



Dear Parents,

I have been thinking a lot about the power of connection this week. Every year at about this time in the Summer term I start to get a bit twitchy. With public exams well underway we have not had a whole school assembly in the Senior School since Friday 3 May and I am really missing the connection that comes from having the whole school together twice a week to contemplate ideas together, sing together, connect with each other as a community. As a result I've been trying to spend more time around school during break and lunch to chat to girls, and I very much enjoyed today's Year 7 birthday party for the girls with June birthdays as a chance to get to know them better.

Watching the coverage of the 80th anniversary of the D Day landings this week also brought home the power of connection. As an historian I have taught this period of history to countless students over the years and visited those beaches and memorials, most recently last summer on my own holiday to Normandy. (If you have not yet had the chance to visit the new British Normandy Memorial at Vers-sur-Mer I highly recommend it as the most beautiful and atmospheric place.) The commemorations have been an extraordinarily moving sight and thought-provoking occasion.

However I know that much of the coverage will have passed our students by: why should a bunch of teenagers in North London care about the experiences of a small group of 100-year old men on the other side of the Channel? I was itching to have the chance to take an assembly where I could share the context of the landings, their significance then and their significance now - after all, our role as a school is to open minds to more than just their subjects; we're here to educate them in the widest possible sense.

To that end you know that we have prioritised reading for pleasure this year, not least with compulsory form time reading on a Monday morning. This morning in our Teaching & Learning Briefing Dr Hayward, the Senior School Reading Coordinator, reminded us of the proven importance of reading and what we can do to encourage it. I was really struck by the three quotes she put up on her opening slide to demonstrate the power of reading:

*'You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that **the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.**'* James Baldwin

*'The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, **the more places you'll go.**'* Dr. Seuss

*'It is what you read when you don't have to that **determines what you will be** when you can't help it.'* Unitarian minister Charles Francis Potter

As she explained, reading does many things: it gives us access to the store of human knowledge; it connects us to people and experiences across the world and across the ages; and because of this, reading shapes who we are and moulds us into people who are capable of thinking critically, deeply and sensitively about the world.

Given my musings this week on the power of connection this really struck a chord, and she went on to give some really useful advice which I thought you might also find interesting. As you would expect, there is a positive correlation between reading for pleasure and literacy skills (e.g. improved vocabulary, greater reading proficiency etc.). But what is perhaps more surprising is the research that shows a connection between reading for enjoyment and an enhanced ability to learn across the curriculum.

Sullivan and Brown, for example, investigated the extent to which inequalities in vocabulary and mathematics are linked to reading. They found that there is a 'substantial link' between reading for pleasure and 'progress in mathematics'. Research carried out by GL Assessment also reveals a significant connection between reading ability and success in all GCSE subjects. This is precisely why Alex Quigley, in his book *Closing The Reading Gap*, describes reading as 'the master skill of school' because it unlocks the academic curriculum for students.

We know that even for our intelligent girls in this academically selective school, the lack of wider reading, beyond those books required for school work, has an impact on their academic progress. It hampers their ability to decode exam questions and the clarity of their written expression, as well as limiting their vocabulary and their ability to analyse in depth. Perhaps most worrying is the echo chamber they create for themselves by not being exposed to a range of ideas, perspectives and experiences beyond those pushed to them by the algorithm of their social media feeds.

We also know, though, that there are lots of barriers to reading for pleasure. The biggest one that they have reported to us is time: either that they think reading is a waste of time when they should be revising for an upcoming test or catching up with homework, or they are distracted by their phones. Certainly their perception of reading as a solitary activity means that they feel that reading is an isolating activity that takes them away from connecting with their friends, whether in person or online.

At school we will be redoubling our efforts to reinforce the research evidence that reading widely, for pleasure, is linked to academic success. This message will come from all their teachers, not just the English department, and it would be wonderful if you could support this at home too. We need students to understand that reading time, whether in form time in school or at home in the evening before bed, is time well spent. We also know that time away from screens in the immediate period before lights out enhances the quality of sleep, which is an added incentive for reading before bed.

We are also going to spend time reading aloud together. You probably haven't done this with your children since they were very young - I certainly used to love story time at bedtime, and for a long time could do the whole of *The Gruffalo* by heart. However, hearing stories read aloud isn't just for young children. We all like to listen to stories; it's the reason we go to the cinema or to the theatre, or, indeed, meet our friends for a gossip. While this is one initiative you might not want to replicate at home, it's worth knowing that we'll be doing it in school.

Finally we really want to motivate reading by pointing out that we are all readers too. Among our adult peers we love to talk about what we are reading. We'll be having more conversations with your children about our reading, and theirs, so that they begin to view reading as something that enhances and enriches social interaction rather than something that diminishes it. Asking for, and sharing, recommendations is a really simple start. In case you're interested, I'm currently reading *Shakespeare: the Man who Pays the Rent* by Dame Judi Dench. I must admit I probably wouldn't have picked it up myself (I was given it by my mother in law for Christmas) but I am happy to report that it's a lovely read. Part memoir of every Shakespeare part she has ever played, part

Shakespearian analysis (which has taught me all sorts of things I didn't know about his plays) and, perhaps unexpectedly, part critique of the craft of acting, it's a perfect read for those ten minutes each night to end the day before I turn the light out. [Enjoy!](#)

When we finally reunite for our next Senior School assembly on Tuesday 25 June I am delighted to say that we will be announcing another important community initiative - the Channing mock general election. Ms Devine and the Year 12 Politics students are making plans and I am excited at the prospect of engaging the school with this important democratic moment. More information to follow in due course.

