

BETHS VIP

Excellence - Community - Respect - Nurture

MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Dear Parents, Carers,



We say goodbye to the 2022-2023 academic year with a jam-packed term.

So far this term, albeit 7 weeks, we managed to host events such as the Arts Festival in Bexley Village's Freemantle Hall for the first time, and I'm pleased to say we will be back there again next year. Our Summer Music concerts which our Year 13 students came back to perform at and the second Sports

Presentation Evening which took place earlier this month had Charlton's Richard Chin (and former Beths student) as the guest speaker. Key Stage 3 had their drop-down days where they learnt cookery and enterprise skills. After three years (due to Covid) we saw the return of Year 8 Camp! Our students enjoyed a memorable time in the New Forest, learning cooking and food hygiene skills as well as outbound skills. We were glad to be able to bring back trips again and look forward to more in the new academic year.

We are pleased to announce that our LGBTQ pride group came 2nd place in the 'Just Like Us' awards ceremony out of 300 pride groups across the UK!

Our Multicultural Committee ran their first Multicultural Showcase last week, which even the rain couldn't dampen the spirits of the performers, showcasing attires from across the globe. With food samples



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from various countries and music played, the event was a great success, and we are proud of our students for setting up this initiative and making it happen.

We could not end the year without a Sixth Form Prom! Photos are within this VIP and I'm told the students all had a great evening!

A reminder for students returning in September:

- Friday 1st September = Staff Training Day (no students)
- Monday 4th September = Year 7 (arriving at 10am) and Year 12 (arriving at 11am)
- Tuesday 5th September = All year groups in at normal time.

I will send another communication out before school returns in September, but for now, I wish you all a wonderful, relaxing and enjoyable summer break.

Kind regards,
Richard Blyghton



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MCC SHOWCASE

On Friday 14th July, Beths Multicultural Committee held their first multicultural showcase. It was a night full of beautiful cultural celebrations including, music, performances, spoken word, food and even a cultural catwalk! Well done for all your hard work, the event was wonderful, we look forward to many more in the future !



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YEAR 13 PROM 2023

On Friday 7th July, we saw the return of Year 13 prom. Students had a fantastic time as they celebrated the end of exams and their time at Beths. We hope you all had a marvellous evening and we wish you all the best for the future.

Congratulations and well done to the prom committee for all their hard work.



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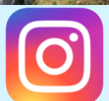
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YEAR 8 CAMP

This year saw the return of Year 8 Camp, over the course of two weeks, two Year 8 groups took turns in going to New Forest Farm. Students had a phenomenal time, and learnt a lot of new skills! They participated in a range of activities including team building, swimming, hiking, fun games and even took turns cooking for each other!



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YEAR 8 DT STEM PROJECT

While one group of students were at camp, the other group made chairs out of newspaper as part of a STEM project. The strength of the chair was put to the test by staff, the heavier the staff member that could sit on the chair, the more points score!



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YEAR 7 READY STEADY COOK

On Tuesday 18th July, our Year 7 students participated in the School Food Showdown. This was an opportunity for students to learn about what makes a healthy meal and how to cook them. One team made rice with chicken and the other team made a stir fry. Students had to vote what team cooked the best meal! Congratulations to both teams for your yummy food!



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YEAR 7 ENTERPRISE DAY

Our Year 7 students participated in an enterprise activity day. They created a marketing campaign, designed and developed a product prototype for a new cards related board game and present their ideas to the rest of their form and year group. They were judged based on a range of categories including ideas, creativity, pricing, marketing etc. Congratulations to Wickam for winning



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JUST LIKE US AWARDS

On Thursday 13th June, we arrived at Charing Cross at 6:15pm and walked along the Embankment to the JP Morgan & Chase building (who also sponsored the event). When we arrived at the JP Morgan building, we were greeted by Frankie from 'Just Like Us', a LGBTQ+ youth charity, who told us how the evening was going to run, where the gender neutral toilets were and took us to a quiet room where we could spend time colouring and communicating with the other schools from South Wales and Dorset.

