

Newsletter



December
2024 Edition



CHRISTMAS CONCERT 2024

Musicians at the College ensured the Autumn Term ended on a high when they performed at the annual Christmas Concert this week.

As well as learners taking A level Music, there was a focus on enrichment students showing off their musical talents. These are students who do not do A level Music, but who come together once a week to perform and give an outlet to their creativity. Among the Christmas songs they performed were 'Merry

Christmas Everybody' by Slade and 'Last Christmas' by Wham. Away from the Christmas theme, there were also performances of songs by bands like Black Sabbath, Amy Winehouse, White Stripes and Radiohead.

Catherine Douglas, Music teacher at the College, commented: "I'm so pleased we were able to give our young people on the Music enrichment an opportunity to perform in front of an audience. They

have worked hard on their music all term and had a lot of fun at the same time, so it was good to showcase their talents and get everyone in the mood for Christmas."

The next public performance will be the Spring Composition Exhibition, when A level Music learners will be showing off their own compositions. This will take place on Tuesday 8 April at 6.30pm in the College Theatre H201. Admissions is free of charge.



TEAM GAMBIA 2024

A group of intrepid young people have just returned from a life-enhancing trip to The Gambia, having raised over £18,000 this year for a school in the West African country. It was the ninth visit to Africa with the College's Team Gambia project and more than £92,000 has been raised since the initiative started in 2013.

A group of 28 students signed up to this volunteer project back in February and since then have been fundraising for the Abuko Nursery and Lower Basic School, which is situated near Serrakunda, the largest town in the country. Students each had a target to raise £400 each and through a variety of fundraising events, many exceeded that goal. Their efforts culminated in a week-long trip to The Gambia in mid-November, where they were able to witness how the money they have been raising is being put to use.

While in The Gambia, the students spent every morning at the school and taught the children (aged 4 to 6) in small groups. As there was a language barrier to overcome, many of the activities that the learners undertook with the children were active and visual, such as singing, craftwork, word and picture matching and there were lots of outdoor fun and games too.

One of those to undertake the trip was Alice Bristoll, who commented: "I enjoyed experiencing the wonderful country of Gambia with my friends, but it was helping the children by improving their education that made the trip unforgettable. Seeing the pure happiness from the children made my days and it made me appreciate my life at home. The poverty was surprising, especially seeing it in person."

Fellow learner Louka Bramwell added: "My favourite part of the trip was visiting the markets, particularly



in Serrakunda, and properly experiencing and interacting with the life of the local people. The thing that surprised me the most was how friendly and positive the people were despite living in such harsh poverty. The culture and togetherness of the Gambian people was heart-warming to see and experience."

Solihull Sixth Form College joined this venture, started by Hamstead Hall School in Handsworth Wood, in 2013. The nursery school now comprises of 8 classrooms with almost 300 children benefitting from the facilities. In 2021, the nursery school was officially handed over to the Gambian Education department which ensures the sustainability of the project.

Vice Principal Janice Hamilton commented: "Over the years, our young people have also taken out mountains of resources, such as medical supplies, sports kit, reading glasses and stationery. Students have also been supported from the Kitson Fund, Shirley Lions and by the the OCR examination board. We are very grateful for all the support we have received.

"All the money we have raised since 2013, more than £92,000 in total, directly benefits the Abuko

Nursery and Lower Basic School and the wider community. This year's fundraising has been used to paint and stencil the perimeter wall and build a dining area, while work will soon begin on a shelter from the sun."

As well as working at the school, there was time for the students to experience more of the local environment and culture. They visited the mangrove in Lamin, the Bijalo monkey sanctuary, bartered at Serrakunda fish and textiles market and visited the National Assembly building in Banjul.



COLLEGE EXPANSION WITH £2.7 MILLION NEW BUILD

Solihull Sixth Form College has opened a brand-new building on campus this term.

The Turvey Building, housing eight new classrooms for Psychology, opened after half-term thanks to a £2,072,512 grant from the Department of Education and a £692,000 investment from the Summit Learning Trust. A net zero project from TG Escapes, this modular building provides modern and spacious classrooms for Psychology and an ideal teaching and learning environment.

Nicola Holmes, Curriculum Leader for Psychology, commented: "Psychology is currently the biggest A level subject here at the College, with approximately 600 learners across Year 12 and Year 13. It's absolutely fantastic for us as a department to be teaching in the brand-new Turvey building. The classrooms are modern and spacious and clearly set the tone for serious study."

Year 13 Psychology learner Denisa Corlan added: "What I like most about the Turvey Building is that it's spacious and it offers us the opportunity to do a wide range of activities in class. It's nice for the biggest subject in College to have its own designated space. The design of it is very calming and peaceful and that goes really well with the subject we are studying."

The building has been named after Malcolm Turvey, who taught at the College for his entire 44-year

career before retiring in 2023. He was a highly skilled and passionate teacher who loved being in the classroom. Malcolm is a true polymath and was able to teach all subjects across the Social Sciences Curriculum area, although he specialised in Economics. He held the post of Curriculum Leader for 22 years, leading a team with a calm and supportive demeanour. All who have worked with Malcolm found him to be a great reassurance, a source of inspiration and an outstanding role model.



STUDENT COUNCIL 2024-2025

The following students on securing positions within the Student Council Executive this year. They are working with current Council Chair Denisa Corlan until she steps down in the summer.

