be vital for future life.

Thank you for your support on this.

The national data can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools>

Careers

Canterbury Christ Church University Visit

On 5th February, we welcomed Canterbury Christ Church University who delivered a workshop to members of Year 13 who have applied for university.

The speaker took us through some top tips about how to make the most of university and the best ways for students to make friends and look after their wellbeing when they start and throughout their time at university. He then took them through how Student Finance works in more detail, as well as talking through other ways that they can access financial support - for example bursaries and scholarships. Students were able to ask questions, dispelling myths and reducing some of the anxiety that they may have about facing such a big transition.

The session was useful, practical, and very well received by Year 13 - as always, they were a credit to the school in the motivation, communication skills and respect that they demonstrated.

Careers Fair

On Wednesday 13th March, we had one of the largest events in the school calendar - the Wrotham School Careers Fair. This year we were fortunate to have welcomed 28 different exhibitors from a range of industries, sectors and education providers for taking the time to come and talk to our students in Year 9, 10, 11 and the sixth form.

Each year group had a different focus since they are all at different stages of their own careers:

- Year 9 were exploring their GCSE options and where different subjects might lead them in the future.
- Year 10 were finding out about post-16 routes, but also researching interview questions and processes to find out how best to impress when it's their turn.
- Year 11 were looking beyond their post-16 choices to find out what opportunities are available next.
- Year 12 were comparing university and apprenticeship options, and also looking for work experience where appropriate.
- Year 13 were exploring key concepts in the world of work beyond their studies, finding out about flexible working, the purpose of unions, the impact of AI on careers and more.

The exhibitors have been overwhelming in their positive feedback - they were all impressed by how prepared the students were, as well as how confidently they communicated and how open-minded they were about exploring new opportunities. Exhibitors were also very clear about how well supported they felt by the careers team and the support staff at the school including the site and catering teams. It was very easy to see how genuine they were in their praise - if any parents or carers know that their company or educational organisation would like to get involved for 2025, please sign up for notifications by emailing ahollinshead@wrotham.kent.sch.uk

As for the students - they had some fantastic feedback for us, especially regarding what they learned. Some of the comments are below and any students who haven't yet given us feedback for next year, please do log in to Morrisby and tell us how you found the event. This event takes over 6 months for Mrs Hollinshead and Mrs Cheval to plan, so your views are incredibly helpful. Overwhelmingly, students and exhibitors have asked for more space next year, which we are already taking account into with our planning so thank you!



WS WROTHAM SCHOOL CAREERS

What did you learn at the careers fair?

I have learned that I can take up summer work experience to enhance my CV and UCAS
Beth M-C

I learned the different ways border control deal with illegal smuggling
Ewan P

That a lot more jobs do apprenticeships than I realised
Aiden R

You can start volunteering at 14 for a lot of the companies
Sarah D

I learned about what different universities offered and the career paths you could take from there, as well as GCSE and A level advice
Will H

What GCSEs I need for the job I want.
Ollie G

I learned all about colleges and their expectations and also degrees in jobs
Lacey D

That each job is looking for different things.
Eva W

That there are conservation jobs in the Civil Service
Shae M

I learned that when you go for an interview you have to talk about more general things as well as what the job is about and why you'd like it.
Poppy G

I learned what are the most desirable skills employers/universities look for, how my skills can be used in the workplace (e.g IT is very applicable due to the need for cybersecurity)
David G

That not everything is about university or education to get a good job
Liam N

There is a whole team of people doing different things in the background of a company
Alex B

How to get work experience.
Holly S

There is more than expected when it comes to careers options
Jean-Loic S

I learned that in some university courses you can take placement years
Harry R

I learned the different things that different employers might want to see in me
Spencer H

Extra support for Year 11 families with what happens next

I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce our Year 11 families to Ed Panting, our Engagement Officer who works with The Education People and Kent County Council. He offers help and advice for students and their parents and carers, especially over the transition to their chosen post-16 destination or to find an appropriate place if they haven't yet found something suitable. It is his aim to support any young person to find the right place for them and he has been working with Mrs Hollinshead, our careers lead, throughout the year. He is already supporting some of our students who have nothing but positive things to say about him and the help he's offered.

