

VISION

Issue 42: Autumn/Winter 2025



King James I Academy & Sixth Form Centre magazine

Learning to inspire at *King James*



Inside: Exam Results, Primary liaison, International trips, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Sports News, British Science Week, Award winners, Health & Wellbeing, Sixth Form News and more.



Welcome

Welcome to the latest issue of *Vision*, our Academy magazine.

It seems that every year at KJI gets busier, but one constant is the outstanding contribution our students make to Academy life and 2024/25 was no exception. Students embraced opportunities both in and out of the classroom, some of which are featured in the following pages, but many more that have been missed due to lack of space! We have driven international visits for students and hope to continue this in the coming year; and our charity work has progressed to another level this year with students demonstrating their commitment to supporting others by raising thousands of pounds for worthwhile causes.

In the classroom there has been a continued focus on academic success, and an emphasis on developing student vocabulary, raising aspirations and incorporating careers information in lessons. This is clearly having an impact, as record numbers of our Year 13 students have progressed on to University. Once again, GCSE and A'Level results were strong, and I would like to formally congratulate all of our Year 11 and 13 students for their hard work and excellent outcomes; we wish them well in their next steps.

As one cohort leaves, another one joins us and we are delighted to welcome a record number of Year 7s this year. Our Primary Outreach offer will continue for students in Years 5 and 6 so that they can visit KJI and experience secondary school life, and we look forward to welcoming visitors to Year 6 Open Evening on Wednesday 17th September.

Thank you to all of the parents who have supported us through the year. We look forward to working with you again through this year and beyond.

Best wishes,
Simon Whitehead, Headteacher

Creating an easy Transition

At King James we recognise the importance of beginning the transition from primary to secondary school early so that our new starters feel happy and confident from day one.

The transition process starts for us with the extensive Outreach Programme we offer to our local primary schools. Pupils from Years 1-5 are invited to attend King James to take part in Art, Photography, Music, Drama, Sport and Media sessions, all of which are designed to introduce young children to secondary school life and allay any fears from an early age.

In our annual Year 5 Curriculum Week 2025, pictured below, pupils from local primary schools enjoyed a host of educational activities in all subjects from Maths, English, Science and History, to Geography, Food, Sport, Art, Drama and Music. As they enter Year 6, these students are then invited to attend our annual Year 6 Open Evening, which takes place on September 17th this year. This is an excellent opportunity for families to join us in school to meet our

staff and students and enjoy an evening of guided tours and subject-themed activities to help parents and carers choose the best secondary school for their child.

For children who are already enrolled to start King James in Year 7, the transition programme is extensive. It begins in the summer term with *No Wasted Weeks*, pictured below, a series of induction days in July where pupils take part in timetabled lessons and join King James students for break and lunch in our Dining Hall. We also organise a number of events where children and their parents can meet our Academy Leadership Team and their Year 7 Form Tutors, order uniform and organise school transport. All of our transition activities and events are designed to build familiarity, confidence and independence, and to help children forge firm friendships.

Transition and outreach activities are designed to build confidence and independence.

Lucy Mulryan, Primary Outreach Co-ordinator



Our new starters attended a series of induction days in July as part of our *No Wasted Weeks* programme; this makes transition easy.



Primary Outreach and Curriculum Weeks

Join us for Year 6 Open Evening

Throughout the academic year we offer an extensive Primary Outreach programme, where local primary schools can opt in to a variety of free after-school sessions; and in July, all Year 5 pupils in the local area are invited to attend our Curriculum Weeks.

Outreach sessions give youngsters the opportunity to take part in a range of activities that primary schools may not be able to offer such as cooking, photography, film making, drama, trampolining and kick boxing.

In Photography, pupils work with professional DSLR cameras and learn different techniques to set up, light and take creative images; and in Media Studies, film making and green screen technology is the focus of the sessions and pupils write a script and become tv presenters to produce their own show. In Food, youngsters love learning how to prepare and cook healthy meals; and our PE & Sport sessions are a great way to have fun at the end of the school day. Primary schools can even sign up for one of our popular *Mini Medics* courses, which introduce youngsters to life-saving techniques and first aid.

Over 450 pupils from 16 local primary schools attended our annual Curriculum Weeks this year and pupils joined a variety of lessons to get a taste of secondary school life. In Science, pupils conducted experiments to see how chemicals change colour as they react with each other, and they witnessed Mr McAdam demonstrate some exciting experiments with fire! In Food & Nutrition, through a fun taste testing activity, pupils learned how the five senses are key to the way we respond to food; and in Drama, pupils used both physical and vocal skills to find out what they could do, rather than what they can't, therefore building confidence and a positive attitude.

Pupils also attended fantastic sessions in English, Maths, History, Geography, PE, Music, Art, French, RE, ICT, Business Studies and at our Forest School.

Plans are well underway for our annual Year 6 Open Evening, which will take place from 6.00pm - 8.00pm on Wednesday 17th September.



The event, which is open to all local primary school pupils in Year 6 and their families, is designed to support parents and carers in making an informed decision about which secondary school will be best for their child.

Throughout the evening, visitors will be able to meet and talk to our school leaders, teachers, support staff and students. They will also be able to take a tour of our facilities, get involved in a wide variety of fun activities in all subjects and sample some of the dishes on our lunch menu. Student work will be on display throughout the Academy, and you can find out about the many extra-curricular opportunities and educational visits we offer to help young people develop outside of lessons.

International Adventures

In the last academic year, students have visited no less than four international destinations, and two of these, to Malta and France, were subsidised thanks to the UK Turing Scheme; this means that international travel becomes possible for all, including those from low income households.



Malta

In February, 18 students in Year 11 spent a week in Malta sightseeing in the capital city of Valletta, the historic town of Mosta and the ancient walled city of Mdina, alongside the modern tourist resorts of Sliema, Qawra and Bugibba.

In Valletta, the group admired the Baroque architecture before heading to the bastions for a spectacular view over the Grand Harbour and to watch the Saluting Battery ceremony, where canons are fired out to sea at noon and at 4.00pm. They also visited the Triton Fountain and Malta 5D, an audio-visual show which explores the history of Malta in a technology-rich theatre.

In the 4,000-year-old walled city of Mdina, the group discovered why, thanks to strict restrictions on vehicle access, it is also known as the 'Silent City'. They visited the Carmelite Priory, with its elaborate interior, and also Mdina Dungeons, which tells the story of corporal punishment through a series of exhibits in cells and passageways below the city's medieval palace. The stone gate to Mdina was a popular spot for photographs, as fans recognised it as the film location used as the entrance to King's Landing in Game of Thrones. The group also visited the film set of the 1980 film Popeye, which is now a popular tourist attraction.

To learn more about Malta's WWII history, the trip included a visit to the town of Mosta to explore the famous Rotunda, which survived a direct hit in 1942 during an air raid. Astonishingly, over 300 worshippers were spared when a German bomb came through the domed roof, landing at the altar and failing to explode; the diffused bomb is still on display within the church as a reminder of what locals consider to be a miracle. They also visited the WWII shelter which lies below the church; this was dug by hand in 1940 by local tradesmen.

In the modern resort of Sliema, the group visited the Independence Gardens, home to a large number of stray cats that are cared for by locals, and they also enjoyed a harbour cruise to view the island from a different perspective. In Qawra, a visit to Malta National Aquarium proved popular, and of course the trip included eating out each night in a wide variety of restaurants.

An important feature of the trip was a visit to San Andrea Secondary School in Mgarr to join some of their lessons. This international school is made up of pupils from Malta, China, Germany, France, England, Italy, Sicily and more.

France



In June, 30 students in Year 9 travelled to Normandy to develop their French language skills and to learn about World War II history.

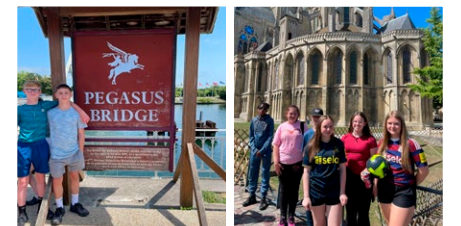
Students began the five-day trip with a visit to Omaha Beach and the Normandy American Cemetery, which covers 170 acres and contains the graves of over 9,300 military personnel, most of whom lost their lives in the D-Day landings and ensuing operations. The group then travelled to the Overlord Museum to discover the unique collection of 10,000 pieces, including personal effects of soldiers, tanks, vehicles and guns, and the life-size reconstructions which trace the history of the Battle of Normandy until the liberation of Paris.

The trip also included a visit to Ecole Élémentaire Fracasse, a primary school in Deauville, where the group spent the day working with pupils on their language skills. They also visited the Pegasus Memorial, which was originally the Caen Canal Bridge before its name was changed in 1944 as a tribute to the British troops who captured it, thus preventing a German counter-attack. Pegasus, the winged horse, was the emblem worn on the sleeves of the men of the airborne division who secured the bridge, hence the name.

A visit to the D-Day Museum allowed students to immerse themselves in a chronological tour through exhibitions of uniforms, weapons and personal effects; and a trip to the amazing Arromanches 360 Cinema was an excellent way to round off the whole experience with 20 emotive minutes of archive film footage from WWII complete with surround sound.

Of course, the trip gave students the opportunity to see and experience some fantastic WWII exhibits and memorials whilst practising their French language skills, but it was also invaluable in terms of building self confidence and independence alongside a desire to embrace global travel in the future.

Mr Wheatley, who organised the trip said, "This was an excellent educational experience for our students but it was also a great opportunity for personal growth. The group gained so much and we were proud of the maturity they demonstrated throughout."



Holland

May saw 45 students in Years 8 and 9 travel to Holland for a five-day trip organised by our PE Department.

This bi-annual experience is an extremely popular international opportunity for our young football fans, with pro-football training sessions at the KNVB Campus, friendly fixtures against young footballers in Holland, and a range of activities including ten pin bowling, a stadium tour, a visit to an art gallery and a trip to Duinrell Theme Park and Tiki Pool. You can read the full story on our PE pages later in this magazine.