When the time reached 7:30 we went into the award room where the main event took place. During the ceremony, there was spectacular food from burgers to cakes and there were well recognised icons in attendance such as Corinna Brown and Tobie Donovan (from the cast of Heartstopper), Megan Jayne Crabbe, Char Bailey, Layton Williams and more. During the event there was music which included a performance from Keanan, jokes, speeches and everyone chanting 'Trans people are loved'. Throughout the evening there were many spectacular awards given out such as the 'Inclusive Teacher of the Year' and 'Pride Group of the Year' for which we were nominated (Beths Grammar came 2nd!). - **By Kai W**



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JUST LIKE US AWARDS

I am so incredibly proud of all of the hard work, dedication and courage of these young people! They represented Beths admirably and we are very grateful to have received a very prestigious second place out of hundreds of schools. It was lovely to see some of the ambassadors that have been delivering speeches at Beths this year as well as an unexpected introduction to an ex-student of Beths, who couldn't believe that there was a Pride Group at the school! Every day, these young people show up as their authentic selves and their courage, resilience and joy constantly inspires me in my role and as a human being. Slowly but surely, we are changing the culture of Beths where it is safe and possible for everyone to be who they are and where compassion, respect and celebration are at the heart of our school culture, regardless of background and identity! Let's aim for 1st place next year, team! - **By Ms Harris**



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MY EXPERIENCE AS A YEAR 7 STUDENT BY FAEQ 7B

For me, joining Beths as a student felt nerve-wracking, yet immense. Just like others within the community, the family they belong to would have some history with the school through older or younger siblings. To me, it seems as though there are these many expectations that I must live up to so I can fly the flag for my family.

Reflecting on how the year has gone, I feel like I am meeting many expectations already and I am slowly marching my way towards some more of them. Stepping into a new school can feel like entering a whole new world at the same time, but as life goes on, you continue to adapt to your new place. As a Year 7, you meet new people, yet make new friends as well, along with collecting many memories. During this year, I have been feeling more secure, not forgetting that I have also had to take on more responsibility, just like the 191 students around me. It can potentially be a struggle, but you have a wide variety of people around you that are willing to give you support.

I have been thinking about being organised a lot during this year. Others may interpret differently, but for me, it is part of the recipe for having as good a day as you can. The recipe also consists of behaving like you did in primary, or even exceeding that behaviour, and conducting yourself to a secondary school standard. That may seem easy, but it is harder than it may look. Being involved in many house competitions while representing Brampton seems different to an Eardley perspective. My older brother was here and achieved many things, including the prestigious Colours award. However, I feel proud of being in a mini community that forms a community that has not won the House Cup since 2014.

My brother has had an impact on the history of the school, and I feel like I can do the same as well. Heading into Year 8 next year, it feels as though it is “a fresh start. A new chapter in life waiting to be written. New questions to be asked, embraced, and loved. Answers to be discovered and then lived” in what will be a “transformative year of delight and self discovery.” I feel like the weight of my brother’s 7 years here will be on my shoulders. Though it is possible for me to emulate him. No pressure



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STUDENT SUCCESS

The MFL department is extremely proud to announce that Mustafa A in 10H has won the coveted Oxford University Prize for 'Flash Fiction' in Spanish in June. He has written a few lines below about his entry and the process. ¡Enhorabuena Mustafa!

Spanish flash fiction competition

By Mustafa A 10H

Oxford University conducted a contest at the end of 2022 that focused on creating a piece of "Flash Fiction" (literature with 100 words or less).

What's Flash fiction?

"Flash fiction" is a condensed, short story of between 5 and 1,500 words.

Firstly, I need to find out that the term 'flash fiction' meant. I was given the above definition, which was not the most detailed! I had never written flash fiction and had no idea what Oxford University meant when they used the term. So I took the decision to learn more about the many forms of flash fiction and various instances of them.

The contest: What it consisted of:

Around 700 people submitted applications for the "Oxford University Spanish Flash Fiction" competition. The MFL department posted a note on Satchel One explaining what the event entailed and what you would need to submit. Upon seeing this, I made the decision to attempt submitting something, and over the course of the following hour, I thought about and wrote the work I eventually titled "El jardín de mi cuerpo" (The garden from my body).



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STUDENT SUCCESSSS

How I won the Prize: The process I went through

I started to come up with writing topics, and I discovered that coming up with a title for my work and utilising it as a prompt helped the most. I am currently reading the Spanish book "Yo no soy tu perfecta hija mexicana" by Erika Sanchez, and I also like to listen to Spanish-language musicians like Kali Uchis and Rosalía. I've been able to learn more about the language by exposing myself to new terms and expressions while doing this.