Chair - Ameera Capper

Deputy Chairs - Camilla Hammond and Christopher Hill

Treasurer - Faidaan Khan

Tackling Sexual Harassment Chair - Rumaisa Mahmood

Tackling Sexual Harassment Deputy Chair - Hawaa Ahmed

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Chair - Becca Ajibade

Charity & Society Co-ordinator - Sophia Carden



ARTISTS INSPIRED BY MADRID VISIT

Visual Arts students visited Madrid during the half-term holidays to explore galleries, museums and prominent architectural sights.

Learners on the A level and BTEC Art & Design courses, including those pursuing Fine Art, Graphics & 3D Design and Photography pathways, undertook the residential fieldtrip in order to experience a different culture and get inspiration for their own portfolios from some world-famous artwork on display in the Madrid galleries.

Among the art galleries and museums they visited, learners saw works from Holbein and Hopper at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza. They also saw famous works like Picasso's Guernica, as well as pieces by Miro, Dali and Calder, at the Museo Reina Sofia. The Museo Del Prado was another stop on their itinerary, as they explored artwork by Goya, Raphael, Velazquez, El Greco and Bosch.

Other places of interest in Madrid included a visit to the Teatro Real to learn about the architecture and history, as well as a tour of the Royal Palace. Students took a tour of Madrid by foot, visiting areas such as Puerta del Sol, Plaza Mayor and Mercado de San Miguel and they enjoyed an evening visit to Temple

of De Bod. They visited the El Rastro Market, La Latina area and the Botanical Gardens. The final site of interest in their trip was the Bernabeu Stadium, home of Real Madrid Football Club, to explore the architecture and engineering of the world-famous stadium.



BLETCHLEY PARK FIELDTRIP

Computer Science students visited Bletchley Park recently to learn about the advances in computer science that took place during the Second World War.

Bletchley Park in Milton Keynes was a site of great importance during the war. It was where a team of mathematicians broke the Enigma code to enable them to decipher

secret German messages and prevent many attacks. Alan Turing designed a machine called the Bombe, which was able to decode messages by cycling through all possible combinations in about 20 minutes, far faster than would be possible by people. Use of that and a computer called the Colossus were hailed as one of the most significant victories for the Allies during the war.



Learners explored the modern-day Bletchley Park by viewing the interactive displays and museum collections, as well as watching the immersive films set within the restored historic buildings.

FINE ART VISIT TO BARBER GALLERY

Aspiring artists visited the University of Birmingham's Barber Art Gallery recently to view their exhibitions and participate in a drawing workshop.

Fine Art students in their first year of study took the trip to engage with the world-class artwork at the gallery. This will inform their research, analysis and making skills in their A level studies.

Learners were enthusiastic about the trip, with one stating: "The trip was very informative and educational. I was interested to learn about many different art pieces, as well as their history and meaning. I found the tip on how to first analyse a painting very intriguing and I like how our tour guide asked us questions and got us all involved and immersed in the whole thing."

Another student added, "The trip was a real eye opener because it gave me the opportunity to not only look carefully at the composition of the artwork, but also learn how each piece was crafted. The changes throughout the artwork as time progressed was something I found particularly enjoyable, such as understanding what substances

were used to create colour and how an individual's class would be reflected throughout the artwork. The rivalry between artists was quite exhilarating and learning how individuals with power fought for the best work and artists, desperate for the ability to withhold such statement pieces, proved very interesting in my eyes."

As well as a guided tour of the exhibitions at the Barber Art Gallery, students also participated in a practical drawing workshop, which they enjoyed very much.

One learner commented: "The art activities were a lot of fun and I

discovered different ways to improve my skills, as well as finding new ways to express myself. Overall, the trip was an amazing experience that really appealed to my love for art and inspired me to visit more galleries."

Creative Arts Curriculum Leader Zoe Maksymiw commented: "We are grateful to staff at the Barber Gallery for giving up their time to work with our young people. Our guide Carl really brought the pieces in the exhibition to life for our students and the practical workshop capitalised on those analytical skills, enabling them to bring what they learned into their own artwork."



TRANSLATION PRIZE IN FRENCH

A talented linguist has scooped a translation prize after being named as one of the winners of the Stephen Spender Translation competition this year.

Emily Evans, who is currently in Year 13 and studying French, Computer Science and Criminology, is one of three Key Stage 5 winners in the competition. She translated the French poem 'Les Corbeaux' by Guy Goffette to win the prize. Fellow learner Sarai McDonald

also entered the competition and received a commendation for her entry.

The Stephen Spender Prize is the leading annual prize for poetry in translation, with categories not only for learners, but also for adults too. The competition asks people to translate into English any poem from any language – from French to Farsi and from Spanish to Somali.

Jane Weatherup, a Modern

Languages teacher at the College, commented: "The Stephen Spender Prize is a very prestigious competition and Emily has done fantastically well to be named one of the winners."

After finishing her A levels at College, Emily is hoping to progress to the University of Coventry to study Games Art, while continuing to practise French outside of education.

CAMBRIDGE CHEMISTRY CHALLENGE

Alevel Chemistry learners took on the demanding Cambridge Chemistry Challenge in Year 12 and at the start of Year 13 they were presented with their certificates by Principal Martin Sullivan.

50 chemists sat the hugely challenging 90-minute paper earlier this year, with 11 young people achieving the Copper award and 7 attaining the Silver prize. One very talented Chemistry learner - Anna Bauer - achieved the Gold standard.