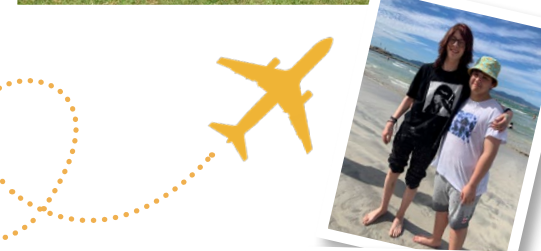
Majorca



Year 13 students in Media and Photography enjoyed a four-night trip to Majorca in October, where they explored the architecture, history and culture of the island. During the trip, the group gathered footage and photographs for their coursework.

In the capital city of Palma, students admired the diverse architecture, and visited La Seu Cathedral, which combines traditional Mediterranean Gothic design with contemporary periods. They also visited Merkat de L'Olivar, which houses almost a hundred food market stalls from around the world; and Castell de Bellver, Spain's only round castle. High on the hilltop, Bellver has a diverse history as a fortress, a royal summer residence, a prison and now a museum filled with artefacts from Roman, Arab and Spanish periods. The group also rode the Road Train to C'an Pastilla and visited Palma Aquarium to hear about the marine wildlife rescue programme that takes place there, and to learn about humpback whales via the aquarium's 3D Aquadome film, 'Whales, Giants of the Ocean'. The trip also included visits to S'Arenal Market, the Pirates' Market in Palma, the famous Plaça Major square, and the Old Town at night.

Director of Learning for Media and trip organiser, Miss Davies said, "As a department, we organise an international trip each year for two main reasons; of course students return with outstanding work for their portfolios, but they also gain confidence in their ability to meet new people and live independently when they leave us for university or work. This is so important for a successful future."





Using live performance to teach *English Literature*

This year, as part of GCSE English Literature, Mr Graham, Lead Practitioner for English, arranged a visit from the award-winning theatre company, *Box Clever*, which is dedicated to the creation of contemporary theatre for young people. The company brings interactive theatre experiences to schools, involving students as the audience members, participants and co-creators, and through creative plays they address relevant world issues from road safety and relationships to bullying.

Cast members, Paulo Sebastiao, Poppy Charlton and Callum Broome presented a contemporary version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to all students in Years 10 and 11, inviting individuals from the audience to join them on stage. The play was followed by a workshop debating the key themes of *Macbeth*; this linked directly to English Literature Paper 1. Six students in Year 9 also attended the event by special invitation as they had demonstrated a love for classic literature and attended lunchtime revision clubs to study the text in advance.

Mr Graham said, "It can be difficult to get young people to approach Shakespeare and *Macbeth* with an open mind as they automatically assume that they won't have anything in common with the characters in a 400 year-old play, however they soon change their opinion. This *Box Clever* visit allowed us to engage a whole year group at once, and students embraced the key themes of ambition, guilt, good versus evil, the influence of power and the concept of fate versus free will. It was a great way to learn and students were completely enthralled."

In October, *Box Clever* will return to deliver two performances of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens followed by associated workshops to examine the themes in this classic novel. Again, this will be delivered to all students in Years 10 and 11 to prepare them for GCSE English Literature Paper 1. Scan this QR code to visit the *Box Clever* website and view *A Christmas Carol* trailer.



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Around the world with *Gusto Lingo*!

Students will soon be cooking dishes from around the world at Mr Blood's after-school cooking club, *Gusto Lingo*.

At the club, students will develop cookery skills, an appreciation of different cultures, and even some language skills, with different members of staff joining sessions as guest chefs. Staff will demonstrate their favourite recipes, with dishes from France and Spain to Greece and Ghana!



Religious Studies visit to Bible Times Exhibition

In June, Year 7 Religious Studies students attended the *Bible Times Exhibition* at the *Wear Valley Christian Centre*. This annual event is hosted by Reverend Bob Woods.

The exhibition showcased a variety of Christian and Jewish artifacts, including Torah scrolls and Bibles translated into different languages, as well as a detailed history of the development of both the Jewish and Christian religions.

Throughout the academic year, pupils study the impact of religious belief upon communities. The items on display at the exhibition allowed pupils to see first hand how these have contributed to human understanding of both faith and religion within the modern era. During the visit, pupils participated in a carousel of different workshops led by volunteers from the Centre where they were able to touch some of the items on display, as well as ask questions about their origins and design.



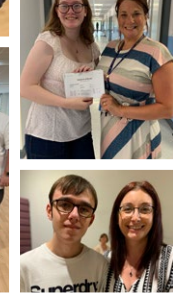
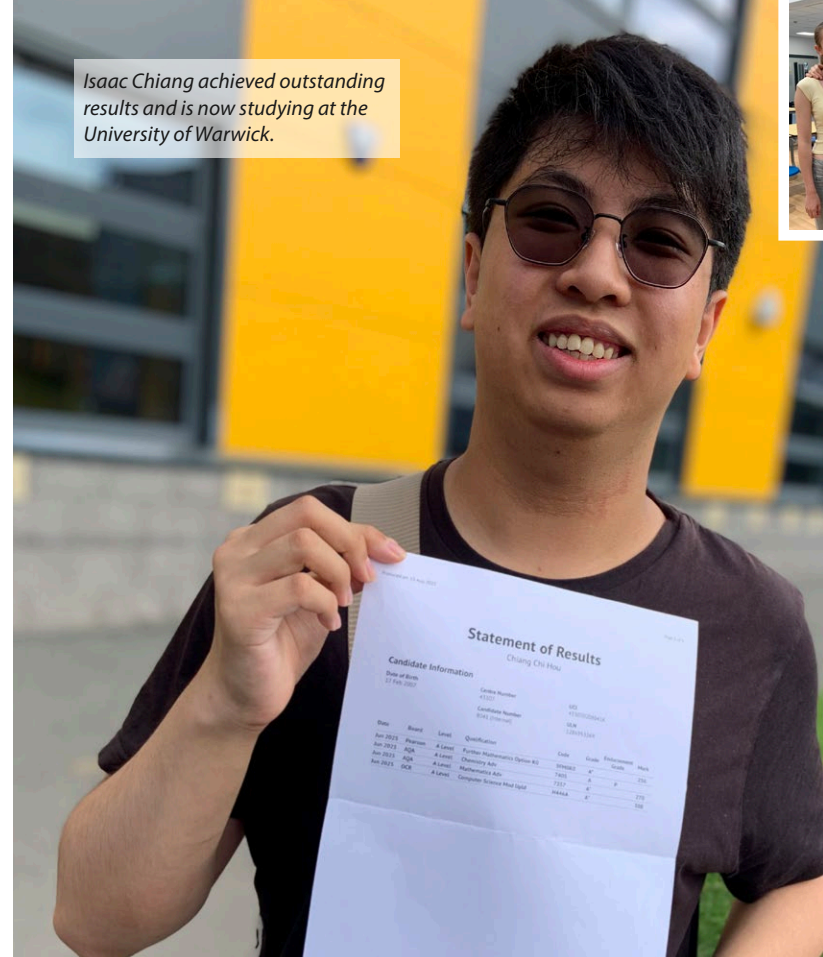
Focus on online safety

In a world full of technology, online safety is more important than ever.

Students learn about online safety as part of Computer Science & IT, and the department also shares new information with parents via direct messaging, our Academy website and social media. Themed assemblies ensure that students are knowledgeable about topics such as fake news, catfishing, cyberstalking, online grooming, sexting and cyberbullying; and as all students at King James work on a *Chromebook* in the majority of lessons, we can offer an enhanced layer of protection as any harmful websites can be blocked by our IT Technicians.



Isaac Chiang achieved outstanding results and is now studying at the University of Warwick.



Celebrating outstanding *Exam Results!*

Students at King James are celebrating outstanding A' Level and GCSE results, and many students in Year 13 achieved the highest grades and are now starting degree courses at university.

In A' Level programmes, 71% of grades were A* - C, with 16% of grades at A* or A grades. Whilst results in all subjects were positive, outcomes were particularly strong in Maths, in which 100% of students achieved at least a C grade, with several achieving A* and A grades. In Art, 83% of students achieved A* - C grades, and in A' Level Sciences, which includes Biology, Chemistry and Computer Science, 75% of students achieved A* - C.

In BTEC's and technical subjects, we again saw a 100% pass rate, which is a fantastic achievement. 55% of students achieved the highest Distinction* or Distinction grades and 89% achieved at least a Merit. In ICT and Performing Arts, 100% of students achieved a Distinction* or Distinction grade, and all students following Human Biology, Business, Media and Music achieved either a Merit, Distinction or Distinction* grade.

Whilst we are immensely proud of all of our students, special congratulations go to Isaac

Chiang, who achieved A* grades in Computer Science, Maths and Further Maths, and an A grade in Chemistry. He will now move on to the University of Warwick to follow a Science specialism. Bobbie Davison also achieved superbly, with Distinction* and A grades in Media, History and Criminology. Bobbie will now complete a degree programme in Film Studies at the University of Sunderland.

Other top performers were Danny Clay, who was awarded Distinction*, Distinction and A grades in Psychology, Media and Criminology, and Ella Bellamy, who achieved Distinction grades in Human Biology, Psychology and Health & Social Care. Danny will complete a further year at King James I Sixth Form, to study Sociology, and Ella plans to go to the University of Plymouth to study nursing.

We would like to congratulate all of our students on the successes they have achieved, and the hard work and dedication they have applied to bring about these fantastic results.

Meet our new *Head Students*

After a rigorous application process involving a video presentation, student vote and interview, we can now introduce our Year 11 Student Leaders for 2025-26.

Our Head Student for the coming year is Kaitlyn Ballan, pictured here, who not only spoke with great confidence in her presentation video and interview, but also impressed the interview team with her outstanding attendance and huge number of positive *Class Charts* points.

Kaitlyn will be supported in her role by two deputies and together they will represent the Academy at public events, help to organise special events in school, and develop ideas to improve the school experience for their peers.





Students travel to London for Carnegie Book Awards

Annual Scholastic Book Fair

Our annual *Scholastic Book Fair* gives both students and staff the opportunity to buy a wide range of books from best sellers and classics to exclusive titles.

