

Acceptance – Kindness – Responsibility – Perseverance - Aspiration



Message from Jo



Dear All

This is the first time I have had the pleasure of writing to you all since joining Jacquie as co-head of iCollege 2 years ago.

The second half of the autumn term has whizzed by and, as always, the newsletter highlights some of the many and varied activities and opportunities that have been happening across all six units of iCollege.

As Christmas approaches learners (and staff) have been enjoying the season with trips to local theatres, ice skating, visits to The Christmas Tree Farm and Millets Farm to see Father Christmas, as well as a traditional Christmas lunch at school.

Christmas is a busy time for families and meeting expectations can, at times, feel like an impossible and overwhelming task. At iCollege we have five core values and the Christmas period probably tests them all, however I will remind you of just one - Kindness: be kind to yourself and enjoy Christmas in the way that is unique and special to your family.

On behalf of all at iCollege, I wish you a peaceful and joyous Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

We look forward to welcoming learners back to school on the 5th January.

Jo Farley, Co- Head Teacher

Inspiration inspired by theatre trip!

Children from Inspiration went to see The Little Mermaid at the Watermill Theatre.

"It was a musical show that had 7 people in it. They all sang and played an instrument, some more than one instrument! I thought it was an amazing show!"

"I loved everything about the costumes!"

"The bubbles were a nice touch!"



IMPORTANT Term Dates

December 25

Christmas Day

January 5

Back to school!

January 16

World Religion Day

January 29

Y11 2024-2025 Presentation Evening

February 13

Break up for half term



Use the QR code to access West Berkshire School's Nursing Team's newsletter.



Mental Health Tips...
Tellmi – emotional support...
Healthy eating...
Asthma advice in cold weather...
Choosing the right school bag...

Being the best we can be!



Intervention

office.intervention@iccollege.org.uk

'Getting Court'

Last week, two Intervention learners attended Oxford Crown Court to observe a case as part of their citizenship topic. The visit, organised by 'Getting Court', an educational social initiative, offered a look into how the justice system operates. Learners were fascinated by the proceedings, including courtroom etiquette such as bowing to the judge. The experience gave a perspective on law and order and the importance of respect within the legal process. One learner reflected, "I feel much more knowledgeable about Crown Court now. Seeing it in real life was completely different from what I thought it was going to be."

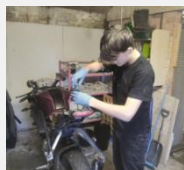
Following on from their court visit, learners visited HM Prison Huntercombe. The experience was designed to encourage reflection and positive decision-making by offering a realistic insight into the consequences of criminal behaviour and the loss of freedom prison involves.



Learners were shocked to discover that some prisoners were a similar age to themselves when they were sentenced. They reflected on the small size of cells, spending up to 23 hours a day locked inside, intrusive searches, strict rules, drug issues, and the impact on mental health. Although described as harsh and depressing, learners agreed the visit was powerful and eye-opening, commenting: "It's so much worse than I expected – I don't want to end up in prison," "It was really good to see how horrible it was," and "I don't think I could cope without seeing friends or family."

STEM project

We have recently received a generous donation to support the development of STEM skills among learners. A motorcycle has been donated by a local resident following discussions with staff, alongside tools donated through a community Facebook appeal and a set of brand-new tools from a member of the Royal Enfield Owners' Club.



Learners have already begun stripping down parts of the bike, developing basic tool-handling and mechanical skills. Over the year, the bike will be fully dismantled and refurbished, with a cross-curricular approach allowing learners to apply art skills to painted components using different techniques and designs.

The project aims to build practical, transferable skills, confidence, teamwork, and resilience, while supporting progression into apprenticeships, further education, or employment. Looking ahead, the college hopes to develop the project into a recognised qualification. Anyone wishing to donate tools or engine-based projects is encouraged to contact Intervention.

Cinema fun

Another donation - this time, tickets from a charity funded by the National Lottery called, 'Into Film' made it possible for learners to visit the cinema in Newbury to watch 'Karate Kid – The Legend'. Learners loved the experience, commenting, "I didn't think it would be possible to see a current film. I love going to the cinema!" Thank you Into Film.



