

Acceptance – Kindness – Responsibility – Perseverance - Aspiration



Message from Jacquie

Welcome to the early spring edition of our newsletter.



As the days slowly begin to lengthen and the first signs of spring start to appear, this is a lovely moment to pause and reflect. Snowdrops are peeking through the ground, mornings are a little brighter, and there is a real sense that change is in the air. It feels like a fitting time to take stock after what has been a busy and hardworking half term for everyone in our school community.

Over recent weeks, learners and staff have shown commitment and perseverance. It has been wonderful to see the effort that has gone into learning, teaching and supporting one another; the dedication shown across the school has been something to be proud of.

This edition of the newsletter coincides with Valentine's Day, a celebration often associated with cards, flowers and chocolates. While these traditions are familiar to many of us, Valentine's Day is also about something deeper: kindness, care and connection. Around the world, different cultures mark the day in their own way. In parts of Latin America, for example, it is known as *El Día del Amor y Amistad* — the Day of Love and Friendship — a reminder that friendship and compassion are just as important as romance. It is a timely opportunity to recognise and celebrate the people who support us, encourage us and make our days brighter. Whether that is a friend, a classmate, a colleague or a family member, taking a moment to appreciate others helps to strengthen the sense of community that makes our school such a special place.

As we move towards the next half term, with spring just around the corner, I hope everyone takes a well-earned moment to rest and recharge. I look forward to welcoming you back refreshed and ready for exciting months ahead, as we continue to learn, grow and enjoy the changing season together.

Jacquie Davies

NSPCC Keeping children safe online

From understanding apps to setting parental controls to what to do if you are worried about something a child has seen online, the NSPCC has got information and resources to help you understand online safety and talk about it with your young people.

Please click [HERE](#) to link to the NSPCC website.



IMPORTANT Term Dates

Feb 6th – 26th

Winter Olympics, Italy

Feb 14th

Valentine's Day

Feb 17th

Chinese New Year
Pancake Day

March 1st

St David's Day

March 5th

World Book Day

March 6th – 15th

British Science Week

March 16th

Y11 practice exams begin
English speaking and Listening
GCSE

March 19th – 20th

Eid El-Fitr

March 20th

Red Nose Day

March 26th – 27th

Y11 English Functional Skills

March 27th

Inspiration mosque trip

March 27th

Last day of term

Being the best that we can be!

Aspirational Year 11 College visits

Berkshire College of Agriculture

Two young people attended a tour of Berkshire College of Agriculture on January 14th to explore the range of courses on offer. In particular, they were interested in horticulture and public service courses. BCA has a zoo, a farm and a riding school!



This is Alison telling us about the many lunchtime clubs they have. BCA is a small college with a great community ethos.

BCA also have a developing Art and Media department with a new Art block under construction.

Reading College

Then on 23rd January, young people from Integration and Independence went to Reading College to explore courses such as bricklaying, plumbing, carpentry, mechanics, hair & beauty and health & social care.

This is Laurens showing us around the Car Maintenance Department.

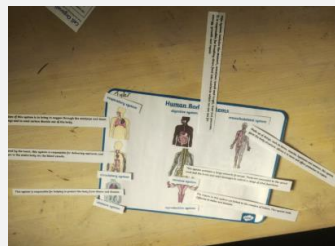


Reading College are offering 'Meet the Team' sessions at 4pm on 24th March for many courses when you'll be able to learn more and meet other young people who are interested in your course.

Book Here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/meet-the-teaching-team-reading-2964179>

Intervention scientists on a roll!

In Science this half term, learners have begun an exciting new topic focused on the human body. They have been using microscopes to examine animal cells and tissues, and even had the opportunity to observe human blood provided by Dave, the Science teacher, where they were able to identify red and white blood cells. Learners are now exploring the body's major organ systems, including the circulatory, nervous, digestive, musculoskeletal, immune, respiratory and reproductive systems.



In the shed, learners successfully completed the stripping down of a donated Yamaha 125 motorcycle, which was sadly beyond repair. Following learner consultation, it was decided that the next project would focus on an off-road or pit bike, and we were delighted to secure a Honda off-road adventure bike, with work set to begin shortly. Over the next term, learners will also be working towards certificated Entry Level Units in basic mechanics. They were keen to thank those who donated tools and bikes and have written letters of thanks during their English lessons.

