

DECEMBER 2024



Shortenills

Wow! What a term it has been!

It was amazing to see so many familiar faces and have the chance to meet new ones at our termly Family and Friends Day. It was a lovely way to end the term by celebrating so many successes within our Shortenills community.

The Autumn Term began with a wonderful visit to Waddesdon Manor, organised by Miss Jackson (Acting Head of Art, Aspire). Students had the opportunity to explore the Manor House and learn about how it was used during WW2. Students also took part in outdoor activities in the beautiful Waddesdon grounds.

We are also thrilled to have secured funding for a whole school theatre trip to the Apollo Victoria Theatre to watch Wicked. We are in the process of finalising the details and you will be hearing more about this in the new year.

I want to thank Mrs Asbridge for sharing her floristry skills and helping the students make Christmas Wreaths that were very kindly sold in The Galleria on the Green in Chalfont St Giles.

I am pleased to say that Mrs Griffiths is making a speedy recovery following her surgery this term and is hoping to slowly return to work in the New Year. We were thrilled that she could join us for Christmas lunch and we can't wait to have her back.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your on-going support of the school and to wish you a very Merry Christmas.

Mrs Wolfenden
Head of School

MAPLE

We had a great first term of the year in Maple Class! All students sat exams in Functional Skills for English and Maths and we are eagerly anticipating the results. We have enjoyed cooking lessons, producing meals from a breakfast fry-up to spaghetti bolognese. Students have increased the complexity of their cooking over the term, creating some delicious two course meals. Maple Class has been actively preparing for their upcoming GCSE exams, producing some beautiful prints, splatter art and sculptures created from dismantling electronics, as well as pieces inspired by Pop Art and candle making.

A highlight of our term was their highly successful and productive endeavours in wreath making, inspired and led by our amazing floristry expert, Rachael. Students collected foliage from our beautiful woods, including firs, holly and pine, made the wreaths and decorated them themselves. Not only has this led to our school looking particularly festive, but it has also introduced our students to the world of industry, with their wreaths being sold in a local shop and profits going towards a Christmas treat for our students. They worked incredibly hard on these wreaths during Enrichment, noticeably developing their skills as they went on.



Maple Class visited the Bucks College Group site in Aylesbury for a tour of the campus and visits to areas of the college in which they are interested in applying. It was very interesting to see the different departments of the campus, including the Construction and Science areas, as well as Games Development, Health and Beauty and the communal study areas. This is a pivotal time for Maple, as they embark on applications towards their next steps. We have been fortunate enough for students to have one-to-one sessions with a Careers advisor to support them in developing their action plans for the future.

I am so proud of what our students have achieved already during this school year, and we are now looking ahead to the new year, when students will be sitting the next round of their Functional Skills exams in English and Maths, as well as completing their application forms for college and apprenticeships and, of course, creating more culinary and artwork masterpieces!

WILLOW

It has been a busy term for Willow class. We have welcomed four new members to the school, all of whom settled in to life at Shortenills very well. One of the highlights of the term for me has been getting to know each of the students in the class and seeing their friendships blossom. Our theme this term has been "Am I a good person" which we have drawn focus on throughout each of the subjects we learn.

In English this gave us an opportunity to study Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. The class enjoyed listening to the book and learning about the struggle between good and evil. There were wide and varied conversations surrounding the text which took us in all sorts of directions, my favourite of which was a discussion on ghost stories! Seeing the love that students have of books, I decided to explore this by exposing them to other texts throughout the term. As a class, we have read *The Boy at the Back of the Class*, *Can You See Me?* and we have finished the term by reading *A Christmas Carol*. The conversations that reading has opened up for the class has been wonderful and I hope to continue with a focus on reading in the new year.

Willow class have also shown their love for the great outdoors this term. Most days involve a walk in the woods, climbing trees and letting off some steam. This is an enjoyable part of the day for all. As the weather becomes colder and inevitably wetter in the new year, please remind your child to bring a coat to school with them so they can continue to enjoy their time outdoors.