El jardín de mi cuerpo by Mustafa A

La serenidad me invadió en cuanto entré en el bosque: era una zona preciosa donde el sol brillaba a través de las hojas y los árboles se erguían altos y orgullosos. Entré en el bosque, caminando por un sendero sinuoso mientras una brisa cálida me acariciaba la cara.

Mi cuerpo se había entumecido a medida que avanzaba por el sendero, como si estuviera borracho de vino. Mis piernas se habían vuelto rígidas y mis pensamientos parecían haberse quedado en blanco: mi cuerpo se había vuelto leñoso y duro. Estaba encadenado para siempre a este jardín.

Translation: "The garden from my body" by Mustafa A

Serenity invaded me as soon as I entered the forest - it was a beautiful zone where the sun shone through the leaves and the trees stood tall and proud. I entered the forest, walking along a winding path whilst a warm breeze caressed my face.

My body had grown numb while I advanced along the path, as if I were drunk on wine. My legs turned rigid and my thoughts seemed to have gone blank - my body had turned woody and hard. I was forever chained to this garden.



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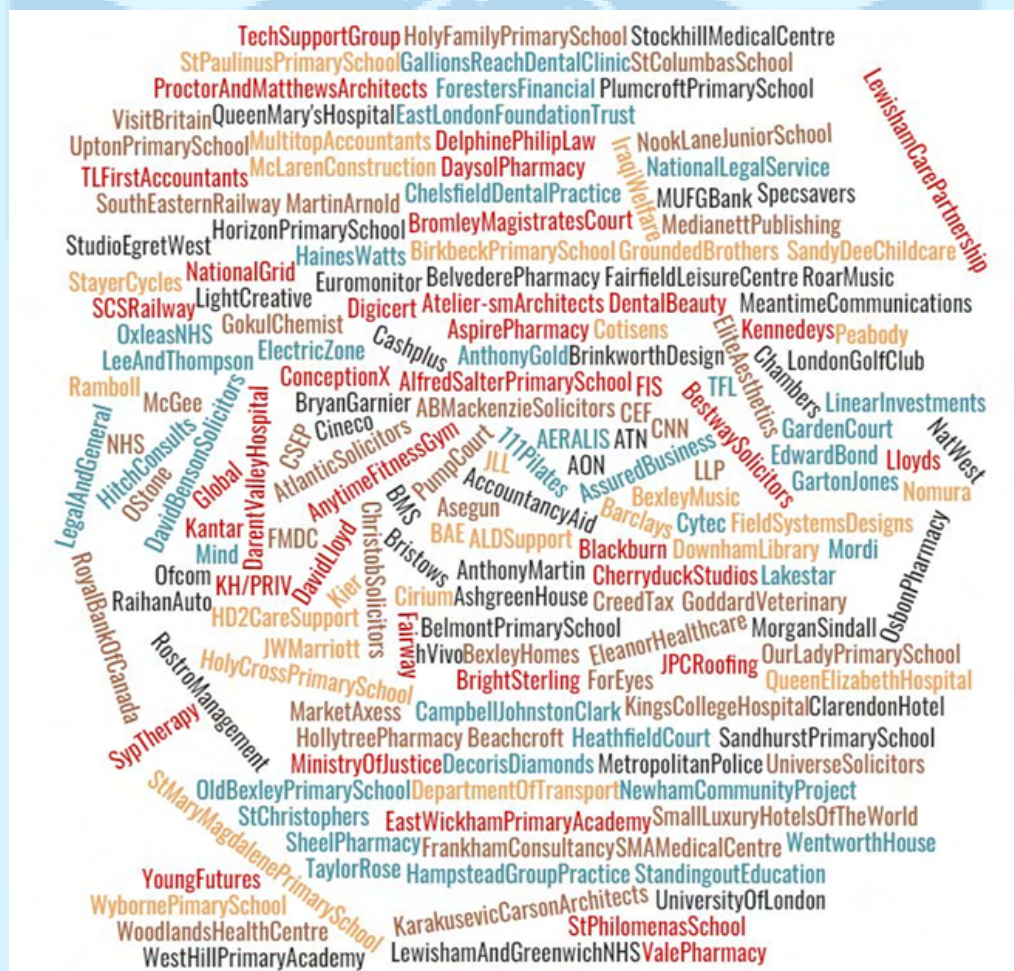
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CAREERS TEAM

YEAR 12 WORK EXPERIENCE

At Beths we believe a period of work-related learning not only gives students the chance to see what a real working environment is like, but also gives them an opportunity to develop key skills that they will need in their working lives. For some students it is also a chance for them to sample a possible future career direction. 238 students from Year 12 found an in-person work experience placement during the designated work experience week of 3 to 7 July 2023. 10 students did in-person work experience on a different week with permission of the school which means that 70% of our Year 12 students had first-hand experience of a workplace in July.

