



Watford Grammar School for Boys Headmaster's Newsletter

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[Friends of the School](#)

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office@watfordboys.org

[@WBGSExcellence](https://www.instagram.com/WBGSExcellence)

www.watfordboys.org

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Update from the Headmaster

Every September, after the break provided by the summer holidays, we have the pleasure of welcoming our new Year 7 cohort to begin their exciting journey in secondary education. We also welcome back all the other year groups as they progress through the school into their new year groups and new set of challenges. This September was, of course, different. The new term held all of the promise we are used to but with some trepidation about how everything would work on a practical level, living day-to-day with Covid-19. The whole staff, especially the site team, has worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of everyone in the school community and so we have been delighted with the cooperative response from students to a new way of life. Students have demonstrated their resilience and responsibility in following new measures such as social distancing, hand washing, one-way systems and working with lots of fresh air with the classroom windows open. After the time away from school in lockdown, we have noticed increased focus for learning and general enthusiasm; teachers and students alike are so pleased to be back at school. As I have mentioned in previous communications, we continue to closely follow all guidance provided by Public Health and the local authority.

Furthering our commitment to health and safety we are pleased to announce that the school has achieved the highest level Platinum award for safety standards in schools by SafetyMARK. This involved a vigorous audit of all health and safety processes and demonstrates our on-going commitment to maintaining excellence in the management of health and safety at Watford Boys.



PLATINUM AWARD

Another change to this half-term was the absence of our Open Morning for prospective families that we were unable to host because of restrictions imposed by Covid-

19. However, we were delighted to welcome a professional film producer into school who worked with Mr. Wallis, Ms. Messik and Miss Connolly to create a virtual tour, in the form of a short film. The school grounds and facilities looked tremendous and the weather was kind with some glorious sunshine on our filming days but there were no doubts about it, the stars of the show were our students. Boys were asked to volunteer to be recorded, they had no preparation and they were interviewed on the spot by the film's producer. The willingness to help and the considered, thoughtful and articulate answers of each and every boy filmed really represents the high calibre of all of our students. At the time of writing the number of views of our virtual video tour has reached over 8,000 and the feedback we have received is very positive. In addition to our virtual video tour, some of our lower sixth formers have been volunteering their spare time and making more films to show life and learning at Watford boys, these videos will be coming to the school website soon.

Your son should have brought home this year's special issue of the 2019-20 Fullerian magazine which gives a comprehensive overview of all the activities of the academic year. It is also available online, [click here](#)

After a busy but successful start to the school year, we wish all of our staff, students and families a restful and restorative half term.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'I. King', written in a cursive style.

Some of you may already be aware that Mrs Rayat, our Specialist teacher, is leaving WBS after 20 years of service as a valued member of the Learning Support, Maths and Science Departments. Her contribution to Learning Support has been immense and tremendous. The knowledge that she shared and the learning that was brought about with countless number of students cannot be compared. We wish her the very best for a well-deserved retirement and all the best for her future endeavours!

Wellbeing

The new Wellbeing Curriculum for all students continues to be implemented, with sessions taking place in form periods with form tutors. The theme for the past half-term has been Resilience, led by my assembly in September on 'Confidence' and The Power of Now. The school has also been reviewing students' wellbeing during the period of lockdown and the return to school and has developed plans to maintain Wellbeing provision through any future interruptions.

This year Mr Matthews, from our Mathematics Department, has taken on the role of School Chaplain. Mr Matthews is a Christian performing the role, but the support offered to the school community is non-denominational and complementary to the existing pastoral and counselling teams. The students will see Mr Matthews through assemblies and his involvement in faith societies, but he is also available to provide a sympathetic, non-judgemental, listening ear to any who seek one, whatever their religious outlook. Students who so wish are free to contact him on chaplain@watfordboys.org.

SIXTH FORM LECTURES

Everyday Sexism – Laura Bates

Anti-doping in Sport – John Brewer

Civil Engineering and Construction – Nick Horton

Careers Advice (not just for Finance) – Chris Edis, Lloyds Bank

Interfaith Debate – Head Prefect Team

Senior Prefect Team News

The head boy team was dealt a very different hand this year when they were told to perform in their roles by recording videos - introducing who they are and how they will improve the school in this academic year. Despite the unorthodox introduction, they swiftly adjusted to their roles and went a step further by supporting (with the help of other senior prefects) the organisation of the school's music aptitude entrance test. This was a great success and their willingness to step forward shows the sense of community and responsibility that the boys possess.

Looking forward to what the future of this year holds, the head boy team has many ambitions in safely picking up from where the previous team left off. The first and most ambitious target is to launch a WBGs mental health podcast (the name of which remains undecided). This will provide a safe space for students to understand how best to cope with certain challenges and has become more important as social interaction has been limited so greatly. Another aim of the team this year will be to enhance the Friday lecture programme for sixth form students with the help of Luca Ponzini U6B and Qadeer Zaman U6P on the Outreach team. Building on the success of the Interfaith debate which was run this year, chaired by Ali Shah U6G, the team will aim to bring engaging speakers which promote critical thinking.