The event is a celebration of reading that puts the very best books directly into the hands of pupils, all whilst raising rewards to spend on books and resources for our library. This year, we had three mobile bookcases on loan, packed with over 200 of the newest and best books from over 60 publishers, including exclusive titles that aren't available in shops or at any other fairs. We raised £80 to spend on new books for our Academy Library.



In June, eight students in Years 7-9 travelled by train to London with our Librarian, Mr Wheatley to attend the *Carnegie Book Awards* ceremony at the *Cambridge Theatre*. Throughout the academic year, in an extra-curricular lunchtime club, our Carnegie students read and discuss the nominated books, before submitting a vote for their favourite.

With limited capacity for seating in the theatre, school librarians must apply for seats and in previous years, our students have had to access the ceremony via live stream only. This year, Mr Wheatley was delighted to be allocated free tickets and the group joined an audience of 600 young people who had travelled from across the UK to hear the winners.

The Carnegies celebrate achievement in children's writing and illustration and each year thousands of reading groups in schools around the world get involved, with young people 'shadowing' the judging process and choosing their own winners from the shortlist. This year, winners included Margaret McDonald for her emotional novel, *Glasgow Boys*, Olivia Lomenech Gill for her illustrations in *Clever Crow*, and Nathanael Lessore for *King of Nothing*, much to the approval of our students who had voted for this particular novel themselves.

Before the formal awards ceremony, all of the shortlisted authors and illustrators delivered an inspiring talk to students, sharing their tips on how to establish a career in the industry, how to develop their own writing and illustration style, and the importance of dedication and resilience. This also included a Q&A session.

Extra-curricular activities

Each week, our Academy Library hosts a popular after-school Games Club for fans of *Warhammer*, *Pokemon*, *Magic the Gathering*, *Dungeons & Dragons*, and *Disney Lorcana*.

Games Club is open to students in all year groups from Years 7-13 who share a common interest in table top games, which means it is an excellent opportunity for socialising. Students can also take part in our lunchtime Chess Club, which is known to raise IQ and build problem-solving skills as well as being lots of fun.



Year 11 lunchtime Revision Club

This year, we have launched a lunchtime revision club in our Library for all Year 11 students.



The Revision Club offers a supervised, quiet space, fully stocked with text books and learning resources for all subjects. Students have access to a wide range of materials to enable them to create their own revision resources, such as flash cards, post it notes, exercise books, notepads, drawing paper, highlighter pens, and felt tips and coloured pencils for mind mapping.

World Book Day

This year, our World Book Day celebration event was the best yet, with lessons delivered by teachers dressed as characters from their favourite books!

Students were both surprised and delighted to see Miss Elizabeth Bennett in Maths, Miss Trunchbull in Geography, Hagrid in Science, Winnie the Pooh in Food & Nutrition and the Mad Hatter in the Library, alongside a host of other characters from Dobby, Cruella de Vil and Miss Havisham, to Mrs Doubtfire and Captain Hook! Miss Howard even spent the day teaching Drama in head-to-toe green face paint as Elphaba from *Wicked*.

Each year, Mr Wheatley organises the event as a way to promote reading for pleasure, however this year was extra special as it was also organised as a fundraiser. Students and staff all made a donation to attend school in non-school uniform and an amazing £1,010 was raised as a result. This was donated to *If U Care Share*, a local charity set up to provide a range of services fundamental to the prevention of suicide, plus support services for families bereaved by suicide.



Student Librarians learning from the professionals

Student Librarians have met with members of the Conservation Team at the *Auckland Project* to learn about logging and recording collections and preserving different materials. They also took part in a hands-on session to try processing artefacts for themselves.

The group then visited the *Faith Museum*, which explores over 6,000 years of British history, to consider how the artefacts on display there were preserved; they then created their own displays with artefacts they had been working with throughout the day. As part of this activity, they wrote information cards and considered how they would present their collection to make it as engaging as possible for visitors. Back at King James, our Student Librarians used their new skills to help Mr Wheatley create the best library space possible.



Working in partnership with the Auckland Project

We have a well established working partnership with *The Auckland Project*, which gives us access to many of the venues, attractions and parkland the project offers, plus opportunities to deliver exciting learning opportunities outside of the classroom.

Early in the year, all of our Year 7 students attend a full-day, carousel-style visit where they are able to tour a number of the attractions including *The Mining Gallery*, *Spanish Gallery*, *Faith Museum* and *Auckland Castle*. Those with a head for heights can also access *Auckland Tower* for a birds eye view across the Market Place and town centre.

Members of our extra-curricular Comic Book Club visited *Auckland Castle*, pictured right, to hear some of the interesting but gruesome stories linked to our local area. Bishop Auckland has a strange and fascinating history, and our comic book creators were able to take inspiration from them. The group of 15 students from Years 7-9 were inspired by the elaborate interior of the palace, which gave them some excellent ideas for settings in their comics. They were also fascinated by the stories of the Bishops who survived the Tudors and the disgusting dinner parties that would have taken place there, and many went on to use these stories to develop their own concepts for a plot. For creative students, young writers and existing comic book fans, this particular club provides the opportunity to use their imagination to develop exciting characters and a plot, alongside building drawing skills as they create their own product.



In the past year, English students have toured the castle and completed a creative challenge to write a piece inspired by the scene in each room; and the Drama, Art and Photography Departments have made excellent use of the partnership by exploring the cultural art in the *Spanish Gallery* and *Faith Museum*. Photography students took some outstanding photographs for their coursework, with a focus on the dramatic architectural angles of *Auckland Tower*; and they also gathered some amazing aerial shots from the top. In July, our Academy choir performed a free concert at *Auckland Palace*, revelling in the superb natural accoustics. They received excellent feedback from both *Auckland Project* staff and tourists alike.



Practitioner Q&A

In Year 10, students opt into a series of presentations with industry professionals. The aim is to inform students about the routes of entry and the skills and qualities required for different roles.



This year, students heard from visiting speakers from the Army, Specsavers, Smith Roddam Solicitors, Amazon and Raby Estates, alongside a Software Engineer and Joiner. They also enjoyed a practical floristry workshop with Allan Raby and Charlotte Perrett, Tutors from East Durham College, where they created colourful boutonnieres to wear on the lapel of their blazer.



Annual Careers Fair

Every year we hold a Careers Fair featuring representatives from a wide selection of industry sectors, apprenticeship programmes and universities.

Students in all year groups and their parents attend the event to talk to visitors at each stall. This allows students to get lots of practical advice about entry requirements and different routes into the industry of interest. This year, the event will take place on Wednesday 12th November.

Focus on Careers



Year 10 Work experience

In May, our Year 10 students enjoyed a week-long period of work experience with local businesses and organisations from a wide variety of sectors.

Animal lovers got the opportunity to work in their ideal environment thanks to *The Barkery Dog Kennels* and *Castle Veterinary Surgeons*, both pictured above, whilst others enjoyed placements in a wide variety of sectors from retail, hospitality and administration to commercial trades and service industries.

A number of students requested placements in local primary schools to explore their ambition to teach as a career, and others who were keen to work with babies and toddlers in a childcare environment found placements in local nurseries. Students also enjoyed work experience in retail, beauty therapy, construction, engineering and healthcare environments; and a group of Year

10s joined the team at *The Auckland Project* where they experienced a variety of roles and learned about the many opportunities in archaeology, restoration and curation.

We would like to thank all of the businesses who supported by providing our students with an excellent experience. These included *George Smith Electricals*, *Durham Works*, *Garnetts*, *Innovations*, *Living*, *Tri-tech Surveys*, *Dalecare*, *Ineos*, *Velocity UK*, *Homes by Esh*, *Fab Deals*, *AJM Construction Ltd*, *Ramsey Joinery*, *T Manners*, *Holly Lodge Care Home*, *Garden Alliance*, *Inkheart Tattoo*, *Leisure Vehicle Services Cannock*, *Gestamp*, *Durham Box*, *Trimdon Farm*, *4 Clocks*, *Franks*, *Lee Brown*, *Elite Decor* and *C&C Aldred*.



Taster sessions at Bishop Auckland College

Throughout their time at King James, students attend one-to-one interviews with Miss Goddard to discuss their ambitions and make sure that they know what they have to do to achieve them.

For those who are interested in careers such as beauty therapy, carpentry, plumbing, construction and vehicle maintenance, Miss Goddard arranges taster sessions at *Bishop Auckland College* so that they can find out more about the opportunities available for training and try out the role for themselves. This makes sure that all of our students are fully supported and confident in making decisions about the next step in their education after they leave Year 11.

Students achieve the prestigious

Duke of Edinburgh Awards



This year, 38 students in Years 9, 10 and 12 have earned one of the prestigious Duke of Edinburgh Awards following completion of tasks in four main sections of the programme: Volunteering, Physical, Skills, and Expedition.

Our DofE programme is managed by Geography Teacher, Mrs Fegan. Students work with her throughout the year to log the required number of volunteering hours, alongside those spent taking part in physical activities or developing a new skill. The programme culminates with an expedition involving orienteering, hiking and camping.

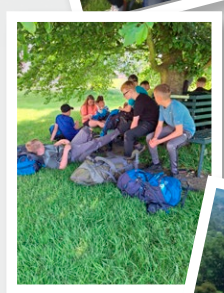
To achieve the Bronze Award, students must complete three months of volunteering in school or in our wider community. This year, students have been involved in sports coaching at local primary schools, working with animals at a local shelter and stables, and assisting Year 7s with one-to-one support as part of the reading initiative at King James. They must also participate in a physical activity for at least three months and students have been involved in everything from football, boxing and gymnastics to dancing and roller-skating.

In terms of developing a new or existing skill, some participants have focused on progression in a sporting activity or developing

their fitness levels and stamina, whilst others have been learning a language with *Duo Lingo* and developing their cooking skills. To achieve the Silver Award, students must complete a six-month period in each category.