Employers There were 207 separate employers who hosted work experience placements for our students during designated work experience week.



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CAREERS TEAM

YEAR 12 WORK EXPERIENCE

It's been great to receive positive feedback from employers regarding our students:

- When discussing creative concepts, she made some great suggestions that were included in the final pitch proposal.
- A number of people that W met commented to me that he was alert, bright and inquisitive in their sessions. He drew on knowledge and experience gained in previous discussions to ask thoughtful questions and demonstrated a strong ability to onboard and retain knowledge on complex subject matter which can be challenging, even for an experienced colleague.
- His presentation was coherent, confident and succinct, using industry level key-terms to emphasise his points.
- J very quickly grasped architectural concepts and was able to solve key aesthetic and technical design problems through his meticulous model making.
- Really showed a dedication and attention to detail that will serve him well in the future.
- Showed great enthusiasm in the lesson he planned and delivered. He had a fantastic motivational manner which engaged his pupils.
- He showed an interest in everything, asked intelligent questions and listened to the answer. He is a great communicator . . . really articulate.
- An incredibly friendly and supportive member of our classroom who did loads in her short time with us.



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CAREERS TEAM

YEAR 12 WORK EXPERIENCE

Students were asked to describe one thing that they learnt through doing the placement:

- The workplace isn't as scary as it seems. The people there were very caring and always willing to help. Everyone has a job that has to be done . . it's like a chain where each stage has to go according to plan.
- You have to maintain a degree of professionalism.
- I learnt better social skills and how to interact better with people.
- I got to gain an understanding how versatile engineering could be.

We also asked students How doing the placement impacted on your plans for the future

- This placement has made me even more determined to read Law at university and become a solicitor.
- After seeing how much [the company] care about their apprentices and how well they support and educate them I am very interested in pursuing a degree apprenticeship with them in engineering.
- This has encouraged me to seriously think about engineering as a work route in the future.
- This experience helped me understand the world of finance and has given me a good baseline understanding about getting into this industry after my A levels.
- I would say with certainty that this placement has dramatically manipulated my thought process regarding my career path. Initially I was unsure about pursuing law as a career but after the first-hand experience and direct involvement I've had with the profession and the operation that the job emails it has granted me the insight to do law following my degree at university.



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CAREERS TEAM

CAREERS FAIR THURSDAY 13TH JULY

- Insightful and knowledgeable offering information regarding both workplaces and other opportunities. (DG, 10E)
- Showed me some ideas about my future that I hadn't considered (OW, 9B)
- Students from years 9, 10 and 12 visited our Careers Fair on Thursday 13th July. The Careers Fair is a great way to start exploring options, making professional contacts and learn about the vast range of opportunities that are open to our students.
- IT WAS SO GOOD! I got a great insight on what subjects can keep your doors open, what I need to do for Psychology and how big the campus for universities are. (KP, 9C)
- Amongst the 34 exhibitors were thirteen universities, including Russell Group universities (Birmingham, Nottingham, Southampton and Warwick) plus representatives from the University of London (Royal Holloway and City), and the universities of Greenwich, Loughborough, Reading, Portsmouth, Leicester, Lancaster and Lincoln.
- The University of Birmingham . . were very helpful and gave me a good overview to what studying history would be like there and what the university specifically offers. (VK, 6C1, Year 12)
- University of Lincoln. . . showed extensively how we can research the course we would like to study on their actual website. (JC, 6C1, Year 12)



- University of Warwick . . . gave me a lot of insight into the degree I'm looking to complete without being able to attend an open day. Also shared resources on how to better tailor our personal statement to my field of choice. (CA, 6C1, Year 12)



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CAREERS TEAM

CAREERS FAIR THURSDAY 13TH JULY

- There were also Further and Higher Education providers including Lewisham, London South East and Rose Bruford Colleges, the London Institute of Banking and Finance and TEDI (The Engineering and Design Institute).
- Both Lewisham and Darenth Valley Hospitals brought a range of medical specialists, including speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, nurses, a podiatrist, dietician and occupational health officer.
- I enjoyed talking too the Lewisham and Greenwich NHS stall as they showed me roles in the NHS I didn't know existed (e.g speech therapy) (CL, 10A)
- I had the opportunity to speak with a paediatrician who provided me with valuable insights into their profession and offered career advice. They emphasized the need for compassion, empathy, and patience when dealing with young patients and their parents, as well as the ability to explain medical information in a clear and understandable manner. I found their advice on having a solid foundation in education and profession routes really interesting and I feel like I learnt a lot about the profession. (YA, Careers Prefect, 10H)