Cooking has also been a highlight of the term for many of the students. They have prepared and cooked a variety of dishes including curry, stir fry and koftas. We have also enjoyed making some sweet treats and I very much hope you enjoyed the delicious fudge which the students made for Family and Friends Day.

As the term draws to a close, I would like to take the opportunity to wish all of the students in Willow class and their families a restful break, a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. I look forward to welcoming the students back in January.



OAK

This term has been a busy one; our work on literacy has continued with this term's enquiry question: "Am I a good person?".

We have been entertained, intrigued and shocked by Lauren Wolk's *Wolf Hollow*, and explored a variety of beliefs and values in English and PSHE. A study of the play, *DNA* by Dennis Kelly, encouraged some deep discussion and reflection about the power of peer pressure, responsibility and the bystander effect. It has also been a pleasure to see students so engaged with Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. We have used this classic story to hone our English language skills, helping to prepare students for the skills they need to complete their qualifications as they move through the year.

In Maths, alongside functional skills practice papers, students have embraced a new online programme designed to identify and close any gaps in their maths journey. This will be a very useful tool in the coming weeks and months; it has been lovely to see them engaging so well with it. They should keep practising the fundamentals like times tables and number bonds at any opportunity.

Students continue to work on their BTEC qualifications in PSHE, Science, and Cookery. We've had a chance to use our new microscopes to look at plant cells and have prepared a variety of sweet and savoury dishes which I hope you've had the chance to sample! We will continue to do as much practical work as possible to bring learning to life.

Students have unleashed their creativity in art with their new teacher Mrs Gee. They have begun their GCSE portfolios focusing this term on 'Phobias and Obsessions', using a variety of media to explore this topic.

Despite the winter weather students have made the most of the grounds in Bushcraft with Mrs Gentle. The class have excelled, not only in woodland skills, but also showing their ability to work as a team and improve their communication skills.



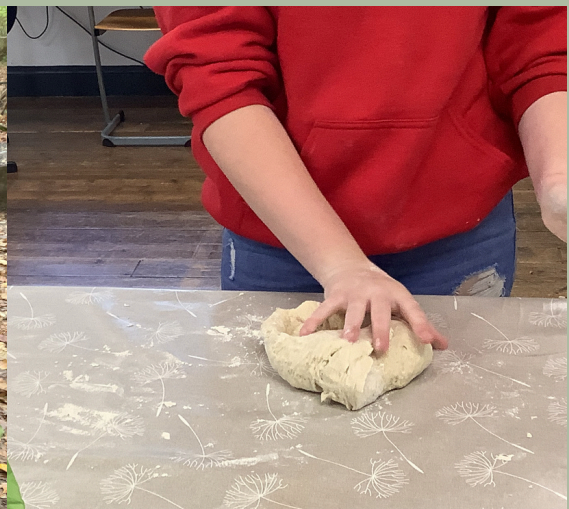
BEECH

It has been a busy term for Beech class with pupils working hard in all their lessons. We have been looking at a Christmas Carol in English and students have completed some excellent creative writing and written some dramatic Christmas ghost stories!

A recent highlight in science was making bread and discussing the reasons behind why bread rises.

In Bushcraft it has been great to get outside and do some winter cooking in the woods - making smores is always fun! Other activities the class have enjoyed include wreath making, winter nature walks and making Christmas lanterns.

We were visited by a host of reptiles and small animals through Wild2You. All the pupils thoroughly enjoyed learning about snakes, cockroaches, skinny pigs and many more. Our students are now working hard to try and convince Mrs Wolfenden that we need a school chinchilla.



HELP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Christmas period can be a challenging period for many people. Please remember that support is available if you need it.

Please follow this link to find out more information:

[You are not alone - Festive Season 2024](#)

Sometimes life can be tough as a teenager. The Family Information Service with Buckinghamshire Council offer courses and youth drop-ins to help and support teenagers online and at different locations across Buckinghamshire.