For the expedition element, which involves walking, camping and navigating, students planned, trained and completed an expedition in an unfamiliar environment. For the Bronze award, the expedition covered two days and one night, and for the Silver, students completed three days and two nights. To prepare for this, students took part in first aid training and practice sessions to ensure they were able to put up their tent efficiently and hike with their back packs.

Students who completed the programme can now add the prestigious awards to their CV. The scheme is extremely well respected by both universities and employers who recognise the commitment and resilience required to succeed and greatly value these qualities.



Stop Motion Animation new



This year, the Media Department is launching a new extra-curricular club for students who are interested in trying Stop Motion Animation.

Students will be able to develop creative storytelling and video editing skills, and achieve a finished product that can be published on our *Youtube* channel, *KJTV Productions*. All using a variety of poseable figures, coloured clay for making unique characters, and miniature furniture to construct sets. The club will be open at lunchtime at least one day each week, and every Friday after school until 4.00pm.

Professional quality Products



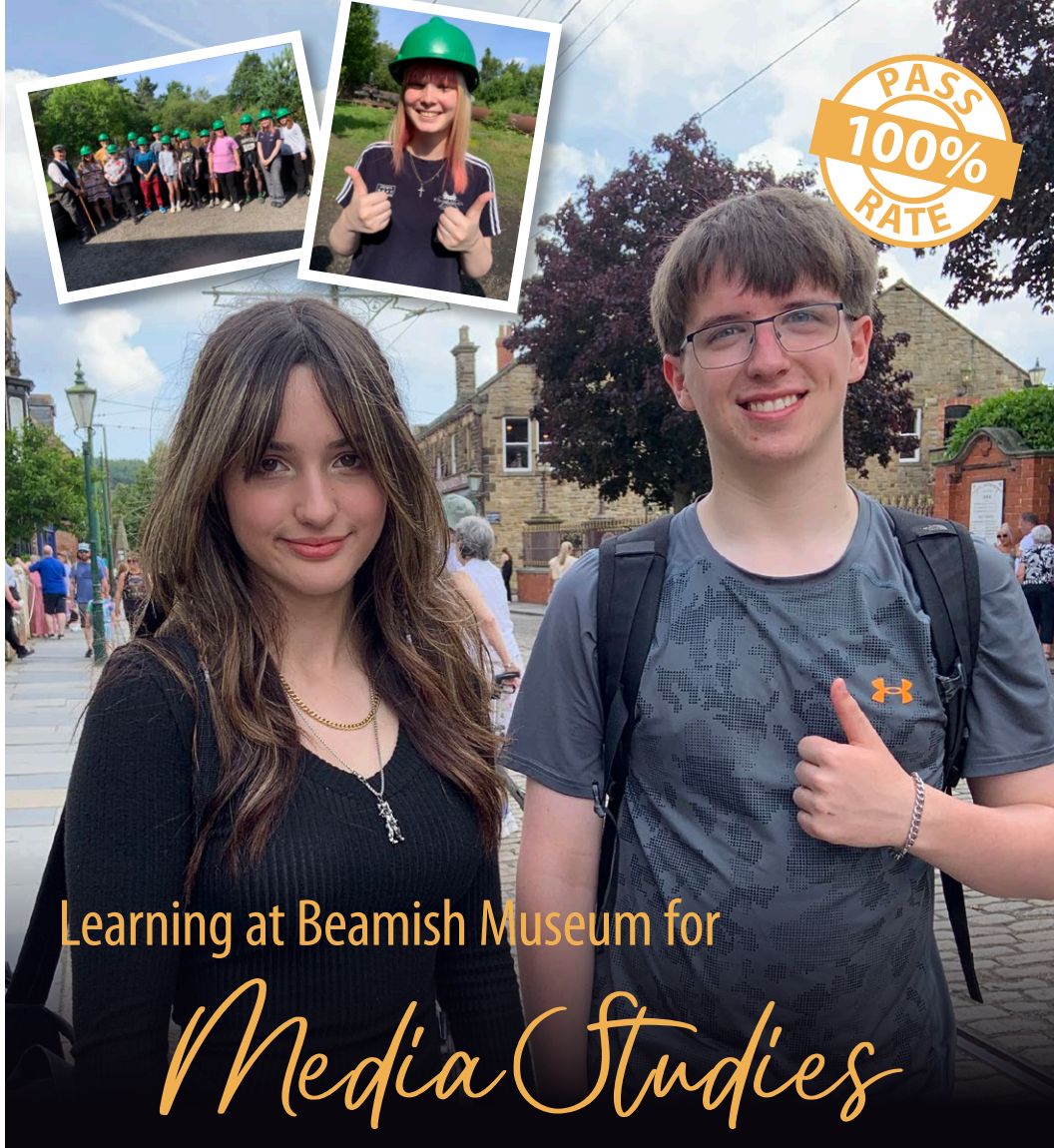
Media students are consistently praised by moderators for the high quality of their work.

From print products such as magazines, leaflets and posters, to film products including fictional films and documentaries, all are produced using professional software to achieve top quality results. We invest in an annual subscription to *Adobe Creative Suite*, which is widely used in industry, and this ensures that students develop outstanding skills for the future.

From The Sofa Podcast new

This year, Sixth Form students will be able to take part in a new King James Podcast.

From The Sofa will give students the opportunity to discuss and debate topics that are important to them, and interview special guests on the sofa!



Learning at Beamish Museum for Media Studies

The Media industry in the UK is booming and there are hundreds of career options in the sector for talented people. Our media courses are designed to build specialist knowledge and a wide range of practical skills, and the department boasts 100% pass rate at both Level 2 and 3.

In Media Studies, students get a broad overview of the industry and build specialist skills including script writing, film making, editing, photography, graphic design and journalism. They also enjoy visits to the cinema, Beamish Museum, Whitby Goth Weekend, Auckland Castle and even an international trip.

The annual visit to Beamish Museum, pictured above, gives students the opportunity to see how setting, props, costume, hair and make-up are carefully chosen and combined to reflect a specific time period; this is an important aspect of media production called *mise-en-scene*. Students identified how the museum had effectively used these techniques to create towns from different decades and this will help them to analyse TV shows and movie products for their coursework.

This year, Mrs Mulryan and members of her Year 7 extra-curricular Photography Club, right, also joined the trip to Beamish as a reward for their hard work throughout the year. It was also a great opportunity for them to take photographs.

In Media lessons, Year 10 students are analysing a range of products from

computer games and magazines to films and TV shows; whilst Year 11s are developing practical skills in photography, journalism and graphic design as they prepare to create a magazine product. Year 13s are also producing a magazine, specifically aimed at young adults, and Year 12s are beginning their Sixth Form Media journey by studying the planning procedure needed for a successful production. They will use this knowledge moving forward, as they go on to create their own products.



Members of the extra-curricular Year 7 Photography Club.

Design Technology

In Design Technology, students focus on creating physical products with an attractive but functional design.

DT is a practical, hands-on subject, which encourages students to be creative and resourceful, whilst developing problem-solving skills and helping them to understand how technology impacts their lives. Students generate ideas, develop plans and create prototypes, before going on to use a variety of tools and materials to construct their designs. By doing this, they learn different techniques and develop practical skills in construction. Students complete each project by assessing their finished product, identifying areas for improvement and learning from their experience.

In lessons, students have designed and produced packaging and point of sale materials for chocolates using cardboard, and last term they worked in pairs to design and build a wooden bird house, pictured right. This involved learning how to safely use appropriate tools. This was followed by a creative project to design a working clock using acrylic as the main material.



KJTV Productions on Youtube! new

Our Media Department has launched a new *Youtube* channel, *KJTV Productions*, to showcase TV shows produced by both King James students and local primary pupils.

The channel currently includes news shows, storytelling programmes and documentaries featuring primary pupils from a number of local schools who have worked with the department as part of our Academy Outreach programme. This year will see the addition of music videos, short fiction and podcasts.



Thornhill Primary School produced an episode of The Good News Show at our Primary Outreach session.

Get Creative!

Art & Photography PASS 100% RATE

Our Art & Photography Department offers students a host of opportunities to develop their creativity and to build technical skills. Alongside normal lessons, students are able to enjoy trips and get involved in special projects.

As part of their Food project in Art, 30 of our Year 7 pupils had the opportunity to visit the *Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA)*. Students had been studying the work of Claes Oldenburg in class, and the trip gave them the opportunity to see his work in person. As a sculptor, Oldenburg is known for his large scale art installations of everyday objects including food.

Year 8 artists studied Cubism as an art movement and artists including Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, before using clay to produce geometric faces inspired by what they had learned. Year 9 students enjoyed a trip to the *Spanish Gallery* to learn about Islamic art, before going on to create their own mosaic. This then inspired their on Buddhist and Hindu art. They were also involved in a creative project with *Durham University* called *Weaving Friendships*, which created multi-goal messages in different languages within

colourful paper weaving trees to celebrate global unity.

In GCSE Photography, Year 10 students enjoyed a trip to the walled garden inside *Auckland Palace* to photograph trees and plants for their unit of study on natural forms; and Year 11s completed studio shoots to develop their skills in lighting techniques and macro photography using flowers.

In July, GCSE and A'Level students held exhibitions to showcase their creative work including their final exam pieces, and King James staff and students' family members visited to see the work in situ and hear students talk about their inspiration and techniques.



A'Level Art student, Rufus Dhimon, with the art installation produced for his final piece.

Quality Mark for excellence in computing!

King James has been recognised for delivering high-quality computing education, developing the digital skills of young people and preparing them for the future.



We have achieved the national Computing Quality Mark after evaluation of our computing education demonstrated high-quality provision. The Computing Quality Mark is awarded by the National Centre for Computing Education and recognises excellence of computing education offered by a school as part of their curriculum development through the Computing Quality Framework (CQF).

Claire Garside, Senior Lead Facilitator at the NCCE said, "Congratulations to King James on becoming an NCCE 'Computing Quality Mark' school. They're among the schools leading the way to deliver high standards in computing education. The Computing Quality Mark recognises the quality of their provision to ensure all students receive the computing skills and knowledge so valuable for today and in their future careers."