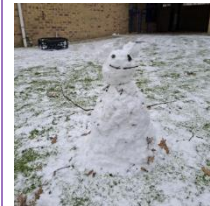
As ever, if anyone has any old tools, machinery or mopeds/motorcycles they would be willing to donate, please let Dave at Intervention know.



Inspiration

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We had an exciting start to the spring term with our first sight of snow.



This gave us a great opportunity to make a snowman which the children worked together to achieve.

Integration

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This term we have spent time remembering those who lost their lives during the Holocaust by creating some candles in their memory.

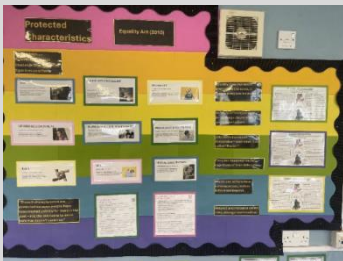


Pod+

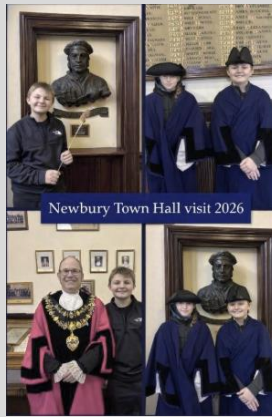
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At Pod+, we have been looking at how visits can enhance our curriculum. Y8 learners have been studying local and central government and had the chance to visit Newbury Town Hall where they explored the building and learnt how democracy works. They found out about civic duty, meetings and community events and even met the Mayor!

Meanwhile, through assemblies and PSHE lessons, we have been learning about the 9 protected characteristics and how these should be protected because in the past, people have been treated unfairly. Learners produced work that reflected their thoughts and feelings which we added to our lovely display.



We have also been discussing the people who inspire us and thinking about why we look up to them. This has led to work around jobs and our future aspirations.



Independence

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Independence learners have been involved in many visits and careers opportunities this half term, but now we are focusing on preparing for our practice exams which take place in March after half term, as well as starting to think about Art GCSE and English GCSE speaking and listening.

Pod

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In History, the children have been learning about WW2. They wrote questions to ask Alex's 91 year old grandmother, who lived in the east of London and was an evacuee in the war. Questions ranged from: "Did you have sweets and chocolate?" to, "Do you remember being evacuated?"

In RE, we have been learning about Islam. We visited Abu Bakr Masjid Mosque in Reading, which was fascinating.



Pinewood welcomes iCollege

Learners from Intervention, Integration and Independence visited Pinewood studios to see what kinds of career opportunities there are in the film industry. The day included a thrilling stunt show where a stuntman jumped on top of a car! Learners met Darth Vader and some Stormtroopers and chatted with professionals including costume and set designers, gaining valuable insight into the many roles that bring films to life.

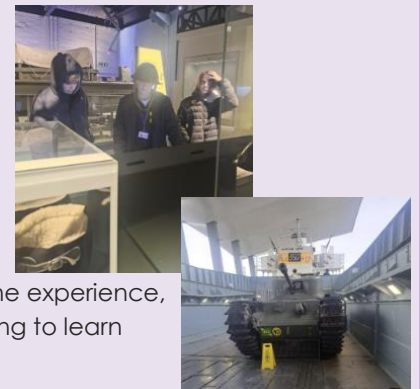
For more information about a possible career in the film industry, follow this link:
<https://pinewoodgroup.com/careers/early-careers/>



Intervention

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Recently, we visited the D-Day museum in Portsmouth. The museum brings history to life and helped give us a deeper understanding of the planning and preparation that took place before D-Day. Learners discovered how the events affected soldiers and civilians at home and abroad. Through artifacts, displays and stories, the visit highlighted the impact of war and encouraged thoughtful discussion. Reflecting on the experience, one learner said, "It was really humbling to see what people went through, and inspiring to learn how much courage and teamwork was involved."



GWR Work Experience for Transport Enthusiast

Year 11, Kenzie, completed a day's work experience with Network Rail at Reading Station on 21 April. He is pictured with Alice, Guards & Revenue Recovery Office Manager, who organised the placement.