If you or your child are struggling to identify an appropriate route or provider for when they've completed their GCSEs, you are welcome to contact him on the email address below - the service he offers is free and continues through Year 11 and Year 12, regardless of whether they remain at Wrotham School.

An introduction from Ed:

"Throughout my career I have demonstrated a passion to remove barriers to participation, support those who are vulnerable and raise aspirations for young people. This underpins the experiences I have gained over the past decade.

The Engagement Officer role has allowed me to utilise a blend of knowledge and skills to deliver purposeful and engaging assemblies, workshops, and interventions across West Kent. These sessions are targeted and proven to reduce the risk of a young person being NEET (not in education, employment or training) when leaving education, and my focus is promoting and identifying career paths, opportunities and developing a young person's employability skills.

Additionally, I aim to support the year 11 students through the summer terms and beyond with calls home to parents, carers and young people that can provide tailored support on guidance, applications, and interviews."

edward.panting@theeducationpeople.org

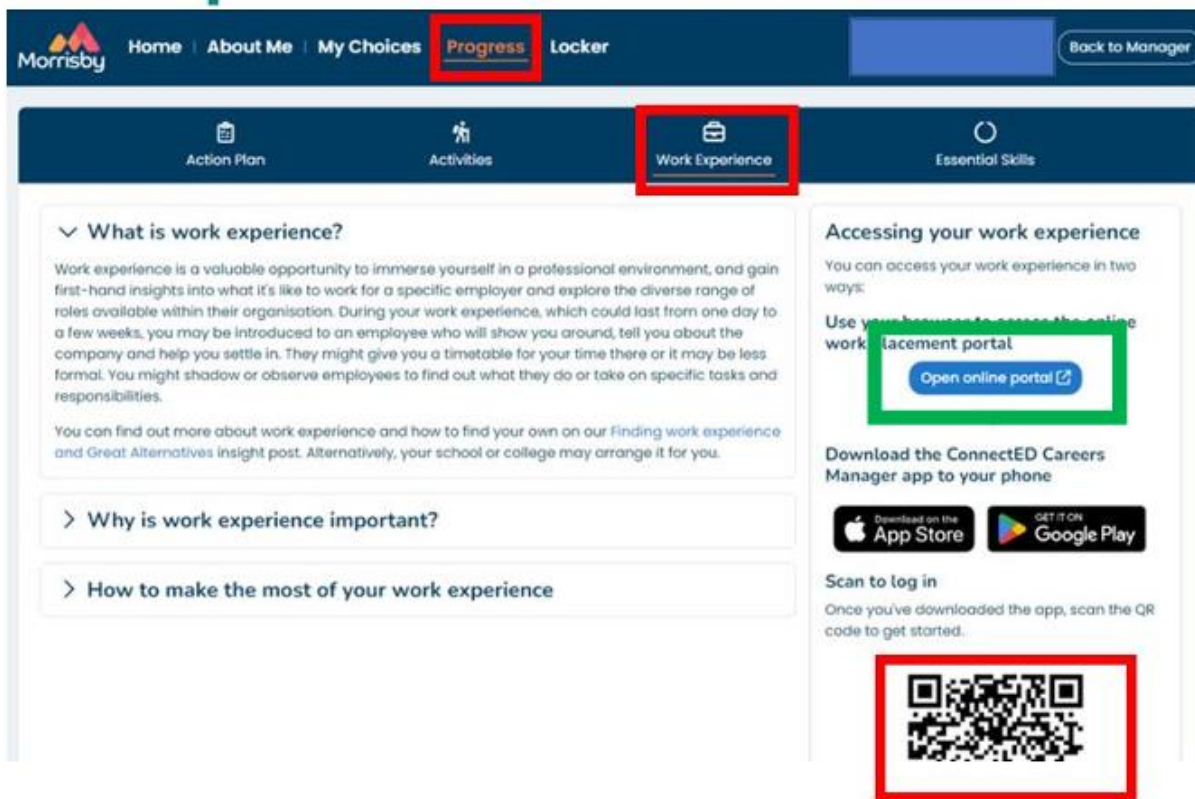
Getting ready for work shadowing day

Students in Year 8, 9 and 10 have all now had the opportunity to sign up to Morrisby, our online careers platform. As well as giving them incredibly personalised careers suggestions and information for their own research, they also get access to a record of all of their careers education at Wrotham School over the past two years since we started using Morrisby.

Most importantly, it means that they now have access to the portal that will help them submit details of their work shadowing day placements for Friday 12th July. A letter was sent out to all parents earlier this term, and a guide can be found at this link here:

<https://www.wrothamschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Work-Experience-Portal-Sign-Up-Guide-2024.pdf>

Mrs Hollinshead is working hard to catch up with any students who were absent on the days that their progress groups signed up, and they can ask their progress tutors for help if they need it. This includes resetting passwords.