Walking the Robot Dog

As part of an exciting learning experience in Computer Science, students have been introduced to Bernard the robotic dog, resident computerised canine at the University of Sunderland.

Bernard, which is one of the most advanced quadrupedal robots in development, was brought to the Academy by Mark Bennison, Programme Leader and Senior Lecturer for the BSc (Hons) Computer Science course. Bernard joined the Faculty of Technology and Engineering at Sunderland in 2021 to showcase what robotic technology can do and he is one of only a handful of his kind in the UK.

Bernard first joined a Year 12 Computer Science lesson to introduce students to the way that robotics can be used in an applied way to solve tasks. At the end of the school day, he was then available for younger students to meet, and Mark was happy to answer their questions and demonstrate Bernard's capabilities, including his impressive dance moves, pictured right. Bernard is worth approximately £100,000!



Chromebooks for all students

All Year 7 students are provided with a Chromebook when they join King James to support their learning both at school and at home. In an increasingly digital world, this makes sure that our students develop excellent computer skills and that all have access to a personal computer.

Real world Computing

Computing at King James offers fantastic opportunities for our students that connect directly to everyday life, from understanding how technology we use works, to developing practical skills in problem solving, communication and creativity that are essential in today's digital world.



The subject recognises the relevance to modern life and the range of career opportunities it can lead to. In lessons, students explore a wide range of topics including the inner workings of a computer, networking, programming, algorithms, problem solving, digital design, digital safety and computational abstractions. These foundational skills are introduced at Key Stage 3, with opportunities to deepen knowledge and gain formal qualifications in these areas at Key Stages 4 and 5.

Students are provided with enriching opportunities that extend their learning beyond the classroom, including visits to leading companies such as Cummins and Nissan, where they gain valuable insight to real-

world industry practices. They also participate in events like Digital Safety Day, pictured left; the event earlier this year featured a video link with influential guest speaker, Scarlett Moffatt, who shared essential knowledge about staying safe online.

Additionally, students engage in creative projects such as designing a user interface for the Auckland Project, allowing them to apply their digital and design skills to meaningful, real-world challenges. Students also have the unique opportunity to work alongside the Durham Cyber Police, gaining first hand experience in tackling cybercrime and learning about careers in digital forensics and online safety.



Young musician of the year

Music students in Years 7-10 have taken part in the inaugural Young Musician of the Year competition at King James. The event, which was organised by Director of Learning for Music, Mr Smith, showcased some of the best talent in the Music department.

The competition featured two categories. In the vocal round, students chose to sing live with either instrumental accompaniment or using a backing track; and in the instrumental round, students demonstrated their talent by playing along to their chosen songs from Arctic Monkeys and Oasis to the Red Hot Chilli Peppers.

Prior to the event itself, Mr Smith held a number of auditions in order to select the performers who would compete in the final on the night, and this prestigious group performed in front of a panel of judges and an invited audience of family members. The vast majority of participants had never performed in front of an audience before, so this was an excellent opportunity to develop their live performance skills and to overcome

nerves, which they all did well. The judging panel consisted of Paul Waite, professional musician and Music Teacher from Durham Music Service; Charley Armstrong, King James Teacher who supports the Academy Drama Club and who is directly involved in bringing the arts and cultural events to Bishop Auckland; and Joanne Aitkin, Deputy Headteacher who is an ambassador for all creative art forms.

Congratulations to Sophie Stevens in Year 9, winner of the vocal category, and to Year 8 vocalist, Isobelle Spowart who was highly commended. In the instrumental category, the winner was Year 7 drummer, Dylan Musgrove, and highly commended was Noah Quinn. Well done to all participants who made it to the final.

"This event was a huge success and an excellent experience for our students. For many, this was the first time they had performed in front of a live audience and they showed great courage in doing so."

Elliott Smith, Director of Learning for Music

Future Business Magnates

Every year, a group of students in Year 8 enter Durham County Council's Future Business Magnates competition.



The team work with a local business partner to research, develop and test an idea for an exciting new product or business, and take part in a variety of rounds which are judged by an esteemed panel. Points are awarded for each round and the winning team with the most points is announced at a glittering event in July.

Workshops in Equality

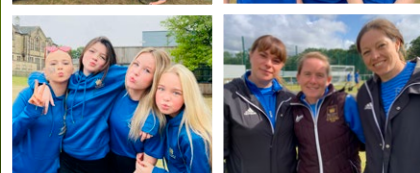
Students in Years 7-9 have attended a series of educational workshops delivered by the Foundation of Light, the official charity of Sunderland AFC.

The charity offers a variety of programmes, all designed to positively impact the health, behaviour, attitude, skills and education of teenagers. With young people facing such a variety of ever-evolving challenges in life, secondary schools need to adapt their approach to pastoral care; for this reason we enlisted The Foundation of Light.

At King James, the charity delivered a series of thought-provoking workshops with a focus on equality to promote greater understanding of diversity in society. This was just one of the many learning activities that we organised to raise awareness and encourage our young people to invest in their local community.



PE & Sport



Sports Day

In the last week of term, an excellent time was had by competitors and spectators alike at our Year Group Sports Day events.

Field events took place prior to our track days, with students taking part in Shot Putt, Discus, Javelin, Standing Broad Jump and Standing Triple Jump. Track events including 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m and the 4 x 100m relay then followed over three days.

At the Year 7 Sports Day event, the trophy was won by Miss Howard's form group with 121 points overall; and Miss Armstrong's form group claimed the trophy in Year 8 with 117 points. In the Year 9 event, the winning form group was Miss Ward's with an impressive 134 points at the end of the day; and the Year 10 winners were Mr Blood's form group, who ended the day on 100 points. Well done to all of our competitors and congratulations to the winners.



Football in Holland

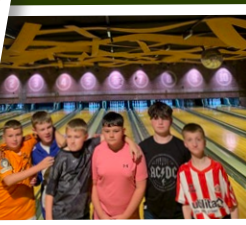
In May, 45 students in Years 8 and 9 travelled to Holland for a five-day action-packed trip with our PE Department. This bi-annual experience is an extremely popular international opportunity, especially for our young football fans.



With both boys and girls attending, the trip involved pro-football training sessions at the KNVB Campus, which is not only the training centre for all of the Netherlands national teams, but also where professional coaches receive their training and qualifications. Students also played a number of friendly fixtures against young footballers in the Woerden U13s and U14s, and two of the SV Houten teams. The experience wasn't all about football however. Students enjoyed eating out each night and taking part in a range of activities including ten pin bowling, a tour of the Ajax Stadium, which is home to the most successful club in Holland, shopping in Utrecht and in Amsterdam, a visit to the Rijksmuseum Art Gallery, and also a trip to Duinrell Theme Park and Tiki Pool.

To prepare for the trip, students took part in two fundraising activities to generate money to subsidise the cost of activities whilst in Holland. Thanks to a sponsored walk from Durham to Bishop Auckland, and a fancy-dress fun run around our 3G football pitch, students raised over £4,000! This helped to make sure that that trip was affordable for everyone.

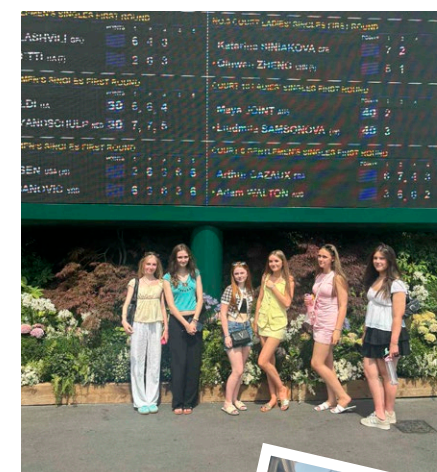
PE Teacher, Mr Bushby, who organised the trip said, "This is always a valuable experience for students, not just because of the opportunities to train with international coaches, but also because they develop a real sense of teamwork and sportsmanship. We are always so proud of the way our students conduct themselves."



Girls take trip to Wimbledon

In July, six girls enjoyed an overnight trip to London to watch tennis at Wimbledon. They were accompanied by PE staff, Mrs Crowther and Mrs O'Connor, and chosen to attend as a reward for their achievement in PE throughout the academic year.

The group joined thousands of fans to watch tennis on Court 2 in scorching 32 degree sunshine. They then enjoyed a visit to Leicester Square and the M&Ms store, which is the largest candy store in the world spread over four floors. This was followed by a little sightseeing and a restaurant meal in the evening before turning in for the night. The following day, at their request, the girls took in some more shops before heading home. It was fantastic for our students to see professional players in action and to experience one of the most prestigious tournaments in the world and the only Grand Slam played on grass.



Keanna is Muay Thai World Champion!

Year 8 student, Keanna Carrick has returned from Italy with a gold medal and a world title following her victory at the Muay Thai World Championships.

Keanna began her sporting career at the age of just six when she joined her local Mixed Martial Arts club and three years later, she switched to Thai Boxing as she was keen to enter competition fighting. Now, she trains regularly at Legions Gym in York and is looking forward to taking part in as many competitions as possible.

In the World Championships final, which took place at the AGSM AIM Stadium in Verona, Keanna fought against an Italian opponent, and despite being at a distinct disadvantage in terms of height, she fought three rounds and won them all to claim the title. Over 80 countries were represented at the event and Team England won Team of the Tournament with the most wins and medals overall. This wasn't Keanna's first competition title; earlier this year she also won the Amateur Muay Thai World Open in Great Yarmouth.



Sporting Heroes

Leyla Vickers

Talented footballer, Leyla has been signed to Sunderland AFC Womens' Academy U16s for her fourth season.



Leyla, who is now in Year 11, has been playing football since she was just five years old. Her impressive record for scoring goals caught the eye of England Scouts, and as a result she has been attending England Talent Camps designed for potential Lionesses since mid-2023. Leyla hopes to break into the England squad and make a career from the sport she loves.

Jenson Wright

Year 7 student, Jenson has very quickly established himself as a talented track athlete.



In his first year at King James, he has already beaten two school track records, one in 200m and the other in 400m, and on Year 7 Sports Day, he unsurprisingly claimed medals for both of these races, alongside the 100m relay. Jenson is definitely one to watch when we enter athletics competitions this year.