Set by a team of university chemists, the competition aims to take Year 12 students significantly beyond their A level syllabus and encourage them to think about science in the way undergraduate students need to at university.

Chemistry Curriculum Leader Simon Windsor commented: "I'm proud of all our learners who took on this extremely difficult Cambridge Chemistry Challenge. It was entirely voluntary for the students to attempt this competition, but they wanted to challenge themselves with some extremely advanced Chemistry."

The learners who were successful in achieving certification in the Challenge were Omar Ahmed, Sameer Ahmed, Anna Bauer, Asiya Begum, Tapanum Chowdhury, Windsor Fong, Mohammed Hadi, Eliza Hamid, Lili Junghanns, Saniya Kamali, Amtul Lubna, Sahana Mahdy, Tze Kiu Ng, Hayden Plaistow-Hicks, Habib Qureshi, Izzy Rajasingam, Zaynab Sharif, Ibrahim Tyrell, Jazmin Nagy Vickers and James Wilson.



HISTORY VISIT TO NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Historians undertook a two-day fieldtrip in London last week to support their A level studies.

Year 13 learners participated in a workshop at the National Archives to explore primary evidence about whether there was a 'Crisis in the Reign of Mary I'. They were able to handle original documents as part of the workshop and were treated to seeing some 'showcase' sources such as the original copy of King Henry VIII's will. Day 1 of the fieldtrip also saw students take a walking tour of key sights in London followed by a trip to watch the musical 'Six' about Henry VIII's six wives on The Strand.

The second day of the trip involved a full-day student conference, at which expert university lecturers from leading Universities delivered relevant lectures on 'Russia in Revolution'. These lectures were

highly relevant to their A level unit on Russian history and some of our learners impressed the lecturers by posing challenging and sophisticated questions to them during the Question-and-Answer sessions.

Humanities Curriculum Leader

Becky Clay commented: "This was a fantastic trip for our young people to participate in, with workshops and lectures that will significantly aid their studies. Our students engaged fully in all the activities and did the College proud."



MUSIC AWARD & CONSERVATOIRE VISIT

A talented musician impressed friends, family and a judging panel to secure a £150 bursary to pay for private music tuition, following auditions at a scholarship concert at the College in October.

Second year A level Music student Nick Hand's guitar performance at the Heartfield Wharam Scholarship Concert impressed the judging panel. He performed 'Choros No 1' by Villa-Lobos to secure the top prize from judges of Parent Governor Sarah Baker and College Principal Martin Sullivan. Sarah is an experienced musician herself, as a pianist, composer and examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music.

12 learners, from both Year 12 and Year 13, performed challenging solos. The judges praised all the musicians for their excellent performances, but highlighted three students for particular praise. As well as Nick's performance, they were especially impressed with Oscar Pinero's violin piece and El Longley's piano and vocal performance.

This bursary was set up in memory

of two great musicians who strongly supported music in Solihull and at the College. Roy Heartfield was the original Head of Music at the College, who died in post in 1992, while Margaret Wharam was the

Year 13 learners on the A level Music course attended a performance of the Manchester Collective to experience their fusion of African and Classical art forms. The concert, entitled "Sirocco" featured



former Head of Music at Malvern Hall and Head Organist at Solihull Methodist Church. The first winner of this prize was in 1994 and for the last 29 years the scholarship fund has continued.

a new exciting arrangement, including performances from Abel Selaocoe on the cello.

Manchester Collective are known for their experimental programming and daring collaborations, combining both contemporary music and classical masterpieces. Their unique style of performance was a great experience for our learners and will support their A level Music studies, which includes performing and composing elements.

Music teacher Catherine Douglas commented: "This concert was an amazing experience for our young people. It is important they get the opportunity to encounter many different genres of music to inform their studies and influence their own compositions."

Music teacher Catherine Douglas commented, "Well done to all the Music students who auditioned, but especially Nick, El and Oscar. Our young people were very nervous before the concert, but they rose to the challenge and did themselves and the College proud."

Away from the performing arena, Music students visited the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire in November to get a taste of African and Classical music.



ASTON BUSINESS SCHOOL SPEAKER

BTEC Business learners got a taste of a possible progression route this term, when a guest speaker from Aston University visited the campus.

Joanne Amos is an Accounting lecturer at Aston Business School and leads on school liaison for Accounting and Finance. She spoke to Year 13 BTEC Business students about the Accounting and Finance degree at Aston and gave learners the opportunity to discover more about a possible future career path.

During her presentation, she spoke about what the degree course involves, including the core modules studied in each year and how it is assessed. She gave learners information about the work

placements that course offers and how the course is accredited by Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ACA). She also talked about the 4-year full-time apprenticeship degree that Aston University will be offering from September 2025.

Phil Rafferty, teacher of Applied Business at the College, commented: "We are grateful to

Joanne for giving up her time to visit the College and speak with Applied Business learners. Most of our young people have aspirations to progress onto Higher Education, so her expertise was of great benefit to them."



ECONOMICS DAY AT ASTON

Economists at have been benefitting from a series of lectures at Aston University, aimed at stretching their learning.

Learners from both Year 12 and Year 13 of the A level Economics course attended an event organised and delivered by the Economics department of the University. The key theme of the lectures centred around the fundamental

economic concept of 'choice', which underpins all economic thought. The undergraduate level lectures began by illustrating, using economic infographics, how consumer expenditure has recovered since the pandemic and how the choices on where and how people spend their income has shifted dramatically towards online retail, as households strive to maximum their material welfare.