Finally, enhancing the WBGs Learner model will be another priority as it has great potential to equip students with day-to-day skills required in their future career prospects. This is likely to be in the form of bite-sized challenges testing students' abilities which will be announced through Google Classroom. Whilst there are many more aims of the team, these remain the primary objectives of our head boy (Ali Shah) and his deputies (James Foley U6R, Jacob Haddo U6N and Aarush Lal U6P).

News from around the School





As seen on the WBGs Open Day film, Year 7 had a fantastic learning opportunity on the school field. They have been learning about the tactical advantages of the Norman archers and the almost impenetrable defensive use of a Saxon shield wall. They thoroughly enjoyed their learning opportunity which was topped off with a sword melon slicing display. Big thanks go out to Mr Williams, Mr Silver, Mrs Barnes Mr Ponte and Ms Riaz for this amazing experience.



Congratulations to the following Year 11 PRE students who graduated from the Alan Senitt Upstander Programme: Theo Adam 11T, Henry Peart 11N, Joel Karet 11B, Shivan Fernando 11T, Caleb Huang 11B, Aryan Kaul 11N, Riyan Shah 11B, Husayn Merali 11F and Aditya Praveen 11T.

Students in Year 10 should look out for information after half term about how to get involved this year.

We now run a PRE Twitter account @WbgsPRE and Instagram account @prwbgs. Please do encourage your son's to follow.

Congratulations to Noah Buckle 13F who won the Theology Prize from the John Locke Institute. His essay was judged by senior academics from the University of Oxford.



The John Locke Institute encourages young people to cultivate the characteristics that turn good students into great writers: independent thought, depth of knowledge, clear reasoning, critical analysis and persuasive style. The Essay Competition invites students to explore a wide range of challenging and interesting questions beyond the confines of the school curriculum.

Congratulations to Shiv Shah U6R who submitted a mini-essay which won a competition run by Downing College, Cambridge and CambridgeZero. He wrote about why climate change informed my choice of course at university (Economics). It was featured on social media platforms alongside the other winners from different subjects, @CambridgeZero, @DiscoverDowning and @DowningCollege (Twitter) and they invited Shiv to give a short interview that will be aired on CAM FM.

We are pleased to hear of the continued success of Nathan Phua U6N. One of his images has been commended in the Youth category of the Young Landscape Photographer of the Year Awards "Your View" and has won a place in the Awards book and will be part of the exhibition in London Bridge station from 16th November 2020 until the 12th February 2021. His commended image, Glass Panels, is attached below and can also be found on the website: <https://www.lpoty.co.uk/gallery/2020/ylpoty-2020>



Tim Hire U6G is one of 5 nominees who have been put forward for the 'Youth Sailor of the Year 2020' award as part of the British Yachting Awards. This is quite an achievement. If you would like to see more about the awards (and even cast a vote for Tim) then please do look at the details below and fill out the quick survey. You need to fill out your details and then you can just click on his category. The result will follow next term. Categories/nominees/voting can be found at www.britishyachtingawards.com

On Wednesday 11th November, we will be holding our Remembrance assemblies in different venues across the school and students will be given the chance to join in a two-minute silence to remember the contribution of the armed forces.

All parents/guardians should have received information about how to vote for the Parent Governor candidates. We have received 370 votes so far, please click here to register your preference:

The school has submitted 80 early UCAS applications by pupils to study at Oxford or Cambridge, or to study Medicine or Dentistry at other institutions which is a school record.

Year 7 Drama club has been more popular than ever this half term. Students are working towards a fun filmed performance to send out to parents before Christmas.

The Fathers' Book Club continues to meet – online. This half term we met to discuss the Book of Dave by Will Self. If anyone would like to join the meetings please contact Mr MacLeod at macleodj@watfordboys.org



Current restrictions mean that we are unable to sell poppies in school this year in the usual way. We encourage parents and students to continue

to support the British Legion via <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/ways-to-give/donate>

The Library Newsletter will be posted on google classroom and sent to parents by InTouch. The newsletter aims to keep students up-to-date with events in the library - new books, VLEbooks and Black History Month celebrations.

A reminder to parents that we are unable to accept any items dropped at reception.

Lost Property Procedures
Email - Lostproperty@watfordboys.org to contact Ms Moody, Lost Property Co-ordinator

STUDENT PLANNERS

Thanks to parents who have already paid for their son's planner. If you haven't paid yet, the cost is only £2, payable on Parentpay.



Yr 7 Science club will be taking place after half term when students will be helping to re-develop the area around the greenhouse at the back of science block. It will be a horticultural experience with herb gardens, vegetable planting and flowers for the site. Also, they will be building a pond at the top of the field with a seating area for outdoor learning. Thanks to Mr Rowe, Mr Mason and Mr Sewell for overseeing the project.

Good News from Music

AUTUMN CALENDAR

The calendar can be accessed via the WBGs student home page.