- The practicals were engaging and creative (AS, 9C)
- The nurses . . . were very engaging whilst talking to and I even learnt how to do CPR. (JN, 9A)



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CAREERS TEAM

CAREERS FAIR THURSDAY 13TH JULY

- I really enjoyed the hospital exhibit . . . I got some excellent advice and answers. I was told what to put on my CV and how to handle an interview and what was important in an interview. I also got an insight into the working world and its competitiveness. (SM, 9C)
- Reflecting the aspirations of Beths students there were employers across a wide range of sectors: Medicine, Finance, Engineering and Construction, Hospitality, and Public Services including the RAF). Our Careers Adviser, Maria Elia, from Prospects also provided individual guidance for students across the year groups.
- I enjoyed the TEDI booth to see what I can do with an engineering skill. (SH, 10B)



The National Grid . . . explained different ways to get into their company e.g. apprenticeship and the different fields within their company that are available. (DS, 10A)

- I spoke predominantly with the Rapley's exhibitor. I found out a lot of information about the things they do and their work experience placements, also how they offer apprenticeships and how they can sponsor your university degree. (SA-R, Careers Prefect, 10W).
- Reflection from EL, Careers Prefect, 10H: The Beths Careers Fair is a fantastic event to meet new people whilst discovering future pathways. As an aspiring software engineer, I spoke to several top 20 UK universities as well as the industry leading employers: Ernst & Young and National Grid Group. I gained a valuable insight into the computing industry through friendly, passionate and supportive representatives who introduced the hundreds of opportunities ahead of me. Additionally, I was thrilled to learn that



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CAREERS TEAM

CAREERS FAIR THURSDAY 13TH JULY

- numerous computing courses provide an option to study abroad, where my current intention is to complete a computing degree with a year abroad in Hong Kong. This would lead to an excellent experience living in a different country, learning about new cultures and languages. All in all, the event serves as a way to gain a clear understanding of your future as well as many free items!
- The feedback from exhibitors was extremely positive with 97% rating the Careers Fair Excellent or Good. Every exhibitor said that our students were very engaged or engaged, and all of them said that they were extremely or very likely to attend another event at Beths in the future.

Here are some comments from exhibitors at the Careers Fair:

- Good range of year groups.
- Thank you for the fab communication prior to the event and such lovely, friendly and welcoming staff!
- Some very good, thoughtful conversations.
- Lots of learners were very engaging and respectful.
- In comparison to other schools the younger years were much more engaged with the fair.
- Very good questions from all age groups - very mature and well behaved students.



The event provided a valuable platform to interact with diverse exhibitors and gain insights into different industries and career paths. It was exciting to see the range of opportunities available, and it has certainly broadened my perspective on potential career choices. (AA, Careers Prefect, 10H)



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BEST OF THE BETHS STUDENT NEWSLETTER

Best of the Beths student newsletter June Special Sports Issue is now available to view on our website <https://www.beths.bexley.sch.uk/page/?title=Best+of+the+Beths+Newsletter&pid=403>. This month's issue includes; 200m: My Experience by Joshua 9B, Horse Riding with Ms Takeda by Dev 9B, Year 8 Relay by Noah 8W and much much more!



Sports Day Highlights and Interview with Mr Beaney By Gabriel 8W

On Thursday 15th June, we had our annual Sports Day: where each of the houses competed to determine the most athletic one. Overall, this day was a massive success with people from across the houses expressing how much they enjoyed it.



The Key Stage 3 events commenced with a lively start, showing Wickham enthusiastically cheering on their Year 7 athletes competing in the 100m track event. Meanwhile, the Year 7s also competed in their tug of war event which Brampton won the majority of.

The 4x100m relays that occurred after all of the Year 7 track events had finished could only be described as exhilarating! Many of the heats came down to split-second differences, showing how close the competition was. Ultimately, however, Abbey managed to win a majority of the races, securing victory for their A & C teams.