Kenzie has been interested in a career in transport since Year 7, when a new bus pass gave him the freedom to travel across Berkshire. That experience sparked a lasting passion for public transport. Since then, he has developed his own transport-focused website and grown in confidence by making journeys independently.

The placement took over a year to arrange and was driven by Kenzie's determination. He asked the mum of a friend for help, who then made contact with Ali Haynes and Alice Tilley to confirm the arrangements. Kenzie followed this up with regular check-ins to ensure the day went ahead.

During the placement, he toured the offices, met the team, attended meetings, investigated delayed trains at Reading Station, and travelled to Swindon HQ for an IT department meeting.

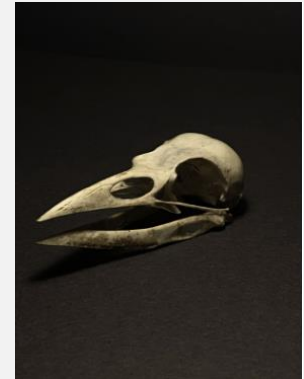
Kenzie was evaluated on nine employability skills, including timekeeping, engagement, communication and professionalism, and achieved 100% in every area. He will now complete a second day of work experience with the help desk and customer assistance team and will also be offered a practice interview.

Congratulations Kenzie — your motivation, organisation and commitment created this opportunity, and you made the most of it.



Congratulations

The popular, 'My Wildlife' photography competition returned to The Base this year, and Jack, Y10, has been selected as a finalist! Here is his photograph, 'Beak and Bone'.



'Acceptance' Awareness Day

Acceptance was the theme of our second whole-school awareness day this year. We recognized World Religion Day, celebrated on January 18th. This included displays, lessons and discussions in which we looked at what different religions say about how we should treat each other.

Acceptance is one of our Core Values at iCollege.



— Same same. But different. —
You belong here.
No matter your story. No matter your past. No matter how you learn.

What acceptance looks like here:

- ✓ We include everyone in our conversations and let people join in our games.
- ✓ We make compromises.
- ✓ We receive constructive feedback.
- ✓ We follow rules and instructions.
- ✓ We forgive and move on.
- ✓ We welcome new faces.

Sovereign Network Group Year 11 Mock Interviews



On 28 January, six learners successfully completed mock interviews with Sovereign Housing Network's (SNG) Skills and Employability Team at their offices in Greenham Business Park.

Young people applied for roles including builder, maintenance team member, business administrator and customer services adviser, adapting their CVs to suit each position SNG shared interview questions in advance, giving learners time to prepare — an approach many employers now use.

Questions included what they knew about SNG, reflecting on mistakes, personal achievements and creative problem-solving. Many learners found preparation challenging and felt nervous on the day, but they rose to the challenge. Interviewees spoke confidently about experiences such as work experience, volunteering, hobbies and team activities.

On 2 February, Elliott visited Independence to provide feedback and share tips for future interviews, encouraging young people to answer with confidence and speak from the heart.

Elliott also met with Harry for a discussion about apprenticeships at SNG. He recommended attending college, allowing young people to gain skills and independence before applying for apprenticeships at 18.

All participants reported feeling more confident about interviews and better informed about SNG and the recruitment process. We are incredibly proud of their resilience and commitment to their future careers.

We are very grateful to SNG and look forward to working with them again next year. SNG also offers employability support to all tenants — anyone interested can contact Ali for more information.

Our iCollege Community

Celebrating Year 11, Class of 2024-2025

We celebrated the achievements of our Year 11 Class of 24-25 during our Presentation Evening on January 25th. It was wonderful to welcome back alumni, parents and families to



Independence to discuss how they are progressing with their post-16 choices.

As well as GCSE certificates, young people were awarded subject, work experience and progress medals. All awards were presented by the Mayor of Newbury, David Harman, with Angie and Emma assisting him.

A note from the governors

This point in the school year offers a natural pause. Spring is often associated with growth, and at iCollege that growth is shaped by our core values of **acceptance, kindness, responsibility, perseverance and aspiration**.

These values guide everyday life in school — helping learners feel they belong, encouraging calm and respectful relationships, and supporting young people to take responsibility, keep going when learning feels challenging and aim high for their future. This values-led approach underpins the steady progress we see through many small but important steps.