Following the lecture, the next activity involved a social and economic experiment called the 'ultimatum and dictator experiment', which questioned the classical economic assumption that individuals will always seek to maximise their satisfaction by acting rationally and selfishly. By bringing in fairness and altruism, the aforementioned assumptions were questioned and this highlighted how firms within certain industries can be punished by consumers if they are perceived to that act "unfairly" when pricing products. For example, consumers are willing (sometimes begrudgingly) to accept price increases if it is the result of increasing costs to the firm, but will penalise those firms that raise prices as a result of growing demand as they do not see that as being fair, even though that is what economic theory dictates. Students were asked to consider why this view exists whilst consumers demonstrate the same behaviour when selling homes to the highest bidder.



LAW COURTS & GYMSHARK VISITS

Law and Business students have been out of the classroom in recent weeks to see examples of excellence in the Crown Court and in industry.

On a visit to the Crown Court, A level Law learners witnessed the confident defending of an accused by a Kings Counsel barrister and were also impressed with the judge's ability to you keep the case on track, whilst managing the information for the jury. Cases they observed included murder, fraud, robbery and a contested use of an insanity defence. They watched opening statements from prosecuting counsel as well as summing up and sentencing, all of

which linked to the current study of criminal law.

Meanwhile, A level Business learners visited successful local business Gymshark, where they met with the Chief Financial Officer, whose job is also to keep order, but in a very different way, tracking income and expenditure and making sure the financial strategy links and supports the overall business objectives. A level Business students were given the opportunity to ask questions, gaining insight into a business that's journeyed from the owner, Ben Francis' home, to multimillion pound premises in Solihull.

Business, Accounting and Law Assistant Curriculum Leader Louise Cherry, commented: "These visits were enormously beneficial to the learning of our young people. There were some excellent case for Law students to witness and Business learners received a fantastic insight into a successful Business. Ben Francis continues to support our students by inviting them to visit and his story of hard work and never giving up, provides inspiration for many of the young entrepreneurs we have on our A Level Business course."

SCHOOL OF WIZARDRY

Scientists at the College joined the School of Wizardry this term for a potions lesson.

Learners on the Practical Science and Forensic Investigation enrichment participated in a microscale practical, dressed in their wizarding robes (lab coats) and wizard hats. The hour-long session saw students using a range of chemicals and mixing them with 'magical' reactants to see what happened and they were invited to observe and record the chemical changes.

Chemistry and Applied Science Assistant Curriculum Leader Laura Whitby commented: "It was great to see our students getting into the spirit of this activity by putting on their wizard hats and completing some hands-on science. Students do not have to be on a Science course at the College to take part in this enrichment. The emphasis is

on developing lab skills, as well as observation and communications skills and cultivating in our young people a life-long appreciation for science."

In earlier weeks students have made bath bombs, slime and completed flame tests. There are plans to

complete forensic investigations too, in which learners will use techniques to identify a suspect. Towards the end of the year, some students may have the opportunity to take part in The Royal Society of Chemistry Analyst Competition.



OXBRIDGE ESSAY COMPETITION

An Oxbridge hopeful has won a prize in the Solihull, Coventry and Birmingham Oxbridge Essay Competition.



Aryan Ahmed, a former learner at Ninestiles, an Academy, submitted an essay on a translated Korean

novel he had been reading called 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint'. The competition was sponsored by Girton College, Cambridge and he found out about it at College and decided to challenge himself to improve his essay writing skills and boost his future application to the University of Cambridge.

"I'm really pleased I won the competition," said Aryan. "I study English Literature and I felt that my essay writing needed some work, so I thought I would challenge myself and I'm glad that I did. I'm applying to Cambridge this year and I'm considering studying abroad too, so this competition was a good experience for me and will be a good thing to add to my applications."

Currently studying English Literature, Fine Art and Statistics at A level, Aryan is also part of the College's Stretch and Challenge programme, which aims to offer learners applying to highly competitive courses with additional support. This includes guidance on their Personal Statements, interview practice and preparation for entrance exams.

English and Modern Languages Curriculum Leader Jane McCard, who also leads the College's Stretch and Challenge Programme, commented: "Congratulations to Aryan on a fantastic achievement. By winning this competition, he has already made himself know to one of the top universities in the country, which will be a big boost to his application to study there or progress to another highly regarded university. We will support his application as much as we can and we wish him the very best of luck."

MODEL UN AT COP29

Environmentally-conscious learners at Solihull Sixth Form College attended the Model United Nations Climate Conference recently and used that platform to highlight their Tread Lightly Climate Action activities.

The Model UN Climate Conference, organised by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and held in the Council's Civic Suite, saw young people from across the borough represent countries and discuss global climate change. A team of 14 students from Solihull Sixth Form College attended and represented three countries - Brazil, Australia and the Marshall Islands.

Learners got the opportunity to meet Solihull Mayor, Councillor Shahin Ashraf (MBE), as well as the chance to promote the College's Climate Action activities, which support the West Midlands Lieutenancy's Tread Lightly programme (supported by all the academies in the Summit Learning

Trust). Actions the College have taken to support this programme include the installation of more solar panels to reduce our demand for carbon-based energy, and the planting of trees on campus to increase carbon absorption.



