



Watford Grammar
School for Boys
Founded 1704

March 2021

HEADMASTER'S NEWSLETTER

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IF YOU NEED TO CONTACT US

School email: office@watfordboys.org

School website: www.watfordboys.org

Report absences:
absence@watfordboys.org

Lost property:
lostproperty@watfordboys.org

Useful links

[WBGs website](#)

[Term dates](#)

[WBGs Sport](#)

[Friends of the School](#)

Message from the Headmaster

This half term has possibly been one of the busiest half-terms I, and I am sure many of you, recall. We started with remote teaching and we close the term with our full cohort of students back in the school and with Spring in the air, bringing with it feelings of positivity and hope for better things to come.

Over the last couple of months many staff, students and their families have faced uncertainty, dealt with new expectations and changed their daily routines. As I have been from the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak, I am yet again struck by the aptitude and tenacity by those around me within our school community.

The preparations for a safe return to school were reliant on establishing an effective system to deliver rapid Covid-19 tests. The Sports school was transformed into an efficient and professional LFD Covid-19 testing centre, thanks to a brilliant team of staff and parent volunteers. Our site staff have been working tirelessly to optimise the safety and cleanliness on-site, the IT team have kept the pulse of school communications beating ensuring access to online systems, staff have adapted from remote teaching to being back in the classroom and students continue to impress. Testing the entire school population before return was a huge undertaking which was very successfully delivered. After all of the effort involved, it was a delight to see boys walking back through the gates, the corridors once again (albeit at a social distance) bustling, to hear the sounds of laughter from the Quad at break-time and to have the School feel full of life with a sense of 'normality'.

I wish all of our families a wonderful break over the Easter holidays.

Mr Ian Cooksey

Headmaster

Design & Technology News



The Design Technology students in year 9 were set **The Ball launcher Challenge**. The assignment took place in lockdown with the challenge set to create a ball launcher that would throw an aluminium ball and be caught by a receiver over the maximum distance possible. The simple but effective winning design came from Aled. His successful design saw the ball travelling an impressive total of 4 meters! The competition for the challenge was strong with some ingenious and gallant attempts at making devices. This was a time consuming problem solving activity which a lot of the boys grabbed with both hands. I was really impressed with the effort made by students.



Ms K Moody

House Competitions

Sadly with lockdown and time restrictions now that we have returned to school, InterHouse sport has not been able to take place this Spring term. Having triumphed in December with some competitive sport, we look to get students active again next term in our summer sports. InterHouse competitions including cricket, rounders, tennis and an athletics sports day are all planned to nurture the student's competitive nature.

There has been one InterHouse competition this term thanks to the great work of New House Captain, Yueyang Han L6th, and his team who run the online chess club. Years 7 & 8 have completed a round robin chess tournament with great wins for Platt in Year 7 and Groves in Year 8. Well done to all those who logged on to compete, watch and enjoy Yueyang's expert commentary – it was like watching an episode of the Queen's Gambit!

Raising funds for our school charities has somewhat paused over lockdown but the summer term should provide an opportunity for a plethora of events including mufti day and 9F's Fantasy Football league.

In the race for the House Cup, House points have continued to be awarded online. Thank you to members of staff for taking the time to upload these achievements from home and well done to all students who continually strive for success and go above and beyond the usual expectations. At the time of writing, Fuller are leading the way in 1st place with Platt and Bushey following closely behind. Well done to Max Pillay 8F who is the top points achiever in the school with 691! Students have been updated in full where each House sits in the league tables and House Captains will report a further, more detailed report to students early next term.

Mr Beere

House Coordinator

Modern Foreign Language News

Our Year 12 team took part this week in the National semi-final of the Goethe Institute German A level debating competition. They debated in German online against a team from Dr. Challoners Grammar School on the topic of "Does social media help to fight against racism?". It was a very close fought battle but in the end Dr. Challoners team won through.

Mrs. A Hensman



Music Department News

Music making has continued to be somewhat limited this term with the current restrictions, but we have managed to run a few chamber groups and we have just started up some rehearsals again with our Upper School Big Band. Hopefully as next term progresses, we may be able to revert back to some normality with our larger ensembles.

Our Pharrell Williams' 'Happy' project had to be put on hold this term, but we intend to rehearse the musicians in each year group separately in the coming weeks with a view to releasing a virtual performance later in the term. Please ask your son to look out for the Gmail about this!

There are plans to have our Music Competition later in the summer term too and this will give many students a chance to showcase a piece of music that they might have been working on in lockdown. More details about this will be forthcoming.