Lilly Metcalfe

Lilly, who has been Thai Boxing for three years, trains five days every week and completes strength and conditioning training on another two days!



Earlier in the year, she won two belts on the same day at the Siam Open in Birmingham, one in Thai Boxing and another in Kick Boxing. She also came joint first overall in the whole tournament. Lilly told us, "There is such an adrenaline rush when you get in the ring and winning makes all the hard work worthwhile."



Bishop Auckland Town Council Youth Award Winners

Bishop Auckland Town Council's Youth Awards is designed to give recognition to outstanding young people in Bishop Auckland. This year, we are proud to announce that our students won four awards!



Guests were welcomed to Bishop Auckland Town Hall in red-carpet style by Mayor Sam Zair and Town Clerk, Sarah Harris, who greeted award winners and their families as they arrived.



A total of 25 awards were presented on the evening - 19 individual awards and 6 group awards, all of which recognised the efforts of young people in areas such as

community service, sports, the arts and personal achievement.

Year 8 student, Mick Fieldson was presented with the *Overcoming Personal Difficulties Award*; and our Year 10 Community Ambassadors won an award for their contributions to the artwork on Shildon Railway Bridge. Our Mental Health & Wellbeing Ambassadors were also honoured with the *Biggest Impact Award* for their dedicated work regarding mental health both in our school and the surrounding community. Former Sixth Former, Anthony Chiang, received the *WOW Award* for his outstanding academic achievement in his A' Levels; Anthony is now studying a Degree at *Oxford University*.

We also celebrated a number of runners-up in various categories and are incredibly proud of all nominees and winners.

Students bid for funding with the key

We have been working with *The Key*, a charity which allows young people to bid for funding to help them drive forward a project of their choice.

Students form a group and progress through a five-step process to think, plan and pitch their bid to a 'Dragon's Den' style panel of judges. If successful, they then move forward with the project, and finally review their progress. Projects may include things such as organising a trip, launching a new club or developing a project to benefit the community in some way. Transitioning through the stages sees young people build their confidence, grow as individuals, and recognise the positive impact they can make in society.

Rewards Store

We make a priority of rewarding students for their hard work in meeting our Seven Standards and *Class Charts* points earned can be converted to treats at our *Rewards Store*.

Students are able to spend their hard earned achievement points on a wide range of rewards ranging from stress toys and stationery to sweet treats. Last year, Year 11s had the opportunity to rack up extra points by attending after school and holiday revision sessions. Mrs Collinson, Assistant Headteacher, opens the Reward Store twice a week at lunch time for students to collect their rewards. She said, "The store has been a great success with our students, and their feedback has helped it to evolve and include a greater variety of products. This year, it will also be open to Year 9 students."



Aim Higher

As part of our *Aim Higher* programme, a group of Key Stage 4 students visited *Teesside University* with Mr Butters to take part in an event called *Choose your Future*.

Designed to encourage young people to begin thinking about career planning and entering higher education after Sixth Form, students first learned about the huge choice of subjects available to them at degree level. They were then able to choose and take part in various workshops led by industry specialists which centred on a diverse range of sectors such as Art, AI, Psychology, Animation and Sport. The group also received a tour of the modern campus at Teesside and the facilities for both learning and leisure. Aim Higher visits take place throughout the year to a variety of universities.



Focus on Science

In our Science Department, teachers focus on planning creative and fun lessons to inspire students in Chemistry, Biology and Physics. During *British Science Week*, students in all year groups enjoyed activities based around the 2025 theme of *Adapt and Change*.

Using this theme, teachers offered our students a range of experiences based on the question, "How could we colonise Mars?". The programme consisted of events and extra-curricular activities which pupils would not usually have access to, such as a star gazing night in school, an observatory visit, and a planetarium experience.

In lessons, students looked at how we might need to adapt and change to survive on another planet. Activities included investigating our health to see if we match NASA astronaut requirements, pictured above, learning about the science of rockets, and even exploring careers in the space industry.

A' Level Physics students were inspired by attending *Durham University Global*

Week where they experienced world-class, cutting edge, scientific research taking place. On the final day of British Science Week, Science teachers surprised students by dressing up as Science legends such as Archimedes, Marie Curie, Jane Goodall and Sir Isaac Newton, pictured below, to increase scientific curiosity.



Our aim as a department is to inspire students to consider a career in the field by sharing our own passion for Science.

Paul McAdam, Director of Learning for Science

Planetarium experience

Students at King James have taken part in a science engagement project delivered by *Durham University Physics* department. The activity involved an inflatable planetarium.

The planetarium, which is run by volunteers in Physics, gave students an insight into Astronomy and consequently a glimpse of the vastness of the Universe and our place within it. Students gained a perspective of how small we are within the grand scheme of things, and how fragile Earth, its atmosphere and its ecosystems are.

Inside the inflatable dome structure, students marvelled at the thousands of stars, planets and constellations that were projected onto the walls, and listened to the stories behind some of the well-known constellations. They also learned about the North Star, the only one in the sky that doesn't move, and discovered that it has been used as a navigator for thousands of years.



Star gazing

This year, students and their families took part in a *Star Gazing* event at King James, organised by our Science Department.

The weather could not have been better, with clear skies on the night that allowed participants to see the moon, planets and stars through our new telescopes. We hope that this encourages a love of Astronomy.



Health & Wellbeing



Student Support

Each year group at King James, including Sixth Form, has a dedicated and experienced Support Worker on hand to help with any issues our young people have at school and at home that affects their ability to learn.

Staff are trained to offer emotional and practical support, and to liaise with families and outside organisations as needed. They work hard to build a positive relationship with students and get to know them well so that they know they can trust them should they need to ask for help. Support Workers are also fully trained in safeguarding and adept at resolving friendship issues.

Our team are passionate about promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for young people, and focus on raising awareness and providing tips for good health alongside supporting students who may be struggling with anxiety.

Smashed interactive theatre

Students in Years 7 and 8 have enjoyed an inspiring interactive theatre experience called *Smashed*, which raised awareness about the dangers of underage drinking. Sessions were delivered by Mia, Jack and Isaac from the team at *Collingwood Learning*.

The touring programme is designed to enable learning and promote responsible decision-making by giving students the opportunity to observe, explore and reflect on vital underage drinking themes through a series of mini plays with realistic scenarios. Themes included the social and emotional causes of underage drinking, the impact of alcohol on young lives, social influence and peer pressure, personal decision making, and how to get help for yourself and for others.

By interacting with the characters in each play, students rapidly identified the causes and

consequences of underage drinking, and by playing Director, they were able to re-shape the story and change the outcome. By doing this, they developed new behaviours to help them make the right choices in their own lives, especially if faced with a similar scenario.

According to the *World Health Organisation*, more than half of 13-year-olds in England have drunk alcohol, and this can damage a child's brain, so education to protect our young people is key. Allowing them to assess situations for themselves and go on to make the right decision is highly effective.

Free personal and feminine care new

Our Student Support Workers have a large supply of feminine hygiene and personal care products which students can access for free on request. These are available from the Student Support Office at any time.

Coming soon... Lego Therapy new

This year, we are introducing **LEGO Therapy**, an evidence-based initiative which helps students with autism to improve social communication skills. They work as a team to follow instructions to build the item and improve communication through collaboration.

Sessions will take place with groups of 3-4 identified children and one adult, and everyone in the group will play a specified role within the session. The adult plays the Facilitator, whose role is to promote positive social interactions; the Engineer holds the visual building instructions who instructs the Supplier who finds the correct bricks then tells the Builder how to put the bricks together. The Engineer must use verbal instructions rather than pointing to the visual instructions. Overall, it is a challenge which promotes effective team working.



Mental Health Awareness

Throughout the year we organise special events to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing, including *Mind's 'Time to Talk Day'* and *Mental Health Foundation's Mental Health Week 2025*.

We know that mental health is directly linked to attendance and academic achievement, so it is important for us to ensure our young people feel confident, positive, and well supported at school and able to access help when needed. Our student Mental Health & Wellbeing group work hard with our Student Support Team to provide this support.

Students are encouraged to get involved in all King James events as we know having a sense of belonging has such a positive impact upon our mental health and wellbeing. Last year, students took part in activities such as a penalty shoot out, mindful colouring and creative craft sessions, board games, gardening and fundraising bake sales. Acts of Kindness is also a consistent theme across King James with students rewarded for helping others.



Financial Support for families

As a result of the cost-of-living crisis, we have teamed up with the Local Authority Financial Inclusion Support Officer (FISO) Programme to offer support and advice to our local community.

Julia Waterhouse, a Financial Inclusion Support Officer, is based in school every week to offer free, confidential advice on a range of issues including benefit appeals, welfare benefits, foodbank referrals, debt and budgeting, fuel grants, educational entitlements such as free school meals and support filling in forms. If you would like to book an appointment, please contact her direct via text or call 07386 659 728; or contact your child's Student Support Worker at King James.



Pre-loved Uniform

We are proud of our uniform at King James but recognise that some families may struggle with the cost of purchasing items. For this reason we have a well-stocked, pre-loved uniform store in Student Support.

The store includes blazers, PE kit, trousers, shirts, jumpers and other essentials, all in good condition and in a variety of sizes; these are available to borrow or for students to keep. Ties are also available to loan until parents can afford to buy one. In addition to this, we have a small discretionary hardship fund to help parents and carers buy uniform. Support can be requested by emailing kirsty.mawdsley@kingjames1academy.com

Donations of the items listed above, plus black school shoes, trainers and school bags in good, clean condition can be left at our Main Reception.

Student Ambassadors

Student Ambassadors are a group of student volunteers from Years 7-11 who have been trained in their role.

They have been taught how to deal with different types of bullying and friendship issues and know how to advise anyone affected by it. They are also adept at talking about feelings and can refer students to their Tutor or to Student Support. Ambassadors also speak at assemblies to make sure students know how to seek help within school for themselves or for others. The Ambassador group was formed because we know it can be easier to open up to someone your own age.