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Students had the opportunity to meet former professional footballer and now manager Darren Moore in October to mark Black History Month.

Darren Moore is currently the manager at Port Vale Football Club and his talk to students covered his playing and management career, as well as the work he has done outside of football. He enjoyed a successful playing career for West Bromwich Albion, where he made more than 100 appearances, as well as playing for eight other clubs, including Derby County, Barnsley, Doncaster Rovers and Torquay United. He was also capped by Jamaica. He cites former West Bromwich Albion player Cyril Regis among his inspirations for getting into football as a black player.

Darren Moore is one of just two managers among the 92 league

football clubs in England who is black. In the history of the Premier League, there have been 280 football managers, but only 11 of them have been black. Darren is working with the football authorities to try to widen the opportunities for black players to move into management.

Student Development Officer Chris Curran commented: "This

was a fantastic opportunity for our young people to hear from one of Birmingham's great footballing success stories. We are grateful to Darren for giving up his time to come in and talk to our learners about his career as both a player and manager.



He was able to offer an insight into the challenges black players face trying to move into football management and discuss the work he is doing with the footballing authorities to try to change this."

KITSON AWARD HELPS TEAM GAMBIA

Two students successfully applied for a bursary to help fund the Team Gambia project this term.

Simran Gill and Esha Surti were part of the College's Team Gambia volunteer project and they applied to the Terry Kitson Award for Services to the Community for a grant to support their work with this project. They put forward a presentation about the Team Gambia project and how it benefits children at the Abuko Nursery and Lower Basic School near Serrakunda in The Gambia. They detailed the costs involved in travelling out to West Africa as part of the project and successfully secured a bursary of £2,000 to help pay these costs. The Terry Kitson bursary awards learners funds to help them complete volunteer projects in the UK and abroad each year. The fund

was set up in memory of a former governor.

A group of 28 young people are travelling out to The Gambia in November to volunteer at the Abuko Nursery and Lower Basic School for a week. The learners have already spent more than nine months fundraising for the school and gathering learning resources to take out there. A range of activities have taken place to raise money, including quiz nights and sponsored runs.

Simran Gill is studying A level Music, Psychology and Sociology and is a part of Team Gambia 2024. She commented: "I was sponsored to run 5km every Monday during the six-week summer holiday, which I tracked on an app. I wanted to be a part of the Team Gambia project

to help make the experience of school better and more enjoyable for the children in Gambia. I also wanted to immerse myself and understand a new culture and gain new experiences."

Esha Surti is an A level Media Studies, Psychology and Sociology student and she has also been fundraising for the trip. She said: "To raise the money for the school in The Gambia I completed a sponsored walk of 15k (9.3 miles) and I managed to raise just over £460.

"Team Gambia appealed to me as volunteering abroad is something that I've always had an interest in and doing it through the college is a great and safe way for me to experience this for the first time."

AUTUMN TERM EVENTS

As always, the Student Development Team have been hard at work this term, organising awareness and fundraising events, supporting Student Council and Student Societies and managing the Refectory, Help Desk and Studio areas.

Term got off to a great start with a Chocolate Tombola to raise money for University Hospital Birmingham charity. Cakes and other tasty treats followed for the Macmillan Coffee Morning and £127.50 was raised for the cancer care charity.

In October, there were a range of awareness events taking

place, including World Sight Day, Challenge Poverty Week and ADHD Awareness Month. We had guide dogs in the Studio to delight staff and students alike and raise money for Guide Dogs UK. Breast Cancer Now also benefited from a Wear It Pink event in College and a Disasters Emergency Committee fundraiser topped £1,020. Staff and students also celebrated Diwali, with a crafts workshop, as well as festive clothes music and food.

After half-term, attention turned to safe travel on public transport and we had staff from West Midlands Police and Safer Travel in the

Refectory to talk to our learners about this. Children in Need also took place and we raised £105 for that charity. Sikhs celebrated Guru Nanak Dev Ji Gurburb Prakah and the Book Society sold books and jigsaws to raise money for Birmingham Children's Hospital.

December has seen a host of Christmas-themed activities, including a visit from Yarnfield Primary School Choir, who sang Christmas carols. Staff got involved in Christmas Jumper Day and there has been a Food Bank Appeal to support those in our community struggling during the festive period.



MEDIA & IT CAREERS FAIR

Media and IT learners participated in the Royal Television Society (RTS) Midlands Careers Fair at The Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) in October.

The event provided a unique opportunity for aspiring media professionals to engage with key players from the UK's television and film industry. Throughout the day, sixth formers connected with leading organisations, including ITV, BBC, and other prominent figures in the film and TV sectors.

A highlight of the event was the Create Central Production Pass Roadshow, a dynamic session offering learners an exclusive behind-the-scenes look into the film and television production

landscape in the Midlands. The session featured presentations from Crew Birmingham, Filming in England, and the Royal Television Society, all providing insights into local production opportunities and emerging trends in the region.

Year 13 BTEC Creative Digital Media Production learner Zoe Leek commented: "I found the trip very informative and interesting. It definitely helped give me a better insight into the industry and it piqued my interest. It was inspiring."



SOUTH AFRICAN ADVENTURE



One student is looking forward to a dream trip to South Africa to volunteer with an animal conservation programme, after being awarded funds from the College's Kitson Community Bursary.