The new instrumental music timetables for the first half of the summer term will be emailed out to students in the holidays once these have been finalised. Please make sure that these are checked carefully and lesson times noted accurately, perhaps with the aid of the school planner, so that boys do not miss their timetabled lessons. Our first day back at school in the summer term is Monday April 12th, and many boys will be having lessons on that day, so please ensure that they check their lesson times carefully in order that they make a good start to the summer term.

It is our intention to run face-to-face Associated Board Music Exams towards the end of term, so please advise if you would like to be part of this visit.

Mr S Hussey

Director of Music

Politics Society

The Politics Society - this has continued throughout lockdown with weekly meets after school debating and discussing in a (mostly) friendly manner various issues including: the Capitol riots, Trump's impeachment, Scottish independence and the future of the royal family. Being online has meant that all year groups have been able to join and some of the younger students have impressed with how informed they are.

Model United Nations - most of these competitions were cancelled this year but Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School hosted an online Model United Nations competition this month where Year 10 year 12 students were able to take part 'representing' Mexico and Ethiopia and being able to debate many topical issues. Special mentions go to Magadev Kuha Kumaran, Sidney Sarpong and Stefan Makhoul who were all highly commended. The students are hoping that the experience they have gained can be put to use next year when hopefully competitions will recommence in person.

Ms S Riaz

PRE News

Michael Bibring Interview

In our previous newsletter we mentioned a group of students coordinated by Head Boy Ali Shah who conducted an interesting and thought provoking interview with Michael Bibring on Holocaust Memorial Day. You can now watch the interview in full here: [Michael Bibring Interview](#)

Ethics & Debate Week Year 10

The week commencing Monday 24th May will be Ethics and Debate Week. Year 10 students will have some changes to their timetable and will stay in form groups; however Games will run as normal this week.

Philosathon Third Place

A challenging competition took place at the beginning of March with students achieving third place in the Philosathon hosted online by Northwood College. The WBS team were the youngest group of students representing their school, with most of the other teams being Sixth Formers from mainly private schools. Hugh congratulations to Ionut, Mohammed, Sid, Aryan, Daniel, Karem, Shrey and Robin. Special acknowledgment goes to Ionut and Daniel, you received very high praise from the judges. Aryan and Shrey have written about the event here:

On 3rd March 2021, several year 10 students, along with other teenagers from multiple secondary schools from schools near to ours took part in the first ever Philosathon. The day was run in order for us to further our philosophical outlook, by inquiring into two different sources. The event was run during the second lockdown, and as such all students and teachers involved logged onto a Google Meet at 12.30pm.

The teacher who was leading the event, Mr Giblin, talked us through the rules of the day. In order to inquire, we had to let others speak, be respectful of the views of others, and keep the discussion sensible. After this, we were sent into separate rooms in order to discuss the first source. This first source was about justice, and points were raised about different meanings of justice across different cultures and countries, and how we can ensure that people can receive justice. The debate lasted 25 minutes, meaning lots of students could raise their hands and state their views. Judges were at hand to assess the points that were made, and this went towards a final leaderboard.

The second source was about happiness, and what it means to be happy. After what could almost be seen as a practise round, the debate flowed better this round, with more students making points about what they thought about the source. Some very detailed and interesting points were raised, for example, about how happiness is temporary, how humans may have to sacrifice their happiness in order for the rest of the species to advance, and whether there is truly a loving God if so much sadness and destruction takes place on Earth.

After this debate, the only thing that was left was for awards to be announced. Watford Boys came in a very respectable position, third place. In addition, Daniel and Ionut, who were from our team, were given a special mention for their discussions. Overall, the day was very enjoyable, and it allowed us to increase our philosophical understanding, as well as being able to debate with many other students. We would like to thank all the teachers who organized the event, as well as Mrs Charlton for inviting us to the afternoon.

Aryan & Shrey

PRE Drop Down Day

Year 9 participated in a virtual PRE-Drop Down Day on the Holocaust on 24th February. They learnt about the Holocaust and then learnt about subsequent genocides. Their next drop down day for PRE will be Wednesday 30th June when they will look at medical ethics.

Blog Writing Competition

Year 7 and 8 students participated in a blog writing competition run by the National Association for the teaching of RE (NATRE). Joel S in year 8 and Shaunak P in year 7 won our inter-school competition. Their entries will go forward to represent the school. Well done to all who participated and good luck to Joel & Shaunak!