Student Council

The Student Council is made up of representatives from all year groups whose ideas help to shape student life.

The Council meets with the Deputy Headteacher each half term to discuss issues, upcoming events and ideas to improve the student experience and Academy life in general. Students discuss ideas with their peers in their form group before the meeting, and communicate these ideas with a view to making change. As a result of the Student Council, we now have a wide range of lunchtime clubs across the school, morning football and a new outdoor basketball hoop.



Industry learning at Aycliffe Business Park



Over 150 students spent the day at Aycliffe Business Park as part of our Careers and Personal Development programme. There they visited businesses from a number of different sectors.

Students, who were all in Year 9 and about to select their subject options, were able to tour the premises of each organisation and learn about their products and services from knowledgeable company representatives. They toured eight different businesses and training providers in total including Stiller Storage and Distribution, Husqvarna, which manufactures and ships forest and gardening tools worldwide, commercial printing company, Newton Press, and NC Group, which provides bespoke workforce development training. Students also visited BTS Fabrications, South West Durham Training, EBAC, which manufactures dehumidifiers and washing machines, and Optimum Skills.

Lucy Mulryan, Assistant Headteacher and Careers Lead at King James said, "Career-based lessons and activities are embedded into our curriculum, so as students progress through the year groups, they are able to identify their personal strengths and ambitions, and understand the opportunities that are available to them. We then help them to establish the most suitable pathway to achieving their goals. The trip to Aycliffe Business Park was an excellent opportunity, with students able to tour buildings and factories that are usually closed to visitors. We would like to thank all of the businesses that took part."



The Review

This year, English Teacher Miss Gowland launched an extra-curricular writing club for students who are enthusiastic about developing their writing skills. Writers work together to produce a student-led publication called *The Review*.

The club has 25 members in all year groups who write reviews about books, movies and computer games, which they then combine into a single publication. Members have all been trained on how to write an effective review and how to choose appropriate things to include in a school magazine. Reviews are written, proofread and uploaded to Google Classroom for feedback and approval before the team then meet in person to edit the magazine and agree on things like layout. Students then design their page and add imagery for additional audience appeal.

Miss Gowland said, "The club is great for promoting literacy, journalism skills, transactional writing and team working too. The students are really engaged; they enjoy sharing their opinions and creating a final product, and they like the fact that many of our staff members take their recommendations on board when choosing a gift for their own children."



Performing with Heart Global

In March, over 130 students signed up to take part in a host of music, dance and performance-based workshops delivered by Heart Global, an exciting travelling outreach programme from America. The event was organised by English Teacher, Mrs Thwaites-Graham.

Participants spent three full days working with the group of talented Heart Global leaders, taking part in fun performance-based activities designed to boost confidence, push personal boundaries, and help students overcome their fears and limitations so that they can develop their true potential. The experience culminated in an outstanding evening show in front of an audience of over 300 friends and family members.



Little Shop of Horrors in Performing Arts

In Performing Arts, students in Years 12 and 13 have deconstructed the popular musical stage show and film, *Little Shop of Horrors*, as part of their combined arts production.



In the performance, students combined Drama and physical theatre skills with exciting, newly-developed talents including playing ukulele, roller skating and tap dancing. It was a beautiful, and haunting

piece which focused on important topics such as capitalism, greed and toxic relationships, and the visiting examiner was hugely impressed by the creativity of the piece and by the groups ability to self-analyse and justify their method.

Miss Howard, Director for Learning for Drama and Performing Arts said, "The group worked incredibly hard to develop and perfect their performance so we were all delighted when the examiner said that the analysis was university level and that the interpretation was leading the way nationally in terms of performance. This is a very talented group of Sixth Form students and I am sure they have an exciting and successful future ahead of them."



RTS Drama group in Morcambe

In July, 15 members of the RTS (Roots) Drama Group in Years 7-10 spent the weekend in the seaside town of Morcambe with Miss Howard and Miss Armstrong. The trip was organised to celebrate their hard work and dedication throughout the academic year.

In Morcambe, the group stayed in a nine-bedroom Air B&B home, which provided plenty of space for relaxation, socialising and games, alongside excellent cooking and dining facilities for large parties. Although Miss Howard and Miss Armstrong took responsibility for the cooking, students were more than happy to follow a rota for cleaning and tidying communal areas and washing up, which served to unite the group and promote a sense of belonging. They visited a Victorian theatre, explored the beach, made tie-dye socks, played team-building games and watched the movie *Mamma Mia* together, creating some amazing memories in a weekend full of fun and laughter.

RTS Drama Group operates as an extra-curricular club for young people in Years 7-13 every Monday from 3.30pm-5.00pm. Each week, members take part in drama-themed activities and work together on a production which they perform to a live audience; last year the group performed an excellent murder mystery, and this year they will be performing a Christmas musical. If you are interested in joining RTS, please contact Miss Howard by email to find out when the next audition sessions will take place: j.howard@kingjames1academy.com

Farewell to Mr Shearer



After many years of loyal service at King James, Mr Shearer has now retired from teaching.

Mr Shearer came to King James as a Business Studies and ICT Teacher in September 1994 after working for ten years in industry. He became Head of Business Studies in 1997 and took on the role of Head of Sixth Form in 2001. He worked in this role for 18 years and saw the Sixth Form become hugely successful due to the many talented and academic students who studied there.

Many students will remember attending one of his popular University trips, and be grateful for the thousands of job references and personal statements he has provided over the years. Mr Shearer said, "It has been a privilege to help so many students gain places to study at university and get a job or apprenticeship. I am proud to have introduced new subjects in Sixth Form, including Extended Project, Criminology, Sociology and Psychology, all of which are now well established and extremely popular." On behalf of the Academy and our students past and present, we wish Mr Shearer a happy retirement.

Goodbye Mrs Keeler

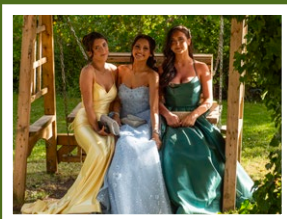


As a long-standing member of staff at King James, Mrs Keeler has taught History to hundreds of students. She is now enjoying retirement.

Mrs Keeler joined the teaching team at King James in 1998 as a teacher of both History and English. Two years later, in 2000, she became a Head of Year and also took on the role of Head of History, focusing her attention full time on teaching her specialist subject to students in Years 7-13. After 16 years as Head of Department she made the decision to reduce her working hours and step back into a teaching-only role, where she remained until 2025. Mrs Keeler is now spending her extra time discovering new hobbies and revisiting old ones - knitting and cooking!



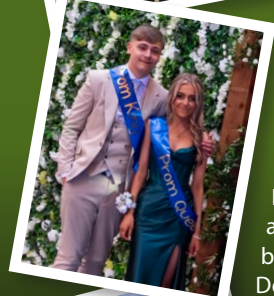
End of an era



In July, over 150 Year 11 students and King James staff enjoyed a glittering Prom Night in *The Barn Marquee* at *Ramside Hall Hotel*.

With a mocktail welcome, hot buffet meal, student awards ceremony and dancing until 11.00pm, the event was the perfect way to celebrate achievement and to reminisce about happy times at King James. As usual, students turned out in evening dresses, ball gowns and stylish suits in every colour, and a professional photographer was present to capture the moment. Codey Austin and Mia Jardine were crowned Prom King and Queen, and other accolades went to Lily Whitaker, *Most likely to be Prime Minister*; Bezaleel Umoru, *Most Stylish*; Toby Davison, *Most likely to make a Million*; and many more including *Biggest Party Animal*, *Biggest Chatterbox* and *Most Chilled!* Although many of those who attended the Prom are now members of our Sixth Form, others have left King James for work, apprenticeships or to study specialist courses at college, and we wish them the very best of luck.

Before Prom, at the end of the GCSE exam season, students attended the annual Year 11 Leavers' event where they enjoyed burgers cooked by the staff and students in our Food Technology Department, good luck speeches from Key Stage 4 Co-ordinators, Mrs Stead and Mrs Short, and a leavers' video which included photographs and footage from their time in Years 7-11. As per tradition, students also collected their 2025 Leavers' hoodie, and signatures of their peers and teachers on their school shirts to keep as a personal memento of their time with us.



An Academy of Fundraisers

Showing support for local and national charities is an important part of our Academy life and we organise a full programme of activities and events throughout the year to raise funds for worthy causes.

In September, each year group chooses a specific charity to support, and activities are planned to raise money which is donated at the end of the academic year when we have final totals. Last year, Year 7s raised £652.29 for *Butterwick Hospice*; Year 8s raised £613.70 for their chosen charity, *Difference*; Year 9s raised £234.46 for the *Angel Trust*; Year 10s donated £373.51 to *Cancer Research*, and Year 11s raised £484.94 for the *Air Ambulance*.

As an Academy, we also supported a number of other charities including *Make a Wish*, the *Poppy Appeal*, *NSPCC*, *Macmillan Cancer Support*, *Children in Need*, *Feeding Families*, *West Auckland Food Bank*, *MIND*, *Comic Relief* and *If U Care Share*. Despite the financial challenges faced by many of our families, we are so proud to have donated over £5,300 to charity in the last academic year.

Macmillan Cancer Support

Our annual *Macmillan Coffee Morning* event in our Dining Hall and Sixth Form Common Room offers both sweet and savoury treats to staff and students. Last year we raised £527.00.



Children in Need

Children in Need is a regular annual event on our fundraising calendar. Thanks to a non-uniform day and hugely popular Doughnut Sale in our Dining Hall we raised £736.10 for the charity..



If U Care Share

In the last academic year, we were proud to be able to donate over £1,100 to the local charity, *If U Care Share*. This charity raises awareness about suicide and provides a range of services fundamental to their three main aims of prevention, intervention and support for those bereaved by suicide. You can find out more at www.ifucareshare.co.uk



1,000 Can Challenge

Each December, we aim to donate 1,000 items to our local food banks, but last year, we collected an amazing 2,007 items, which were shared between *West Auckland Food Bank* and *The Angel Trust*.