An £800 grant has been awarded from the Kitson Award for Services to the Community to Year 13 student Chloe O'Reilly, after she applied for funding. Chloe put together a presentation and delivered it to a panel of judges in order to get the award, which will help pay for the costs associated with going on the trip. The funds are given out each year to support students in undertaking community projects in the UK and overseas and are made in memory of Terry Kitson, a former governor of the College.

Chloe's trip will take place in July 2025 and will see her working for The Mighty Roar at the Amakhala Game Reserve near Gqeberha

(formerly known as Port Elizabeth). Her volunteering will include tracking animals, maintaining the environment (such as monitoring erosion near the water holes) and working within schools and community centres nearby.

Chloe commented: "I've been involved in volunteering since I was 13 and I've always wanted to volunteer abroad. I was torn between this and another volunteer project in Bali, but I love anything to do with animals, so this project with the Mighty Roar really appealed to me. I'm told there is a friendly elephant out there called Norman and I can't wait to meet him!"

Chloe is currently in her final year of A level studies in Biology, Criminology and Psychology and hopes to continue her Psychology studies at university when she finishes at the College.

TRAMPOLINIST SECURES SCHOOLS SUCCESS

A talented trampolinist has won an award from the Principal in recognition of her extra-curricular achievements.

Kaitlyn Quinn, currently in Year 12 studying A level English Literature, History and Media Studies, competed in the West Midlands School Trampolining Competition, where she placed fourth. Representing Altair Trampolining Club, Kaitlyn's success meant she earned a place at the Zonal Schools competition.

The former Tudor Grange Academy Kingshurst learner commented: "I started trampolining in April 2022 after I competed in a competition for my secondary school and I enjoyed it; a close friend of mine was part of the trampolining Club and suggested I joined.

Trampolining started as something to do after I quit dance and wanted a hobby and then my coach had

said I could do well at it so I started doing it competitively and now I'm just seeing where it takes me and what doors it opens for me."

Kaitlyn is juggling her trampoline training with her studies and has ambitions to progress to university after she finishes her A levels.

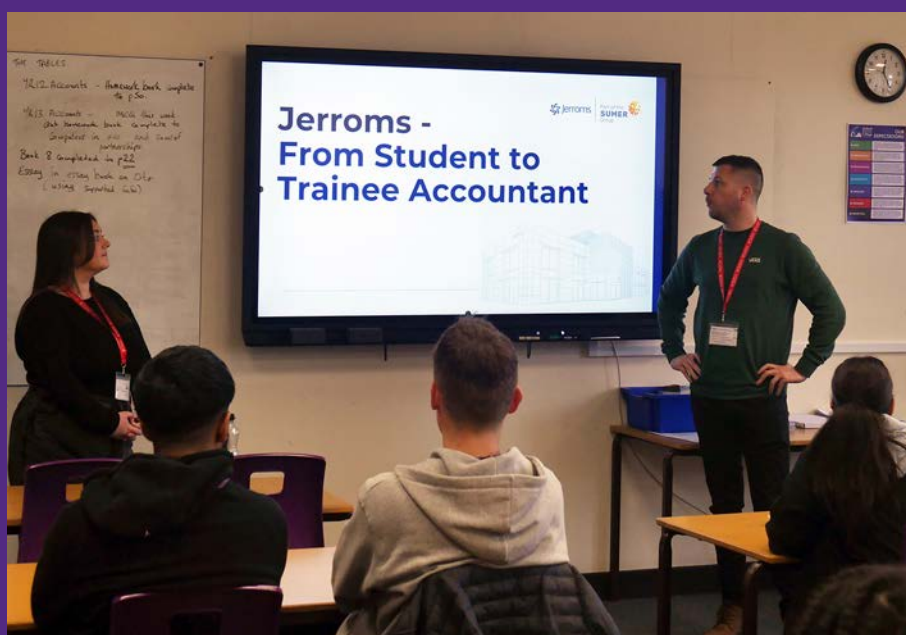


JERROMS ACCOUNTANCY TALK

Accounting students got the opportunity to learn about careers as trainee accountants in November, thanks to a talk from Jerroms.

Robin and Megan were the representatives from Jerroms who came into College. They talked about their own journeys from being students to becoming trainee accountants.

The presentation gave learners a chance to learn about possible careers for them to pursue and the route they can take to get there.



BIOLOGY LIVE!

Biology students attended A Level Biology Live! at the University of Birmingham earlier in November.

While at this conference, they had the opportunity to hear from a range of inspiring speakers, including Professor Robert Winston, who has been a pioneer in IVF treatment and who spoke to learners about Human Progress and related ethical questions.



Other talks covered topics like health and restoring coral reefs, neuroscience, antibiotic resistant bacteria, the science of mental

HARD-HITTING DRAMA SHOWCASE

A Year 13 Drama Showcase took place in October in which Year 13 students showed off their original devised theatre performances.

Their pieces were created in the style of the contemporary company The Paper Birds, who specialise in verbatim storytelling. Students selected social and political issues that they felt passionate about and as part of the devising process, collected in-depth research in the form of interviews, questionnaires, case studies and videos to inspire and influence their work. The hard-hitting themes included child abuse and stalking and an age advisory was issued for the audience.

The Paper Birds has previously delivered a workshop for our students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the company's devising process and rehearsal strategies.

Year 12 Drama students will have a public showcase in February.



SCIENCE STUDENTS TURN CSI

Applied Science learners at Solihull Sixth Form College turned into Crime Scene Investigators recently to get hands-on experience of forensics work.