For now, Chag Sameach for those families who will be celebrating Shavuot in the coming week, and warmest wishes to you all for the weekend.

Mrs Lindsey Hughes
Headmistress

Notices

Requests for help from the Careers Department:

Work Insight Volunteers - Friday 21 June

Could your organisation offer a **Work Insight visit** for some **Year 10 students** on the **morning of Friday 21 June 2024**? **We've only received half the number of visit spaces we need to accommodate all Year 10 students.** Small groups of students, accompanied by a member of staff, spend some time in a workplace, finding out about the world of work. Sometimes organisations ask pupils to complete a pre-visit task, and the visit itself might include a site or office tour, discussions with employees and a work-based simulated group activity. We are particularly looking for visits to organisations involved in **law; business services; the creative sector; retail** and those where **foreign languages** are critical. Please get in touch by completing this [form](#).

Careers Convention - Thursday 20 June

Offers of help are also still needed for the afternoon careers fair and networking session on Thursday 20 June. If you, or someone from your organisation, could spend a couple of hours talking with students in an informal way about your career and ways to get into your sector, we would love to still hear from you. If you are a parent new to Channing, or have not volunteered before, please do so [here](#).

Year 13 Leavers' Ball - Saturday 22 June

A reminder to Year 13 parents: please don't forget to buy your leavers' ball tickets!
<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/channingseniorschoolchanningassociation/1164897>

Fair in the Square

If you are in Highgate Village this weekend, please come and see us at Camden's largest community event of the year - Fair in the Square. We have a stall with our partners from HNCP, and our two award-winning Young Enterprise teams will be selling their merchandise. Students from Channing will be performing on the main stage at 3:30pm and some of our other amazing students have kindly volunteered to help out with sustainability, face painting and litter picking. The forecast is good so we hope to see you there!



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Girls Enjoying Success

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Classics News

On Friday 17 May Year 8 travelled to the British Museum to develop their understanding of Roman history. Students built on their current study of the Roman invasion of Britain and discovered many ancient artefacts illustrating how Roman life evolved in Britain and across Europe during the Roman Empire. Throughout the day, students creatively completed activities such as creating an advert for an ancient artefact and using Roman treasures to write a murder mystery film script. Year 8 also had the chance to delve into Greek culture, seeing the much debated Parthenon marbles up close and learning about the different features of the temple and the myths behind the sculptures.



Sports News

Congratulations to Isabella M in Year 8 for earning her RYA Powerboat Level 2 certification over half term. She mastered key powerboating skills such as navigation, boat handling and safety. A standout moment of her training was piloting a speedboat beneath the iconic Tower Bridge in London. Well done, Isabella!

Music News

Music at Lunchtime: WICKED!

For the final lunchtime recital prior to half term, every single seat in the Arundel Centre was taken as we were treated to a wonderful performance of Wicked by Stephen Schwartz. Wicked (the abridged version) was performed by Ms Bradbury-Rance's musical theatre group - Lulu C, Maya C, Lily M, Tabitha W, Nina F and Lily B, Alaia P, Aggie T and Izzy P - and the show was an absolutely amazing way to end this half term. The group performed a few of the most famous songs from Wicked, including Popular, No Good Deed, Changed for the Better and of course Defying Gravity.





Every single song was sung beautifully and ended with rapturous applause from the audience. The vocal range and ability from all the girls was outstanding, and it was very clear that every single audience member thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Special thanks to Mrs Bradbury-Rance for organising this performance, and to Mr Maliphant-Gray for the incredible lighting and sound. A huge well done to all the performers and you can watch the performance [HERE](#).

Reviewed by Evie M and Simran T

LAMDA News

LAMDA Showcase

We had 2 wonderful evenings of theatre in the Arundel centre when the 64 LAMDA students performed a host of characters over 2 nights. The audience added the final icing on the cake, giving laughter in all the right places for the comedies - one student came off beaming saying 'Now, I really get how it's funny' and a hushed intensity in the serious scenes - 'It was so exciting!' said another. Thank you to all the parents who supported the whole course and the evenings, and gave such wonderful feedback. Here are images of the students who performed on Monday evening. Tuesday images and the recordings of both evenings will be available next week.



Sustainability News

The Eco Reps had a chill out session this week making eco crafts before exam week starts. They made pine cone bees and stick dragonflies. They also prepared lots of crafts for their stall at Highgate Eco Fair on Saturday 15 June. This is the first time Channing has had a stall at the fair - come along and see.



RPE News

The Religion, Philosophy and Ethics Department have had an exciting half-term running the Spirited Arts Competition in Year 7. Spirited Arts is a national competition run by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education and calls on students to create an artwork (in any form) which relates to one of six timely themes all connected to Religion, Philosophy or

Spirituality. We were astounded by the works the Channing Year 7s created - ranging from poems to paintings to decorated baked goods! - making it very tough to select the ten entrants which will represent Channing in the national competition.

A huge congratulations to our winners, whose work you can see here: [Year 7 Spirited Arts Winners](#)

Naomi E in 7JG "Faith in Humanity" (collage)

Ruby R in 7RL "Permanent Marks" (painting)

Mimi M in 7CWi "Looking Beyond" (drawing)

Thea I in 7JG "More than we Know" (painting)

Emilia M in 7CWi "God Envisaged" (poetry)

Amalia G in 7CWi "They who give have all things, they withhold have nothing" (sculpture)

Anya A in 7JG "God's Green Earth" (mixed media)

Audrey N in 7KN "Look Closer" (drawing)

Isabel M in 7KN "Why are animals important?" (sculpture)

Evie S in 7LR "Watercolour of Fish" (painting)



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