Faith at WBS

We have well-established faith societies at WBS. For more information, please go to: <https://sites.google.com/watfordboys.org/faith-wbs/home>

Mrs Charlton

Head of Philosophy, Religion & Ethics

Science Club

Science practicals have sadly been non-existent in school during the pandemic due to all the Covid-19 restrictions that have been placed upon us. It has been a huge shame and staff have endeavoured, where possible, to set experiments that are safe for the boys to do at home. Additionally we have set up a remote science club that has enabled boys from year 7 and 8 to have even more hands-on opportunities at home. Activities have included sticking string to ice, making their own Mars Rover, celebrating International Day for Women and girls in Science, celebrating Science week and looking at some colourful science.

Mrs Butler

Sports News – not long now!

Our newsletters used to be filled with updates from the Sports Department with fixtures and the latest news from the latest sporting endeavours. Our hope is that we will be able to offer extra-curricular activities in the near future, and that at some point in the summer term we will be able to offer pupils the opportunity to compete against other schools again - in line with government and national governing body guidance. We cannot wait to get back to regular sporting events and activities. We will keep you posted but in the meantime you can use the dedicated WBGS Sports mini-website to keep up-to-date with the latest Sports information: <http://www.watfordboyssports.org/>

Winners of HCC Feel Good award

12P were successful in their application for a £500 grant to promote mental wellbeing during Feeling Good Week which is run by Herts CC.

Nikhil Ruparellia from Year 12 tells us more about the award:

A few members from our form (L6P) have taken up a fantastic opportunity offered to us by Hertfordshire County Council. We submitted a bid for £500 pounds of funding towards a week of fun activities called "Feeling Good Week".

Feeling Good Week promotes children and young people's emotional wellbeing by raising awareness of mental health and showing where support can be accessed within the community.

Our idea for Feeling Good Week, which enabled us to successfully obtain the funding, is as follows; we intend to hire a van which will distribute popcorn and fresh fruit juice to the students and staff of our school community. There will be information about mental health, physical movement and healthy eating provided near this location (this will be repeated throughout the week to allow for year group bubbles to be maintained).

This will be followed up by having designated areas that students can attend to have a conversation, listen to talks about healthy eating and wellbeing and a book reading in the library. We decided to use confectionery as it's popular among our target audience. We hope that through this it may act as an incentive and encourage the students to speak out and articulate any challenging thoughts they may struggle with.

As it stands we are planning on doing this at some point in the summer term but due to COVID and various restrictions in place we are unable to give an exact week. More details are coming very soon regarding dates and times.

Mental Health Awareness & Child Protection

Open discussion, understanding and support of mental wellbeing and issues relating to mental health are a priority at WBGs. To this end, the entire school staff received Mental Health Awareness Training in February. As a whole school community we endeavour to create a safe space and encourage all members of the school community from students, staff and families to feel able to speak positively about mental health issues.

Parents are reminded that the School's Child Protection Policy (which also includes our safeguarding policies) is available on the school website [here](#). The policy is updated at least annually. The latest policy includes details of Operation Encompass, the Hertfordshire Police strategy for alerting schools whenever they attend a domestic incident at a home where children are resident. Any feedback or questions about safeguarding measures in the school should be addressed to Mr MacLeod at macleodj@watfordboys.org

For the particular benefit of parents new to the school this year, please be advised that we periodically invite a sniffer dog into school. This is not in response to any specific concern – it is a measure we take to confirm our belief that the school is a very safe site. The first visit, in December 2019, found neither any drugs or any indications of the presence of drugs on the school site.

Mr Macleod

Deputy Headmaster

More Writing Success for Eesa

Year 8 student Eesa has had yet more writing success. His second piece of creative writing entitled 'Unidentified Magnara' has been selected by Young Writers organisation for publication. Well done to Eesa!

If you are interested in entering a piece of writing to the competition find out more here:

<https://www.youngwriters.co.uk/competitions/KS3-4>

LFD Covid-19 Testing – Keeping everyone safe



The introduction of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Covid-19 rapid testing has been a mammoth task only possible thanks to our dedicated team of staff and the kindness of our parent volunteers. Under the stewardship of Mr Mason the Sports Hall was transformed into a testing centre. Staff and volunteers received training and precise timetables and checklists were created to ensure that all staff and students could receive a test. The LFD tests give quick responses and are able to help detect asymptomatic cases of the virus. Students showed mature and helpful attitudes in following the procedures and ensured the testing process all ran smoothly. We are now finished and have

approximately tested 4000 boys within 6 days of Testing, with no positive cases detected. Notes of thanks go out to the Testers, registrars, queue managers, results checkers and recorders to their amazing support and work. Thanks also to the site team, IT department and Mr Carr for the seamless processing of students.

BBC Young Reporter 2021 WINNERS!