Here is Year 11 learner Elissa in her role as a Drama Support Assistant with Make Sense Theatre at Brookfield School. As part of an ongoing work experience placement, Elissa works regularly with the team and aspires to progress into an apprenticeship after Year 11. During a recent review, Elissa demonstrated outstanding kindness, patience, and empathy while supporting young people with learning difficulties. She responded calmly and respectfully, building positive connections and helping each young person access the activity. Elissa has developed effective strategies to manage overstimulation and achieved 100% across key employability skills. She is described as an energetic, valued team member and a truly aspirational role model. We are all very proud of you, Elissa.

Meanwhile, year 11 learner, Noah, waited nine months for his plumbing placement with LJP Heating and Plumbing and can confidently say it was worth the wait. He developed key skills including pipe bending, joining methods, tiling, drilling, and health and safety. Noah achieved full



employability marks, scored 85% in his practical assessment, and is now pursuing plumbing courses and a future apprenticeship.

Inspiration

office.inspiration@icollege.org.uk

It has been busy at Inspiration!
We celebrated 'Hello Yellow' day to raise awareness of mental health in young children. We talked about ways to look after our own mental health – everyone was different!



We hosted 2 'nosey teas events' for West Berkshire school staff who were invited to come and have a cup of tea, a biscuit and a tour of our building along with a presentation and an opportunity to ask questions about what we do at Inspiration.



We went along to our own community engagement event at Shaw House and had lots of fun at the different stalls thinking about what we could aspire to be.



Finally, we can't wait for our trip to Millets Farm and a chance to tell Father Christmas what we would like for Christmas. We hope we are on his 'good list' - especially the adults!

Pod

staff.pod@icollege.org.uk

At the Pod, we have been studying Ancient Greece and Mythology. We looked at paintings on vases to learn about life in the past. Then we made our own pots.



What do you think this design would tell someone who might dig it up sometime in the future? What would they think about our lives?



We also have a new swing! We have been LOVING it!



Careers and Community Engagement Event

We were delighted to welcome friends of iCollege to Shaw House, Newbury, on 23rd October for our annual event. The event brought together a wide range of employers, training providers, colleges, and youth organisations, all committed to inspiring and supporting young people as they explore future pathways.

We extend huge thanks to our event sponsors, Rebound Electronics, and to all contributors including Westcoast Ltd, Helix Construction, Thames Water, Tesco, the NHS, The Army, Berkshire Youth, Ways into Work, Outdoor Academy, local colleges, training providers, and community organisations. We look forward to continuing these partnerships into 2026.

Throughout the day, interactive stands engaged learners from Year 5 to Year 11, alongside alumni



and parents. Popular activities included Rebound's Spin the Wheel and Outdoor Academy's hands-on plumbing workshop.

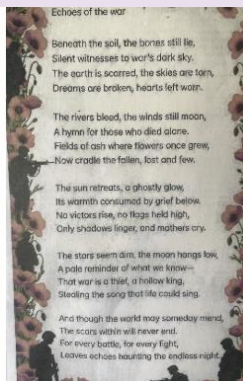
The Pink and Rose Room provided a calm, creative space led by art teacher Sarah Gordon and Harry Warren from The Corn Exchange, allowing young people valuable time to reflect and recharge.

At iCollege, we are keen to work with community-focused businesses who want to enrich the lives of young people, so let us know if you can!

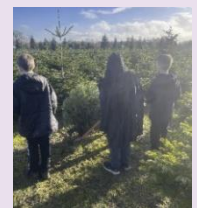
Pod+

Office.podplus@icollege.org.uk

As part of their history topic this term, year 9 learners have been focusing on WW1, so it was only right that they got to make poppies and lay their wreath on Memorial Day with the mayor and ex-service people. One learner was so inspired, he went home and wrote a poem using a combination of his own words and AI.



We also paid a visit to a local Christmas tree farm to pick a tree for the unit. You can imagine how much discussion there was as to which tree we should have! Eventually we settled on a decision and the tree was cut down and netted for us.





Independence

office.independence@icollge.org.uk

In November, learners and staff at Independence made a wreath whilst reflecting on those who died in service to our country in past wars. We also thought about those who die in conflict around the world. On Remembrance Day, at 11 am, we laid our wreath at the war memorial in Speen.



Integration

Office.integration@icollge.org.uk



Another busy term at Integration has seen a regular turn-over of learners with many successfully returning to mainstream settings. Our offer of 'In-Reach' has also borne fruit, and there are significantly fewer permanent exclusions than this time last year. We have had 36 learners on roll this term.