After the Year 7s had finished their track events, many of the Year 8s were eager to begin. Wickham started off strong in the 200m sprints – with Jayden & Mylo accomplishing first place. This was met with fierce competition from the other houses in the 100m, 300m, 800m, and 1500m events.

In the Year 8 tug of war, Cray managed to level the playing field – as well as their opponents – by becoming victorious in both their A & B teams.

Following these events were the 4x100m relays, in which everyone displayed both great athleticism and sportsmanship. All of those competing gave their best in the relay and were in turn given a massive round of applause. In total, Wickham managed to win most of the races, securing first place for their A, B & C teams.

Well done everyone!

A table of the top three houses (according to the rankings) in Year 7 & 8:

Year 7	Year 8
1st— ABBEY	1st— WICKHAM
2nd— BRAMPTON	2nd— BRAMPTON
3rd— WICKHAM	3rd— ABBEY

Sports Day Banners By Eoin 7C

When doing Sports Day this year, the "sport" part in Sports Day really does give the game away from what it is. However, the sport is not the only thing that students at Beths Grammar School have been up to! When running or throwing, you would have noticed the huge banners flapping around. They were rather big. Not only did this show support to the houses, but it was also a competition. The official rankings for the banners were: 1) Brampton 2) Eardley 3) Wickham 4) Abbey 5) Cray 6) Hurst (For not producing a banner, so the year 8's made theirs). However, this is not the popular opinion on these banners. My opinion was that:

1) Brampton

Brampton's Fiery dragon was highlighting the BOLD in their values: brilliant, brave, bold. The use of different fabrics really brings out the diversity of their form and of the school, all next to each other, unifying different races, beliefs, and cultures that Brampton has.



2) Wickham

Whilst portraying around the form 7W, they did show that they truly identify as Wickham and that they are together (As shown by the handprints) and they really like their form tutor because she was mentioned a fair few times! (If you REALLY want to know, its twice, but I wanted you to look at the picture and see a whole lot of people looking at the camera after I said "Smile")



3) Cray

Cray may not have been the flashiest, but it was by far the most thought-provoking. The banner's little shards presented the names of the members of forms 7C, 8C and 9C. This was a smashing success, and the way it was presented was fantastic. I cannot say the only good things about it, or I may be proclaimed as "Biased" because it was my form who created this banner, or because of me being on the creative team, so I have just one singular fault. The banner would have looked a bit more cohesive if it was all in the same style, but furthermore it looks very presentable. Well done Cray!!



Year 8 Field Events By Marley 8W

On Thursday 15th of June, Beths Grammar School held their yearly sports day. There were various events such as track, field, tug of war and relay. There was great competition in the field events with lots of close competitions.

Discuss

Discuss was a very close and competitive game. The top three were:

1st - Osasere Roberts for Hurst

2nd - Finn Horgan for Brampton

3rd - Ethan Makambe for Cray

Luca Schneider said that his opponents were much better than he expected and he personally felt that he under performed.



High Jump

High jump is a very difficult sport to master but everyone still tried their best. The top 3 for this event were

1st - Emmanuel Nim 8C

2nd - Fegor Arutogh 8B

3rd - Ethan Wong 8E

Issac Oke from 8E said the competition started easy but then increased in difficulty as the competition went on. There was lots of healthy competition, it was very impressive.

Overall, the year 8 field events were amazing and everyone performed to their fullest. Lucas De Villiers from Hurst had a massive 30 cm lead in Shot Put. Omar Bekhoukh said it was very exciting.

Well done everyone! You all did amazing.



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BEST OF THE BETHS STUDENT NEWSLETTER

Best of the Beths student newsletter July issue is now available to view on our website <https://www.beths.bexley.sch.uk/page/?title=Best+of+the+Beths+Newsletter&pid=403>. This month's issue includes; Bletchley Park school visit by Ronnie 10H, The 4th July by Nathaniel 10A, Sports Awards by Alastair 9H and Wicked the musical review.




Why You Should Do DofE

By Damilola 10H

Two weekends ago (8-9th June), my half of the year went on their final Duke of Edinburgh expedition, and it was a great experience to say the least and I highly recommend that anyone who is up to a challenge or wants to build qualities such as leadership and perseverance should definitely participate.