You may remember from our December newsletter that two of our students, Tavish and Adam had been shortlisted for the BBC Young Reporter Competition? The boys' article on modern day cyber crime impressed the judges and we are delighted to share the news that Tavish and Adam have gone on to win the national level for the group category. The news of their winning entry was announced live in the BBC One Show on Monday 15th March at 7pm. This is a fantastic achievement and the School are extremely proud. Well Done boys! You can watch the clip on **BBC iPlayer here** (24 minutes in).



Oxbridge Candidates Share Experience

James and William, Year 13 students have shared their success story with Year 12 potential Oxbridge candidates. James introduced the students to the course of Management and Economy in Oxford, William, introduced them to Land Economy in Cambridge. Both boys discussed how they have achieved the offers from Oxford and Cambridge and answered the questions passionately. Well done James and William!



Hire our facilities

As you know, our school has fantastic facilities and we have various external groups such as tutoring centres, sports groups and a dance company that hire these on a regular basis. We currently have some availability for new lettings. If your business, or someone you know, is looking for a new base please direct them to the lettings page of our school website <https://www.watfordboys.org/Facilities-For-Hire.aspx> or e-mail to: lettings@watfordboys.org

Update from Friends of School

Still, sadly, without any activity to report on from this past half-term, the Friends of School are now eagerly looking forward to being able to plan some activities for the Summer term, details of which we will be pleased to share with you as soon as possible. In the meantime, please find below some information on our immediate activities, as always we would be grateful for your support and involvement.

If you would like to join the Friends Committee, or can just spare an hour or so to help out at an event we would be very pleased to hear from you – please get in touch via info@friendsofwbgs.org

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The AGM, delayed from November 2020 whilst we were in Tier 4 restrictions, will be held **virtually** on **Tuesday 20th April**. All are welcome. Details of the link to join the meeting have been sent by Parentmail, if you have not received this or have any questions please email info@friendsofwbgs.org. We require minimum numbers to this meeting so would appreciate as many people as possible in attendance, it will be a short meeting.

The Big Raffle

The Friends of School Big Raffle will be held in the first half of the Summer Term. This will once again be an online raffle and tickets will be on sale on the return to school after the Easter holidays with the Raffle drawn on Thursday 27th May. Please look out for details, including information on the great prizes to be won, which will be sent by Parentmail in the first week back, as well as being posted on our website www.friendsofwbgs.org

Second-Hand Uniform Shop

The uniform shop is now open once again, offering good quality uniform and sports kit at low prices (a price sheet is available on our [website](#)). The shop is open every Wednesday from 3.30-4.30pm and visits are by prior appointment – [book here](#).

We really need more stock for the shop and so would be very grateful for donations of CLEAN, good quality uniform and sports kit. Please note we can only take WBGS-branded uniform – we do NOT have any space for plain white shirts or black trousers – please take these to a charity shop instead. We do particularly need larger sizes of sports kit, both green and white.

Donations can be brought into school by boys or parents EVERY FRIDAY morning from 8.15 - 10.30am. Donations, in bags please, should be brought to the West Gate (the black gates to the left of the main school entrance where Year 11 & 6th form enter) and placed in the dedicated uniform donation box. All items will be “quarantined” for the required 3 days before going into the shop.

We can't wait to see you at a Friends of School event hopefully in the very near future!

Wishing you all a very happy and healthy Easter break

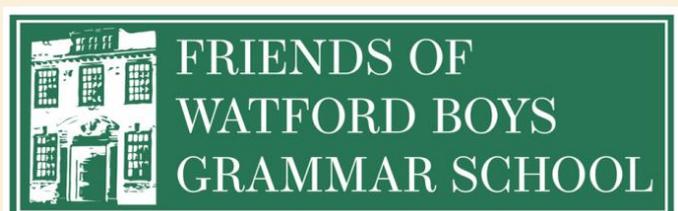
The Friends of School

www.friendsofwbgs.org

Mrs Amanda Rafferty

Chair of Friends

E-mail: info@friendsofwbgs.org



Stay in Touch

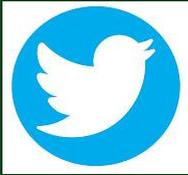
If you would like to stay up-to-date with the latest news from the school community then why not join us on our social media channels:



Instagram

@watfordboysgrammar

<https://www.instagram.com/watfordboysgrammar/>



Twitter

<https://twitter.com/WBGSExcelsence>



Facebook – School Page

<https://www.facebook.com/watfordgrammarboys>

Facebook – Alumni Page

<https://www.facebook.com/wbgsalumni>



Linked In

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/watford-grammar-school-for-boys>