We are now preparing for Christmas. The decorations are up and a trip to Basingstoke's Ice Planet is booked for the last week of term!



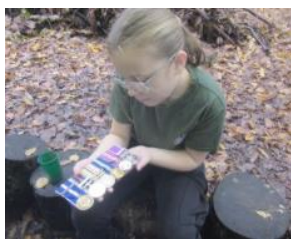
Careers through the Arts is a partnership project delivered with the Watermill Theatre and the Corn Exchange, designed to inspire young people aged 14-25 in West Berkshire and North Hampshire about the range of careers available within the arts.

As part of Discover Creative Careers Week, learners from iCollege visited the Watermill Theatre to explore creative pathways through the theme "Work with Everyone." The session encouraged imagination and creativity while supporting reflection and personal development. Learners also developed social skills by working cooperatively, communicating effectively, and engaging positively with others from different backgrounds. Learners took part in interactive, problem-solving activities that promoted teamwork and positive competition. One learner enjoyed a Mastermind-style game as it allowed her to "use her brain," while another said her favourite part was creating her own game and teaching it to staff. Both demonstrated excellent collaboration and confidence.



All participating units described the event as a positive and engaging experience. We are very grateful to the Corn Exchange and the Watermill Theatre for providing this funded opportunity for young people at iCollege.

Forest School... spent time remembering those who have sacrificed things. They gave them 2 minutes of their time, and made clay poppies.



How's that GCSE Art coursework coming along?

"Year 11 artists have been producing beautiful lino prints. Check out work from Bobbie and Oliver. I'm sure you'll agree these 2-3 layer prints are wonderful!"



Attendance is crucial!

Whole of iCollege 93%
Independence 91%
Integration 90%
Intervention 86%
Inspiration 99%
Pod 92%
Pod Plus 100%



In line with National policy, iCollege cannot authorise absence during term time and so taking holiday may result in a fine.

Our iCollege Community

Ryan keeps tripping himself up. As he tells me, 'School said it's my last chance this term. My mum's reminded me I'm on thin ice. As if I don't know it.' And still he keeps daring the authorities to do their worst. As ever with young people, Ryan's looking for a way to test his potency, whilst developing his sense of philosophical agency: 'What's the point of school anyway? We're all going to die.' Moreover, the psychological rough and tumble of adolescence has prompted his use of primitive defences to prevent feeling overwhelmed. His favoured defence is to simplify through black and white thinking. For Ryan, there are only two ways of being-in-the-world right now: a troublemaker, or a neek ('And that's the last thing I ever want to be!'). Enjoying the attendant clout in playing the role of truculent renegade, Ryan has become stuck in this psychic retreat from the daily reality reminders in school. The developmental task here is to fashion a more nuanced notion of who and how to be. Parents, school staff, coaches, and peers can all help, not by rescuing him, but by persistently reminding him about actions having consequences, and accompanying him as he struggles to jettison the simplicities of childhood.

iCollege Counsellor

College Alternative Education Achieves EBSA Horizons Accreditation

We are pleased to announce that College Alternative Education (Primary and Secondary) has successfully completed the EBSA Horizons training programme, developed by EdPsychEd in partnership with West Berkshire Council. This evidence-based programme strengthens our support for learners experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).

Key achievements include:

- Over 75% of staff completing Level 1 EBSA training
- Our designated EBSA Lead completing advanced Level 3 training

As a result, staff are better equipped to identify and support EBSA, with more adaptive and accessible teaching approaches. Attendance practices have been strengthened through a focus on emotional wellbeing, early intervention, and resilience. Leadership has embedded a whole-school, evidence-based approach, with improved understanding of how EBSA links to SEND and safeguarding.

This marks an important step in our commitment to inclusive education and ensuring every pupil feels safe, supported, and able to engage in learning.

From the Governors...

The term is nearly over, holidays
twinkle into sight,
At iCollege you've been sparkling
— working hard with festive might.
You have learned Words of the
Week (some tricky, some
extreme!),
Though remembering them all term
long was trickier than it seemed!

Now Rudolf's polishing his nose —
preparing for his flight,
But he still checks planners daily to
make sure they're just right!
If he sees you giving effort, he
cheers, "Keep going, you're a
star!"
Let your confidence shine brighter
than his nose from near and far.