Careers in Archaeology

On Thursday 7th March, we were very lucky for a small group of 16 students to have the opportunity to accompany archaeologists taking scans for a geophysical survey of part of the school grounds: this task had to be done as part of the preparations to start building the new school facilities. Most archaeological work in the UK takes place because of construction projects and is called 'developer-led archaeology'. A geophysical scan is completed and if they find any sites of interest, archaeologists then excavate and this process can lead to some fascinating discoveries.

We invited Year 9 members of the Key Stage 3 History Club, and opened the remaining places up to sixth form students who are considering careers or university courses in related fields. Our team didn't find any evidence of a hidden city or lost treasure, which was bad news for them, but good news for the new buildings since it means BAM can move forward with the first stage of the development without needing to give archaeologists time to identify, record and preserve archaeological remains.

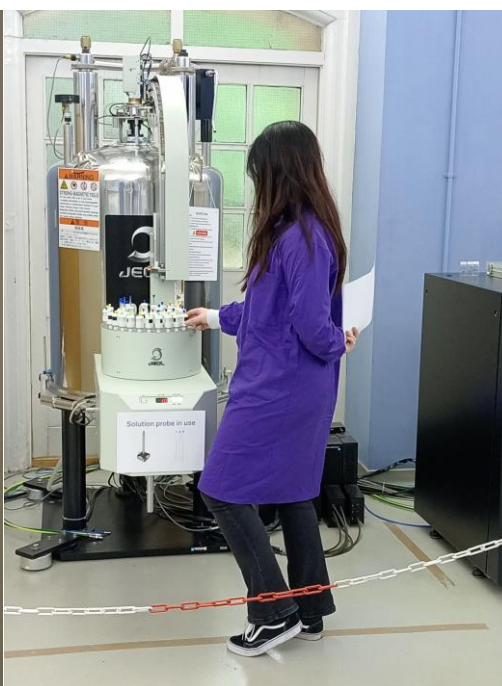
The students have all given some fantastic feedback and they were especially excited that they got the chance to use the equipment. In their comments, Poppy G said that she learned that 'archaeology needs you to not only write about, but also draw your findings even down to the colour and texture of the dirt.' And Miles D said that he found it 'very interesting to learn what archaeology really was'. When asked what could be improved, the students said they couldn't think of anything that could improve it so we'll take that as strong evidence that they had a fantastic time!

Our site manager, Mr Shearman, accompanied the group and arranged the activity with the support of BAM, the construction company who are responsible for the new build. They are very keen to get involved with careers education opportunities within the school community, already having attended our careers fair and offering work experience placements to Year 12 students, and there will be other workshops in the future as well.