There are three sections of the Bronze DofE Qualification; Volunteering, where you help your community or environment, Physical, where you do a sport or physical activity and Skills, where you develop an expertise for a specific activity that isn't physical. In this article I'm going to focus more on the things I learnt on my expedition but for the other three sections, two must be done for three months and one for six. More information on this can be found on <https://www.dofe.org/dofe-sections/>. For Volunteering I did Sports Leadership where me and other sports leaders in the year group organised events for the local community such as primary school tournaments which helped us build our teamwork as we had to communicate clearly to each other and children.




The expedition consists of 2 days of walking, approximately 16km on each one, and an overnight stay at the campsite. In my opinion, the walking wasn't too bad and that's due to my team's preparation. We made sure to get lifts for each other to the starting points and had more than enough food between us. To add to this most of us had synthetic clothes instead of cotton so they could dry quicker. I, however, had a showerproof winter jacket from Mountain Warehouse which wasn't sufficient to protect me from the treacherous rainfall, so we had to hide under some trees for cover and eat our lunch. To add to this, correct rucksacks and appropriate footwear is essential if you want maximum comfort. I followed the DofE recommendations and only experienced mild aches at the end of the day at the campsite.


My Review Of Wimbledon

By Riley 10W

At the time of writing on Friday 14th July, the semifinals of the Men and Women's competition at Wimbledon have just concluded. After thirteen days of whirlwind tennis action, we are down to the grand finals. On Saturday, sixth seed Ons Jabeur will face the unseeded Marketa Vondrousova, with both women bidding to win their first Wimbledon title. On Sunday, defending champion Novak Djokovic takes on world number one Carlos Alcaraz. Djokovic is going for his eighth Wimbledon, whilst Alcaraz will attempt to win his first. The finals will be very closely contested between some of the world's best players competing for one of the most prestigious honours that the sport has to offer. In this article, I will review how these finalists have made it through the rounds and give my prediction as to who will win.



The women's draw threw up plenty of surprises throughout the tournament, with Marketa Vondrousova making a brilliant run to the finals. The Czech world number forty-two defeated Ukrainian Elina Svitolina in the semifinals and fourth seed Jessica Pegula en route to her second grand slam final. Vondrousova was able to take control of the first set of her semi-final match against Svitolina, achieving a break of serve to win the first set 6-3. She managed to use that momentum to race to a 4-0 lead in the second set. However, Svitolina fought back well, making two breaks of serve to claw back to 4-3. It wasn't quite enough though, as Vondrousova remained composed to win the match 6-3 6-3. Svitolina was also unseeded in the tournament, and the Ukrainian beat four former grand slam champions including the world number one Iga Swiatek during her run to the semis.



Life In Russia: 17 Months On

By Victor 10H

'Don't be mad at the mirror if you are ugly.' - Vladimir Putin

On the 24th of July 2023, it will be 17 months after the military invasion by Russian Forces in Ukraine – that's just over 500 days of bloody fighting between a seemingly unstoppable attack and an immovable line of defence. As what happens to any country at war, life changes for the ordinary person.

The sanctions levied on Russia by Western countries has crippled the European energy market, leaving many Brits, as well as greater Europe, in desperation trying to pay increased energy prices, as well as higher food prices and mortgage rates inflating through the roof right now. This has been an attempt by the West to break Russia's economy, regardless of collateral damage to civilians on both sides of the sanctions, in order to run the Eastern Bear out of money to fund its campaign in Ukraine.

Sanctions on Russia not only include obvious ones such as barring military technology to enter the vast country, but also discouraging consumer brands, such as Unilever, McDonald's and KFC from having business in the country. The vast majority of brands have either shut down their shops in Russia or sold them to domestic firms. For example, KFC has sold all of its Russian venues to a Russian company, who will rebrand the chain to Russian-made 'Rostik's', a brand prevalent in 1990s Russia, at the height of its economic depression, a company which stopped being able to compete with the Western giants around the mid-2000s. In McDonald's case, a similar thing has happened, and prices now are lower than they were under the Western Thumb; this seems like more a win for the average Russian, as Western governments and the foreign companies lose fortunes in lost revenue and asset write-down. Other Western consumer commodities, such as iPhones, have also been forced to adhere to the sanctions. Although on paper, Apple no longer sells products to Russia, the situation on the ground paints a very different picture. Western Products are sent across the border and sold to Russians at a slightly higher price – Drop-shipping at its core. Of course, it is riskier and slightly more expensive to buy Western goods nowadays in Russia, but nonetheless it's easy to obtain what you want. Once again, the biggest cost goes to the Western companies, and thus the government and its people through lost tax revenue. Something that has affected me personally, as a Russian-Ukrainian individual, is the European ban on direct travel to and from Russia. The only way is to fly through non-sanctioning countries such as Egypt or Turkey, which costs a fortune to the average Russian with family in European countries. All this seems to do is reinforce the idea of Russian isolation and the Western enemy, as they try to rip apart families living on both sides of the block.