We hope that over the break the whole iCollege family — learners, parents and staff — has the chance to rest and recharge. Whether that includes fresh air, spotting lambs in nearby fields, watching the geese returning to the waterways, enjoying a lie-in, or simply slowing the pace, we look forward to welcoming everyone back refreshed and ready to continue learning together. Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

'What are your best hopes from our conversation today?' Molly shrugs, unsure about joining me for our session, and unsure about what she wants to get from our time together. And yet figuring this out is crucial, not just in the process of counselling, but whenever we're trying to help someone find a way forward. Such hope-orientated questioning stems from the field of solution-focused brief therapy, first developed in the 1970s. I think it can inform *all* our work with young people, and with each other too. Problem-focused talk comes easily, enmiring us in a stance of 'what's the point anyway.' Instead, try recognising that all of us come from successful pasts, especially when things have been difficult, because the capacity to live through vicissitudes always reveals specific resources upon which we might draw in the service of realizing our best hopes. And approaching people with a degree of curiosity involves introducing people to themselves, without showering them with praise in turn inviting them to be curious about themselves. There's an important difference between believing the person and believing *in* the person. Working with Molly, I'd persist in establishing that if she were to have hope, what might she be pleased to see? Whatever her response, by encouraging her to selectively attend to what she *does* want in her life, amplifying and elaborating on this, I can enable her to develop a narrative of competence and agency.

Welcome to Jodie!



"I'm the new English teacher at Integration, bringing a love of language, stories and all things literacy. When I'm not in the classroom, you'll usually find me outdoors with my two little boys. I've loved finding my feet and getting to know everyone at Integration, and I'm excited to dive into Literacy across the school."

Staff Book Exchange!

Intervention has introduced a Staff Book Exchange to promote reading and wellbeing. Staff share books they have enjoyed, helping to model positive reading habits for learners.

Reading supports communication, concentration, confidence and emotional wellbeing. By talking about books, staff show that reading can be enjoyable and not just academic, helping to build a positive reading culture across the unit.

Attendance

Unit	Attendance
Inspiration	98%
Integration	90%
Intervention	88%
Independence	92%
Pod	90%
Pod +	100%

Click here to answer the question, ['Is my child too ill for](#)

And Finally...

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Our School

Keeping families informed

You may have heard about *artificial intelligence (AI)* in the news or online. We want to let you know how AI is currently used in our school and how we are helping children understand it safely.

What is generative AI?

Generative AI is technology that can **create new text, images or ideas** when someone types a question or instruction. Examples include chatbots and image-making tools.

How staff use AI

Staff may use AI to:

- Get lesson planning ideas
- Create or adapt teaching resources
- Reduce paperwork and admin tasks
- Keep up to date with research, including SEND support

Important:

Staff are **not allowed to enter any information that could identify a child, parent or staff member**. This keeps everyone's personal information safe.

Staff training

All staff receive **training and guidance** on using AI **safely** and **ethically**.

Do learners use AI in lessons?

Currently, **learners do not use generative AI tools for learning or schoolwork**.

However, children may come across AI outside school. Because of this, we talk about it as part of our wider teaching on:

- Online safety
- Fake images and videos (deepfakes)
- Checking whether online information can be trusted

Looking ahead

The government has confirmed that **future curriculum changes will include learning about AI and digital technology**. We will make sure any changes are age-appropriate and carefully planned and shared with parents.

Trusted support for parents

For clear, UK-based advice for parents and carers, we recommend:

Internet Matters – Using Artificial Intelligence

🔗 <https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/by-activity/using-artificial-intelligence/>

This website explains AI in simple language and gives practical tips to help keep children safe online.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

You are the expert of your child

You Are Not Alone - Every 1st Tuesday of the month - 7.00pm - 8.30pm

The **You Are Not Alone** community is a friendly and safe space where you can come and learn about autism and PDA, ask questions, connect with like-minded people or simply listen and learn from other people's conversations.

We talk about all sorts of things like:

Helping your child regulate their emotions.
Navigating school and EHCPs.
Supporting your child with friendships.
Managing sensory needs.
Developing a positive relationship with your child.
Looking after your wellbeing.

Click on the image for more information.



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

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Thank you to everyone who sent items for this edition.

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