We've decked our halls with
kindness, respect wrapped like a
bow,
Silent Night? Well... sometimes —
but Jingle Bells steals the show!
Learning's like a Christmas cracker:
surprises tucked inside,
And when we pull together, we
open them with pride.

So thank you to our brilliant staff —
each one a guiding light,
From classrooms to the kitchen,
making every day feel bright.
Learners — keep on
sparkling, you're amazing
— that's the gist...
Now enjoy your Christmas break
— you've definitely made the
"nice" list!

Feeling low?

Need some support with your
mental health?

Texting **shout 85258** provides
support if you are feeling low or
struggling with your mental health.

Alternatively, visit:

<https://giveusashout.org/get-help/>

Raise funds for us for FREE

with **easyfundraising**

Join as our supporter today at:
www.easyfundraising.org.uk/support-a-good-cause
Just search for:

8,000+ retailers will donate to us whenever you shop with them

Start at the easyfundraising website or app → Click out to where you'd like to shop → Checkout: prices are exactly the same! → The retailer sends a % of your spend to easyfundraising → They pass it on to us

Plus, you'll get...
Exclusive retailer offers | Competitions | A warm feeling inside!

Over **£60m** raised for UK good causes | **£0** extra cost to anyone

...or you still have time to vote for
iCollege on the Tesco blue tokens...

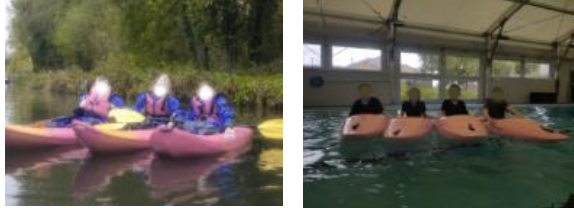


And Finally...

Outdoor Academy Round-Up!

Wow, it has been such an amazing term at Outdoor Academy, our learners have engaged and challenged themselves with a huge variety of Outdoor learning opportunities. The term has been filled with successes and achievements, and the learners have gained a wide range of outdoor awards and accreditations.

To start our highlights from this term we must go back to September. Groups from all the units tackled the lake for stand up paddle boarding, kayaking and rafted open canoeing.



Heading into October, learners had the opportunity to test out our new fleet of full suspension mountain bikes courtesy of Orange Bikes. Some learners learnt to ride, whilst others tested and developed their skills at more challenging mountain bike trail centres such as Swinley Forest and Fleet. Our Younger learners have grown so much with their biking confidence. Well Done!



Into November,



Into November, we had a lot of amazing and tasty wilderness programmes. Integration and Intervention tried their hand at preparing and cooking a pheasant on an open fire!

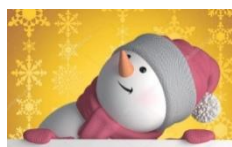
As we headed into the more wintery conditions, our learners climbed to new heights and explored new climbing and put their skills to the test with our pool kayaking sessions.

Finally in December, all of our learners have been in the festive spirit, taking part in various Christmas-themed challenges, including the Highest Christmas Tree in the South of England Challenge, Gonk Builds and Santa Paddles.



We would like to thank all our brilliant young people, parents and careers, and the incredible College Team. We hope you have an amazing Christmas holiday and can't wait to see you back in the New Year for some more amazing adventures.

The Outdoor Academy Team



Learner
Voice!

Inspiration Leaner

Age 10

What's your favourite thing to do?

"Play Forza Horizon 5"

If you could live inside a video game for a day, which would you choose and why?

"Forza Horizon because I get to race other cars."

One food you can't stand...

"Lasagne!"

What's the most boring thing in the world?

"Minecraft."

What do you like about iCollege?

"The lessons are shorter which I like because I can't sit still for long."

Is there anything you don't like?

"Learning about history."

Which 'out of school' activity do you like best and why?

Forest school because they have a massive swing, I get to light fire and we have hot chocolate and biscuits."

If you were the Head teacher, what changes would you make?

"More trips!"

If you would like to contribute to the next iTimes, please email:

sgiaever@icollge.org.uk

Thank you to everyone who sent items for this edition.

For general enquiries, contact:

office@icollge.org.uk

01635 48872