Second year students on the BTEC Extended Diploma Applied Science course have been participating in assessed crime scene investigations at the end of the Autumn Term.

The course requires learners to collect and analyse evidence from a simulated crime scene, including collecting biological evidence (blood, hair, fingerprints, etc), physical evidence (footwear impressions and questioned documents) and chemical evidence. The students

first learn about possessing crime scene evidence in order to maintain its integrity. They will later go on to analyse the evidence in a forensic scientist role and finally present their findings as an expert witness in a mock court cross examination.

Assistant Curriculum Leader Laura Whitby commented: "Our learners did very well with this activity. It is one of the most interesting assessments that the students undertake as part of the BTEC Applied Science course, because it's unlike anything else they do. We try to make it as true to life as possible, with PPE for the students to wear and dedicated rooms set up like crime scenes for them to investigate."



ESU MACE COMPETITION SUCCESS

The Debate team has progressed to the regional round of the ESU Mace Debate competition after defeating a team from Bishop Ullathorne Catholic School recently.

Rya Abbasi, Isla Barnes and Eva Lowe comprised the Solihull Sixth Form College team and they participated in the first round, held at Solihull School. They were successful in proposing the motion: "This House would ban the use of facial recognition technology in public spaces".

Student Development Officer Chris Curran commented: "Our students were slightly daunted before the competition, as none had ever participated in any form of debating competition previously. However, they worked extremely hard in the build-up to the event and overcame their nerves to present a very articulate argument.

"Although Rya, Isla and Eva were the young people representing the College in the competition, there were other learners who have attended the Debate Society over the last term, who have helped and supported each other in learning

the formalities of Mace debating and they all deserve praise for this success."

Their success means they now have a place in the regional competition, which will be held in the New Year.



MUSIC PERFORMANCE IN HOSPITAL

Music students supported the Summit Learning Trust's work with University Hospitals Birmingham by going into Solihull Hospital to perform this term.

Learners entertained staff, patients and visitors alike with some festive songs and lifted spirits.

Huge thanks to our young people for giving up their time to do this.



SHIRLEY LIONS THANK VOLUNTEERS

Generous students have been rewarded for giving up their time for others. 17 learners at the College have earned awards for their volunteer work this term. Many of them picked up their awards from Jacqueline Culliford and Ken Barker from the Shirley Lions recently, in a small ceremony that took place on campus. Students completed a wide range of voluntary activities to earn their awards, from helping at College events to volunteering in the community and some even went on the College's volunteer trip to The Gambia to help out at a school.

11 of the 17 learners who have won these awards accrued more than

100 hours of volunteering, resulting in Gold Seal awards. Other completed 25 hours of volunteer work for a Bronze award or 50 hours to get a Silver award. The students winning awards were George Balhaves, Fahiza Begum, Sumayyah Begum, Jessie Bond, Denisa Corlan, Poonam Kaur-Landa, Amina Keyani, Zareen Nissa, Oluwatosin Olalekan, Simran Sagoo, Manal Shuja, Amira Beshar, Safira Hossain Akter, Abida Islam, Kendric Oduro-Dano, Amtul Sehar and Kesa Zia.

Chris Curran, one of the Student Development Officers at the College, commented: "I'm really proud of our young people for achieving

so many hours of volunteer work. Their charitable nature is a credit to themselves and their families and the help they give to so many people makes such a difference."

Jacqueline Culliford added, "Members of Lions Clubs believe volunteering both helps others and the volunteer themselves who can gain new skills and get to know new people. The Young Leaders in Service award is a way of celebrating the volunteering that young people do and we are very proud of the students who have received these awards today. They are already making a difference in the world and we wish them all the best for their future."



HUMAN RIGHTS WORKSHOP

Religious Studies students were treated to a workshop from BPP Education Group last week which looked at Human Rights.

Marika, Rachael, Jordan and Niamh from BPP Education Group came onto campus to support students with the Ethics unit of their A level Religious Studies course. Learners were asked to define Human Rights and were given an activity to think about which human rights they believed to be most important.

Joanna Taylor, Religious Studies teacher at the College, commented: "We are grateful to the staff from BPP Education for giving up their

time to come into College and speak with our young people. The workshop was highly interactive and it was fantastic to see learners

debating the merits of various human rights. They did not always agree, but that's what makes these debates so fascinating."



MEDIA LEARNERS SUPPORT RESEARCH

Creative Media learners joined academics from the University of Birmingham for a research study, exploring the impact of social media influencers' stories on mental health awareness among young people.

The study, which is being conducted in partnership with the University of Nottingham and Aston University, is being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. The College's involvement saw six BTEC Creative Digital Media Production

students participating in a focus group aimed at understanding how young people engage with mental health narratives shared by influencers.

The purpose of the study was to examine how the personal stories influencers share about mental health issues, including anxiety, influence young people's perceptions and responses to mental health challenges. The students provided valuable feedback on how these

stories impact their understanding of mental health and the role social media plays in shaping their views.

Dr. Ruth Page and Dr Alex Christiansen from the University of Birmingham led the focus group, and the research findings will help inform future strategies for using media and digital platforms to support mental health education.