Please follow this link to find out more information about the courses available:

<https://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/youth/help-for-young-people/>

READING

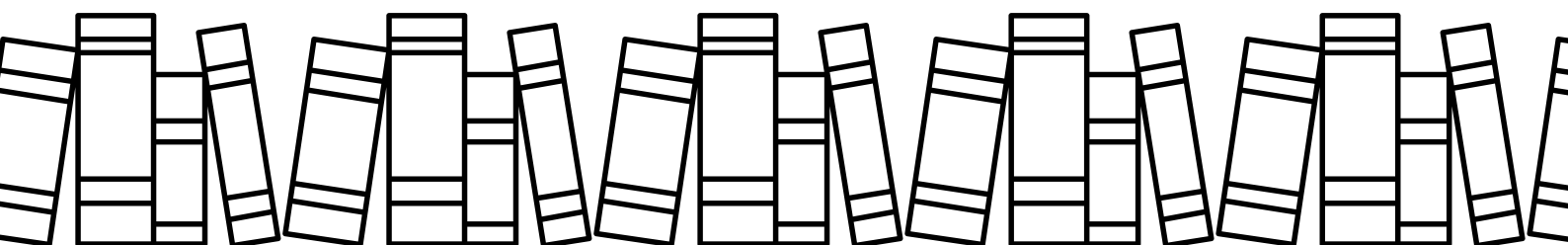
Reading is a key focus for us in school and we make sure we read daily in some shape or form. Research from the National Literacy Trust shows that only 2 in 5 children and young people aged 8 to 18 said they enjoyed reading in their free time in 2023. This is the lowest level since they started collecting this data in 2005.

There is also research that shows that children enjoy audiobooks more and that these can help build comprehension skills and engage reluctant readers. Children who listen to audiobooks are also more likely to start reading traditional books.

With this in mind, we thought it was worth sharing a local charity that offer access to 17,000 books. Maybe you can give this a try over the Christmas break. We would love to hear any stories that students have listened to!

Please follow this link to find out more information about free audio books for children and young people with SEN:

<https://www.calibreaudio.org.uk/>



THANK YOU

We are sad to be saying goodbye to Mr Hodge. He will be leaving us to return to his passion of Geography teaching and will make an excellent Head of Department. I would like to thank him for his commitment and dedication to the students and wish him well in his new role.

We are pleased to welcome Mr Castle from Orchard House in Chesham who will be teaching Oak class in January.

Mrs Wolfenden

As we reach the end of our first term together, I would like to take this opportunity to share the wonderful progress and activities we've experienced in Oak Class. It has been a pleasure to get to know the students and see them settle in with enthusiasm and kindness.

Thank you for your continued support. It has been a great start to the year, and I look forward to hearing how Oak Class progress in the future.

Mr Hodge



We are incredibly grateful to Samantha at The Galleria on the Green in Chalfont St Giles for inviting our Shortenills students to sell their handmade Christmas wreaths. As a result, every Shortenills class has been given some money to spend on a Christmas treat of their choice.

Mrs Asbridge worked hard to share her floristry skills with our students, who all enjoyed taking part in the craft.

A notable mention to Year 11 students Chloe and Robin for their fantastic efforts and dedication to creating some beautiful wreaths this Christmas.



A huge thank you to Rowan Garden Centre in Chalfont St Giles, for kindly donating Christmas trees to our classrooms at Shortenills. This contribution has been enjoyed by students and staff during the festive period.

Dates for your diary:

End of Autumn term: **Friday 20 December 2024**

Christmas holiday: **Monday 23 December 2024 - Friday 3 January 2025**

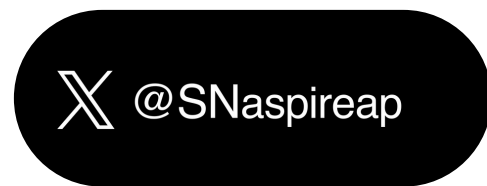
Start of Spring term: **Monday 6 January 2025**

Half term: **Monday 17 February 2025 - Friday 21 February 2025**

End of Spring term: **Friday 4 April 2025**

Easter holiday: **Monday 7 April 2025 - Monday 21 April 2025**

Family and Friends Day: **Wednesday 26 March 2025**



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