<https://sites.google.com/watfordboys.org/students/calendar>

Although all the Associated Board and Trinity face-to-face music examinations had to be cancelled, we were delighted to see a number of students convert these to digital assessments and there were notable successes, in particular for Jay Pate U6TI, Grade 8 guitar, and Ethan Underwood U6F, Grade 8 alto saxophone. Congratulations to these two students for their outstanding achievements at this high level. We are planning a face-to-face visit in December for our Associated Board examinations and letters about these will be sent in due course. If there are any other students learning an instrument outside school ready to take an examination and would like to join us, please let Mr Hussey know as soon as possible.

Sadly, there has been very little ensemble activity due to the Covid restrictions that are in place and this is really the case of course throughout the music profession. However, we plan to have small ensembles in year groups after half term with a plan to put together a recording of our students playing, as we did during lockdown back in the summer. Please ask your son to look out for any details regarding these rehearsals, which will take place mostly in the morning break between 10.30 and 11.30. This will give us plenty of time to prepare the Concert Hall where we can distance the students according to the government guidelines, as well as sanitising the space afterwards.

It has been excellent to see many new students joining our instrumental programme and receiving face-to-face lessons in school during the first half of term. The Instrumental Music Timetables for the second half of this term will be sent to the boys via their Gmail account during the half term break. They will not receive a hard copy, so boys will need to check their email account very carefully for the email attachment and then write their lesson times into their planner. Students are reminded to let Mr Hussey know if they do not receive their timetable this way and he will check and resend.

House Competitions

The Race for the House Cup, House Bowl and Charity Goblet is underway for the 2020/21 year. The L6th House Captains have fielded two video assemblies to motivate the student body to start planning charity events to raise money. This year's school charities, as chosen by the Senior Prefect team, include our two good causes from last year, CALM (which address the issue of mental health and young male suicide) and Prostate Cancer UK, with The Stephen Lawrence Trust and Raise (a West Herts Hospital support charity) being added this year. Students in each form have been tasked to organise a COVID compliant fundraiser or charity event with the help of their Year 11 Junior Prefects and House Captains. In terms of current standings within the competitions, Cassio House have taken an early lead in both the House Cup and Bowl with Cassio and Turner close behind. There are no placings at present in the Charity Goblet but our first mufti day on Monday 14th December will help. Well done to all students who have achieved house points this term, just under 10,000 have been earned!

Friends of the School (FOS)

A very warm welcome from the Friends of WBGS to all newcomers to the school. We hope, when we return to "normal" times to be able to welcome you in person to some of our events. In the meantime, we hope you have been able to view the video sent by email giving you some more information about the Friends and the ways in which we support the school. The video can also be viewed via the Friends of School website www.friendsofwbgs.org

For obvious reasons, we have sadly not been able to hold any of our usual welcome events this half-term and with it not being possible to plan anything for a while, I wanted instead to take this opportunity to remind you of other ways you can help us to fundraise for the school, even in these strange times.

All money raised is used to buy resources and equipment to enrich the education and school life of our boys, so please do support us in any way we can.



Family Draw - Help us to Help your Sons by Joining the Family Draw Termly Lottery

The Family Draw is our 100-club style lottery and gives you the opportunity to win a cash prize whilst also supporting the school.

All you need to do is pay £25 a year into the Family Draw Fund and we will allocate you a unique lucky number, which will automatically be entered into our termly lottery. There are three cash prizes each year and you can 'buy' as many lucky numbers as you like to increase your chances of winning.

25% of the income raised is given as prizes and the remaining 75% is donated to directly benefit students at WBGS.

If you don't currently participate in the Family Draw but would like to do so, more information and a form to join can be found on our website here.

To join the Family Draw for the next academic year, please contact Jean Ryba on familydraw@friendsofwbgs.org or call 07736 065511.

Second-Hand Uniform Shop – Donations Needed Please!

The uniform shop continues to offer a valuable service to parents. We have been particularly busy this first half-term and so **we would be extremely grateful for donations of clean, good quality uniform and particularly sports kit** that your son has outgrown or no longer needs. **Donations can be brought into school every Friday morning from 8.15-10.30am** and left in the box at the West Gate where they will be "quarantined" for 3 days before going into stock the following week. If you have items to donate but cannot bring them in on a Friday for any reason, please get in touch – info@friendsofwbgs.org

The shop is open in the Cloisters, under the arches off the quad, next to the James Theatre every Wednesday 3.15-4.30pm and the first Saturday of each half-term (next Saturday opening is 7th November 10am-12 noon).

Due to the current situation we can only offer visits by pre-booked appointment. Please book your visit here.

Volunteers needed. We need another 1 or 2 volunteers to run the shop on a Wednesday and / or Saturday. This is only for an hour or so and is on a rota basis, so you don't need to commit to every week. But if you are able to help it would be greatly appreciated - please do get in touch at info@friendsofwbgs.org.

Possible Future Events

The planned Giant Scalextric event had to be cancelled in March. We do hope to run as soon as it is safe to do so, perhaps in the Summer term. More information will be provided when we know what is possible.

Virtual Events. In the meantime, if anyone has ideas for events or activities that we could perhaps offer virtually please do get in touch; we'd love to hear from you.

Thank you for your continued support, we wish you a safe and healthy half-term break.

Best wishes

Amanda Rafferty, Chair, Friends of WBGS