Rasbinder Gill, Curriculum Leader for Media & IT at the College, said: "It was incredibly valuable for our students to see first-hand how the topics we cover in our Creative Digital Media course, especially the focus on mass media and research, are directly relevant to understanding real-world media issues. This research highlighted the importance of critical thinking when engaging with media content, particularly around sensitive topics like mental health. It is a great opportunity for our students to see how their own studies can have a tangible impact on addressing societal challenges."



VISUAL ARTS WORKSHOPS

Two Visual Arts workshops took place this term, benefitting learners at the College and those from one of the Summit Learning Trust secondary academies.

In November, learners from Lyndon School came into College to participate in a Visual Arts workshop. As well as having a tour of our Art & Design School, they worked on designs for Christmas cards to enter into the Summit Learning Trust Christmas Card Competition.

Meanwhile, Year 12 and Year 13 BTEC Art & Design Practice students took part in a session with ex-student Katie Holtom and Ruth

Millington from Solihull CEP. During their presentation, Katie and Ruth launched an opportunity to be part of a public art project, which will see

up to 30 artists presenting new work on the theme of 'surreal' in a free exhibition in Solihull town centre from March to May.



MOST INCLUSIVE UK EMPLOYER INDEX

Solihull Sixth Form College is celebrating being named in the Top 100 Most Inclusive UK Employers Index for 2024, with a ranking of 78.

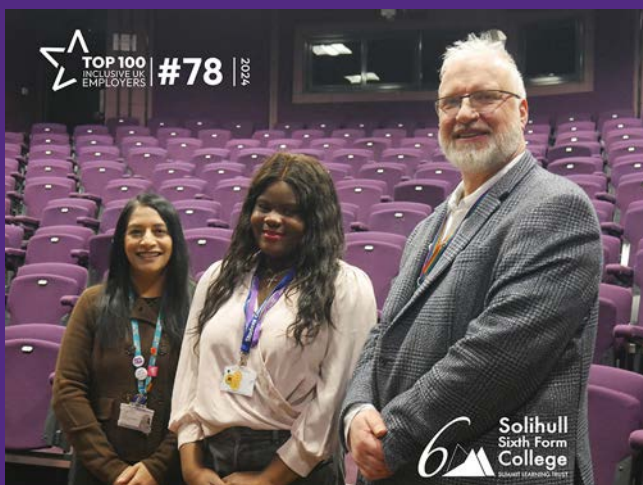
The College has been accredited with the Investor in Diversity award since 2017 following a series of assessments by the National Centre for Diversity, carried out every two years. The last assessment in 2023

praised the College's "positive and inclusive culture" and noted there is "a positive environment for wellbeing and good mental health".

Anisa Lokat-Fanning, Associate Assistant Principal, who leads Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Solihull Sixth Form College, commented: "I'm proud of this achievement. The College has worked hard as a community to create an inclusive environment for our young people and staff members alike it's gratifying to see that this has been recognised once again by the National Centre for Diversity." Solat Chaudhry, Chief Executive at the National Centre for Diversity added:

"I send my warmest congratulations to Solihull Sixth Form College on successfully reaching number 78 in the Top 100 Most Inclusive UK Employers Index 2024. The inspiring organisations that make the Top 100, demonstrate excellent levels of employee retention and recruitment and clearly demonstrate how they value and respect the people that work for them. What better than to be recognised by peers and those travelling in the same direction towards the common goal of Fairness in the workplace. It is hugely motivational."

The National Centre for Diversity's assessment looks at the FREDIE journey that businesses go on, which considers how firms address Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement.



HEALTH & WELLBEING FAIR

The second annual Health & Wellbeing Fair took place this term, with charities and support agencies

present to talk to students and the services they offer to help with mental and physical health and

wellbeing. Kooth, Umbrella, Papyrus and Samaritans were among those who attended.



COLLEGE SHORTS

MP VISIT:

The Autumn Term saw Saqib Bhatti MP come into College to meet learners. He met with College Principal Martin Sullivan and talked to groups of Politics and History students, as well as spending some time with members of the Student Council.

Saqib Bhatti MP is the Member of Parliament for Meriden and Solihull East and represents the Conservative Party.

There are plans for Solihull West MP Neil Shastri-Hurst to also visit the College later in the academic year.

REMEMBRANCE:

The College marked Remembrance this year with two events, both on campus and out in the community.

On Remembrance Sunday, a wreath of poppies from the College was laid in Solihull town centre by Assistant



Principal Richard Hammond. The following day - Armistice Day - there was a period of silence in College, with a trumpeter from the Music department in the Refectory to play the Last Post.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH:

Staff came together for a festive



meal at the end of term, as Caterlink served up Christmas lunch on the last Tuesday and Wednesday of the Autumn Term. SDO staff were on hand to serve the traditional meal to colleagues.

GEOGRAPHY FIELDWORK

Year 12 Geographers took part in a fieldwork day in Solihull in December.

Following a detailed lecture in the morning about how to gather primary and secondary data, students descended on Solihull Town Centre to put theory into practice. They went to Station Road to assess the quality of the 1960 architecture.

Despite the cold and damp conditions, students worked with enthusiasm, professionalism and with smiles on their faces!



SPORTS UPDATE

Congratulations to the Netball and Football Teams, who have ended the Autumn term on a high.

The 1st Netball Team won 56-23 against Stourport High School in the penultimate week of term, while the 2nd Team defeated Sandwell Academy 27-7.

In the football, the 1st team beat Walsall College 3-1 in their top of the table clash. Both the Football and Netball 1st teams are top of their respective leagues!



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