Science Field Trips

Analytical Chemistry at Greenwich University

Year 13 students enjoyed a trip to Greenwich University recently, in order to carry out different types of analysis on samples of aspirin which they had made themselves during A-level practical work. The samples were tested by Infra-Red Spectroscopy, NMR spectroscopy and in a state-of-the-art Mass Spectroscopy unit. Students carried out all the sample preparation themselves and obtained results showing their aspirin to be pure and exactly what they expected. Students were motivated by seeing the equipment which they have learnt about in theory lessons, and now feel much more confident to apply their knowledge to questions about the techniques.



Biology Weekend!



Year 12 Biologists spent the weekend in Norfolk at the Kingswood Activity Centre, together with their counterparts from Aylesford School. The aim of the trip was to complete practical work required for their A level qualification, but students also took part in a range of team activities and enjoyed the beautiful surroundings of the site.

Holly and Elina enjoyed the activities, and showed great resilience in the blindfold obstacle course on Saturday night. They worked well as a team making sure everyone safely got through the tyres, bridges, tunnels and other obstacles. They also tried archery and bouldering, playing various games and practicing their new skills.

They all demonstrated motivation whilst standing in a cold river sampling the biodiversity and making readings of abiotic factors. Nick, Toby and Harry were first in the river and communicated well with their team on the bank to record their results. Back in the classroom, they produced graphs and tables of their results to bring back to school. We were all glad of a hot drink and the good food on offer after being outdoors all day.

Thanks very much to Mr Dawkins from Aylesford School for driving and allowing us to share this experience. A wonderful example of collaboration between our schools.

Sports Update

Football Fever

Our football teams have shown immense skill and determination once again this season, this year we have run 11 sides across a variety of competitions. We're proud to announce that our Year 7 and 8 boys teams have been particularly successful, reaching the semi-finals of the Maidstone Schools Premiership. These fixtures will take place over the coming weeks. Additionally, our Girls' Football teams have been actively engaged in regular fixtures, demonstrating their commitment to the sport and their development as footballers.

Netball Champions

In the realm of netball, our Year 8/9 team emerged victorious in the Maidstone Schools tournament, securing a well-deserved win for our school as we defended the title which they won last year. Not to be outdone, our Year 7 team displayed exceptional prowess, clinching third place in the competition, only losing out to the two girls grammar schools.

Basketball Brilliance

Our basketball team has been diligently preparing for upcoming tournaments and fixtures throughout the term. Their dedication and hard work in training sessions are sure to pay off as they step onto the court to represent Wrotham with pride over the coming weeks.

Charity Champions

In the spirit of giving back, we recently hosted a charity inter-house football tournament for our Year 7 students. With an impressive turnout of 70 footballers, our students raised an incredible £500 for Macmillan Cancer Support. This remarkable display of generosity and camaraderie truly embodies the values of our school community.

School Sports Tour – Limburg, The Netherlands:



Over the Easter Break we organised the first overseas sports trip since the pandemic. 55 students from Year 8 and 9 headed to The Netherlands to represent our school in Football, Basketball and Netball. All of our teams performed brilliantly but our Year 9 A team made us particularly proud by clinching victory in the Under 15 tournament, playing “up a year”.

The B team showcased their skills with a commendable second-place finish in the Under 13 championship tournament. In addition to the football, our Netball and Basketball teams performed brilliantly against both English and European opposition.

Alongside thrilling sports competitions, our students enjoyed a variety of other activities including swimming, theme park adventures, mini golf and ten-pin bowling, fostering friendships and unforgettable memories along the way.

Here's too many more victories and unforgettable moments in the world of sports at Wrotham School.

Coming Up:

- Year 7 camping evening
- Bewl Water trip
- Wimbledon Tennis visit (limited to 10 places awarded on merit)
- Year 11 and 13 exams season
- Character Awards evening
- New parent/student welcome evening
- Year 10 parents evening
- Transition Events

And much more!

Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'M Cater', written in a cursive style.

Mr M Cater
Headteacher