Rewards & Recognition

We reward our students for hard work, achievement, attendance and positive behaviour in a number of ways. These are just a few.

Each day, students earn *Class Charts* points in lessons for various reasons including supporting others, being positive and showing respect, alongside producing good work. They can also earn extra points for attending lunchtime or after-school study sessions, helping out at public events and getting involved in fundraising activities. Points earned can then be exchanged for a range of stationery items and sweet treats from our *Rewards Store*, which is open at lunchtime two days per week.

Mrs Aitkin, Deputy Headteacher also organises a themed rewards event each half term to recognise students in each year group who have earned the highest number of *Class Charts* points. Students are invited to our Library where they are treated to luxury hot chocolate or milk shake, plus cupcakes and cookies, all themed around either Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day or Easter. In July, for the summer term, students are even rewarded with a visit from the ice cream van!

Our annual Prize Evening recognises the efforts of students in all year groups and in all subjects. Prize winners are chosen by their Form Tutors and subject teachers, and they are presented with their award at a formal event which is attended by family, King James staff and guest speakers. This is a much-anticipated event, and students are both excited and proud to receive an invitation.

Students with excellent behaviour and attendance are also invited to attend Mr Bishop's Year Group Movie Afternoons, which take place each term in our Main Hall. In the past, students have enjoyed movies including *Elf*, *Creed 3*, *Goosebumps*, *The Witches* and *The Women in Black*.





Kennedy Aldsworth

Kennedy was a student at King James from 2012 to 2019. After completing her A' Levels in Sixth Form, she moved to Leeds to study an Undergraduate Law Degree at the University of Law.

"I met so many new people and thoroughly enjoyed exploring a new city but unfortunately, in March 2020, the pandemic hit and my time at university was put on hold. I returned home for a while, and all of my learning took place remotely. Eventually, I returned to Leeds to be with my friends until lockdown measures were lifted."

"During my law degree, I volunteered for 'Witness Support'. As part of this role, I attended York and Leeds Crown Court where I observed a range of criminal cases. This was a huge learning opportunity, and I quickly realised that I had an aptitude for supporting vulnerable individuals who were going through the justice system."

"After three years, I graduated from university with a First Class Honours Degree in Law, then came the big decision; should I become a solicitor or barrister? This decision was easy for me as I had always wanted to be a barrister. I was accepted onto Northumbria's Bar Course on a part-time basis and although everybody told me how difficult and competitive this route would be, I didn't let that stop me. I made it my goal to obtain as much experience as possible whilst completing the Bar Course so I accepted a job as a legal secretary in Durham and also returned to King James as a Mentor. My role was primarily based in Sixth Form, working with students to help them prepare for exams on a 12-month contract, but just as it was coming to an end, I was informed that they were looking for someone to teach Law. I saw this as another challenge and grabbed the opportunity. This role developed my advocacy and ability to work under pressure, both of which are essential skills of a barrister. At this time, I also accepted another job as a Paralegal within a local solicitor's firm. Juggling two jobs and studying the Bar Course was difficult but nothing a little determination could not solve."

"I completed the Bar Course with a Distinction and the biggest day of my career finally arrived when I was called to the Bar. This involved travelling to London with my family, wearing my wig and gown, and being formally appointed as a barrister. The hard work did not stop there however; anyone who wishes to practise as a barrister must complete a period of training known as 'pupillage', and given the extremely limited number of these available, this is unbelievably competitive. In my first year of applications, I attended some interviews and although I was considered a 'reserve' for one pupillage, I wasn't successful and had to do it all over again the following year. That brings us to 2025. I had significant success with my applications this year and was invited to many interviews, then in May, pupillage offers were made and after three months of hard work and interviews every weekend, I received three offers. This was, without a doubt, the most important day in my career."

"This month, I am beginning a common law pupillage with Park Square Barristers in Teesside where I will practise both criminal and family law. This is what I have worked for over the last five years and I am beyond excited to get started. As a former student of King James and an ordinary girl from Bishop Auckland, I would encourage anyone with a career goal or aspiration to go for it. If you are willing to put the work in and remain determined, you really can achieve anything!"



Diary date..
**SIXTH FORM
OPEN EVENING**



Sixth Form



*Lexi
Hagben-
Stephenson*

As a student of English, History and Performing Arts at King James, Lexi explored her passion for performance further as a Primary Outreach Assistant in the Drama Department. She is now studying a Degree in Drama, Theatre and Performance at Lancaster University with a view to pursuing a successful career as a teacher in the field.



Here at King James I Academy Sixth Form we offer a wide range of academic and vocational subjects to ensure that our students have the very best chance of success.

Whatever your aspirations, from university to employment or apprenticeships, we will help you to achieve your goal. We even offer the option of a third year in Sixth Form for those who wish to boost UCAS points or study an additional subject. Students can choose from the following subjects:

- Accounting
- Art
- Biology
- Business Studies
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Creative Media
- Core Maths
- Criminology
- English Language
- English Literature
- Extended Project
- Food Science
- Further Maths
- Geography
- Health & Social Care
- History
- Human Biology
- IT: Data Analysis
- Maths
- Music Practitioners
- Performing Arts
- Photography
- Physics
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Sport

Earn while you learn!

There are a number of opportunities for Sixth Form students to take part in paid work whilst studying at King James. These offer not just a welcome source of income, but also a way to gain valuable work experience and a respected addition to their CV.

We have an extensive Primary Outreach Programme where pupils in Years 4 and 5 attend King James after school each week to take part in activities including Kickboxing, Trampolining, Film making, Photography, Art, Drama, Cooking and Music. Each one of these employs an Outreach Assistant to work alongside the subject teacher to deliver sessions. Danny Clay, pictured below with pupils from Victoria Lane Academy, has been working in the Media Department for the past year. He said, "I have really enjoyed working with primary pupils. They are so enthusiastic about learning new things and I am now even considering a career as a Primary School Teacher, something that I had never thought about before. I am looking forward to continuing as an assistant in the coming academic year."

In addition to this, Year 5 Curriculum Weeks and Year 6 No Wasted Weeks both offer an opportunity for a large team of Sixth Formers to work with visiting pupils as they take part in different lessons across the Academy. Sixth Formers take responsibility for making sure their allocated group are escorted around school and ensure that they feel safe, confident and included. This is an important job and many of our students find it a rewarding experience to have helped ease the transition for primary pupils, especially for those joining King James in September.



*Luke
Thompson*

As a Primary Outreach assistant and helper at Year 5 and 6 events at King James, Luke gained plenty of experience working with children. This helped him to gain a full-time job with local company, Robert Proud Education, Fitness and Adventures. Luke now visits primary schools to deliver assemblies in mental health awareness, and fun activity sessions to promote fitness and build social skills. He plans to launch his own business in the future.



*Joseph
McMahon*

Joseph achieved excellent A' Level results in Biology, History and Extended Project whilst in Sixth Form at King James, and as a result, he was offered a place to study a degree at his first choice, University of Sunderland. He is now undertaking a Degree in Biomedical Science and hopes to pursue a successful career in this field in the future.



Year 12 Work Experience

Each year, our Year 12 students take part in Work Experience Week, with placements in a wide range of sectors.

In July 2025, students worked in a variety of healthcare, childcare and education environments in and around Bishop Auckland, alongside charity organisations and local businesses including T and B Properties, ATAG Design Ltd, Octopus Energy, T Manners & Sons Ltd, BGW Contractors, Cre8ive Graphics and Sew Fabrics. Students also worked in Darlington Football Club and Shildon Sports Academy, and within departments at King James. Grace Buxton, pictured above, worked within Media on a stop motion animation project to promote a new extra-curricular club; and Alyssa Sample was a huge help in our Library as she logged and categorised books.

University visits

Whilst in Year 12, our Sixth Form students attend open day events at different universities to explore their options before making an application.

In the past year, students have visited Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside Universities where they were able to take part in workshops, talk to lecturers and enjoy a guided tour of the study facilities and student accommodation. They also enjoyed a visit to the University of Nottingham with an overnight stay. This gave them the opportunity to explore the city to see if they might like to live there.



Diary dates

8 Oct	Box Clever performance: A Christmas Carol
16 Oct	Year 8 Drop Down Day
22 Oct	A Christmas Carol workshops
23 Oct	School closes for half term
24 Oct	INSET Day
3 Nov	Academy reopens to students
6 Nov	Sixth Form Open Evening
12 Nov	Careers Fair
26 Nov	Online Safety Day
19 Dec	Christmas holiday begins (2 weeks)
5 Jan	Academy reopens to students

Join us at Year 6

Open Evening

SEPT
17



Our Year 6 Open Evening, will take place from 6.00pm - 8.00pm on Wednesday 17th September. The event is designed to support Year 6 pupils and their families in making an informed decision about which secondary school will be best for them in September 2026. At the event you can:

- Meet school leaders and teachers
- Hear about our curriculum
- Talk to students
- Take a tour of our facilities
- Join in a variety of activities in all subjects
- View student work
- Find out about extra-curricular opportunities
- Sample our Academy menu
- Find out about school transport
- Enter our Open Evening competition!

Free Breakfast!

Every morning, from 8.00am-8.30am in our Dining Hall, King James students can enjoy a free breakfast to set them up for the day ahead.

Students can enjoy a delicious toasted bagel or choose from a selection of Kellogg's cereals for free; we can even cater for food allergies on request.



PARENTS HELP US SHAPE THE FUTURE

Does your child attend King James? Would you like to get involved in shaping the future of our Academy?

We are always looking for enthusiastic parents to join our Parents' Forum group, which meets to discuss ideas to improve the learning experience we offer, and raise the profile of King James in our community. To register your interest and find out more, please call Main Reception on 01388 603388.

Sixth Form Open Evening

NOV
6



If you are in Year 11, our Sixth Form Open Evening will help you begin to make plans for your future. Join us from 6.00pm-8.00pm to:

- Meet our dedicated Sixth Form Team
- Find out about subject options
- Talk to subject teachers and students
- Take a tour of Academy facilities
- View our Common Room and Study Zone
- Find out about extra-curricular opportunities and trips

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