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KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE ONLINE

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many apps which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

WAPP

AGE RESTRICTION
12+
on the App Store:
'Everyone' on Google Play

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Developed in Germany, this social networking app is called 'W App' in the Apple Store and Google Play but is also branded as 'Slay' in some territories. Aimed primarily at teens and marketed as a 'zero-negativity' zone, it asks users to connect with others from their school. They are then asked a positive question (such as 'Who is the nicest person?') and shown four people from their school to choose from. All users from a school can appear in the poll: not just those a child is friends with. The app is mainly anonymous – but does offer clues to reveal who selected you for each question.

FAKE ACCOUNTS

There is no verification when signing up to W App. Once someone joins, they can see all users at their school and add them if they wish. Users provide their name, gender, school and grade – but are also able to change these (aside from their name) as often as they like. This concerned our expert: predators could potentially keep attempting to build connections with children at different schools.

PROFILE OVERSHARING

Young people tend to have multiple social media accounts, so it's vital their identity is protected online. By default, W App shares someone's school and grade, while users choose whether to share their full name, photo and other social accounts. Most people appear to select this – making it easier for someone to build up a picture of who they are, what they enjoy and where they go to school.

SPAMMING CONTACTS

The app's activity feed notifies a user when they have been put forward for a poll. They're then given the option to reveal the initial of the person who nominated them, by inviting a friend to join the app. The friend doesn't have to sign up, but they will receive a 'get the app now' text, followed by a link. This process could result in texts being continually sent to a child's contacts.

CATFISHING RISKS

As well as invented fake accounts, users could also sign up and pretend to be someone else from their school. By joining under another person's name (possibly with their photo), they can take part in polls while masquerading as that other person. Some polls hint at an attraction or crush, which – if deliberately misused by imposters – could result in misunderstandings and embarrassment for teens.

SUBSCRIPTION COSTS

W App is free to download and use, but there is also a 'gold membership' package (costing £4.99 per week) available. Subscribing allows users to reveal the names of people who selected them in polls (slightly defeating the point of it being an anonymous app), gives unlimited hints and offers exclusive play modes – all of which may tempt a curious young user into spending their money.

REPEATED USE

Like most other social media platforms, W App wants users to log in regularly. Every time someone completes a set of 12 polls, they earn virtual coins. These can be cashed in for perks such as being included in random polls (so that more users will see them) or adding their name to their crush's poll. This may not seem much of an incentive currently, but that may alter as the app evolves.

Advice for Parents & Carers

DISCUSS FRIEND REQUESTS

Talk to your child about the risk of sharing their other social accounts, especially on anonymous platforms where there is no verification – so a user could be anyone. If someone they don't normally talk to at school approaches your child via W App and suggests connecting on TikTok, Snapchat or Instagram, emphasise that it's safest to confirm it with that person face to face before accepting or replying.

BE MINDFUL OF REJECTION

The polls in W App are designed to be complimentary rather than negative. However, never being nominated or picked by their peers could leave a child – especially a status-conscious teen – feeling ignored and isolated. If you think that W App is having this effect on your child, it might be time for a supportive reminder that social media doesn't reflect someone's true worth or popularity.

PROTECT PERSONAL INFORMATION

It's crucial that trusted adults regularly remind children about the importance of not sharing too much of their personal information online (and demonstrate it on their own social accounts, where possible). W App automatically displays the user's school on their profile – but if your child does want to use the app, you can advise them to only enter their first name and not to upload an image of their face.

DO SOME 'APP ADMIN'

Before letting your child download W App, you may want to (via their device's settings) disable the option to make in-app purchases: £4.99 per week for the subscription can soon mount up. Likewise, if a friend's use of W App is causing your child to be inundated with texts inviting them to sign up too, you could suggest asking that friend to stop selecting your child's name from their contacts list.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



Source: <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/w-app-anonymous-polls/id1645858941> | <https://www.slay.co.uk/> | <https://techcrunch.com/2023/01/19/german-teens-went-crazy-for-this-compliments-app-and-now-we-are-backing-its-next-phase/>

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