



IMPORTANT Term Dates

December 25

Christmas Day

January 1

New Year 2024!

January 8

Term begins

January 9

Functional Skills English exams

February 5

Mental Health Awareness week

Message from Jacquie



You will remember that my last two Christmas messages started with the first and second verses of the poem, 'A visit from St Nicolas' by Clement Clarke Moore. This year, I'm skipping to verse 10:

*His eyes how they twinkled! His dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.*

The poem is 200 years old this year, or more than 90,000 'sleeps' and yet we **all** instantly recognise the description of Santa and can picture him in our 'mind's eye'. Don't you think that's an amazing use of words to describe somebody!!

How many different pictures of Santa can you find in this newsletter?

iCollege has had another busy Autumn term with lots of learning and loads of activities. When you read this newsletter, I hope you will be impressed by the variety of interesting and creative opportunities available to our learners, and see how successful they have been. A very big 'well done' to all our learners, families, staff and support agencies.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year, and look forward to our learners returning to school on the 8th of January, 2024.

With my very best wishes

Jacquie Davies, Head teacher



Emotional Health Triage

Emotional Health Triage is a free service open to children and young people in West Berkshire who need support with their emotional health. Referrals can be made by family members as well as by schools or GPs.

When a young person is referred, the team gets in touch with their family to discuss need and to signpost them to relevant support.

To make a referral for a child or young person please use our [online referral form](#). For further information please see our website or email us at emotional.health.triage@westberks.gov.uk. If you are unable to use a web form, you can e-mail us to request a PDF form.



Season's Greetings from your School Nursing team!

Keeping safe online: [NSPCC website](#)

Understanding the [health impact of screen time](#)

Advice on [eating well](#).

How to teach your children [road safety](#).

[Asthma in cold weather](#).

Fend off those bugs by [washing your hands properly!](#)

Help your children look after their [teeth](#).

If you are worried about your young person's anxiety, try [Young Minds](#).

Learn to Live....Live to Learn!

Inspiration

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This term, our local PCSO team came to visit us at Inspiration. They brought their van for us to investigate!



As part of our topic, we have been looking at the Stone Age. We were able to borrow some boxes of artefacts from Newbury Museum. We felt a real reindeer pelt (not from the Stone Age!) and handled some bowls, axe heads and flints. We especially loved seeing fingerprints in the clay pots.



We have also been learning about our 'zones of regulation', and thinking about how we are feeling. We made check-in strips to help us communicate how we are feeling to others.

Pod

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Pod staff and learners got involved with remembering those who lost their lives in battle back during Remembrance season.



At Forest School, we made some natural wreaths from materials we found, whilst in the classroom, we sewed poppies for the school wreath. Then we walked into town and laid our wreaths with the others.

We also went to the pantomime to see Beauty and the Beast. We had an amazing time shouting and booing at the characters. Our favourite part was when Ratty and Batty sang the Twelve Days of Christmas, but changed it to include KFC and Taylor Swift!



In FOREST SCHOOL, we have been working hard at keeping the environment free from litter.



Additionally, we have been making good use of our whittling skills by making festive reindeers!



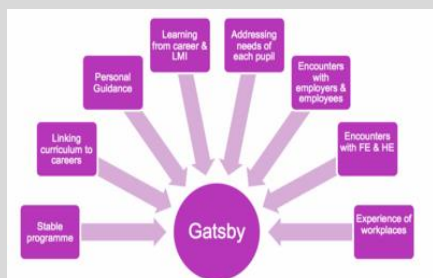


iCollege Careers Programme achieves 100% against Gatsby Benchmarks!

The careers programme for iCollege is based on recommendations by the Careers Development Institute (CDI) and is underpinned by the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks.

We are delighted to share that iCollege scored 100% in their Gatsby benchmark evaluation in December 2023 as evidenced by the Careers & Enterprise Company.

This diagram shows the areas that we are monitored on each term:



The next challenge for the careers team is the Quality in Careers Standard Assessment on 15th January 2024. Following 2 years of preparation, we will be inspected by a representative of the CDI.

How employers can help.

We aim to help all learners reach their full potential by providing them with a broad range of employer and career-related opportunities. We offer over 40 events including visits, speaker sessions and workshops to inspire and inform.

We appreciate that time is precious, but all employer contributions would be most welcome. Could you:

- Provide a 'career insight' talk to learners about your career?
- Act as an interviewer at a mock interview or event?
- Attend our careers fair or speed networking event?
- Host a workplace visit for a small group of learners?
- Host a work experience placement?

Please contact Ali: ahaynes@icollege.org.uk / 07464895993 if you can help



...on some great attendance figures...

Inspiration	94%
Pod	95%
Pod plus	96%
Integration	84%
Intervention	91%
Independence	89%

There are 8 learners who have 100% attendance!

Independence

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Learners at Independence were lucky enough to experience a little taste of Hollywood during their trip to Pinewood Studios. They heard from industry professionals and even had a close encounter with Darth Vader and some Stormtroopers! They managed to come through the experience unscathed, though one Stormtrooper did borrow Lauren's phone to take some selfies!



Careers and Community event 2023!

On 19th October at Intervention, staff welcomed friends of iCollege and members of the local community to a small careers fair, held to inspire the young people of Independence, Intervention, Integration, Pod+ and Pod who came to visit.

The event was also attended by iCollege alumni and school governors, and even the Mayor of Newbury and his wife called in to give their support. Exhibitors, who included Thames Water, The Army, Sparsholt College, BCOT, Berkshire Music Trust, Kennet school sixth form, Adviza, ASK apprenticeships and BEEP, have committed to a number of activities to engage learners in future careers or pathways. We are grateful to you all for your support.



Pod Plus

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We have had a great term at Pod+, with learners working hard in the run-up to Christmas. In English we have been learning about WW1 poetry and the emotion it evokes whilst in maths, we have been rounding numbers and studying long multiplication and division.

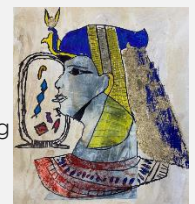
In humanities, we have been looking at the ancient Egyptians. We have discovered where Egypt is on a map, found out about life 5000 years ago, and investigated their beliefs in different gods. We have looked at the pyramids and thought about the technology they used. We have even mummified fish which was smelly, disgusting and absolutely fascinating!



At Integration, learners have created a collaborative, gothic wall based around architecture and the characters of Tim Burton.



At Pod+ it has been all about the Egyptians, and learners have created pharaohs using mixed media.



Intervention

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Intervention has been all about wreath making!

Spearheaded by Carolyn, Intervention has led the way in getting all units across iCollege to help with making poppies for the Remembrance wreath. Learners at Intervention learned to use a sewing machine for the first time!

Closer to Christmas, this has become making wreaths for front doors as well as some jewelry charms and homemade fudge.



Integration

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Integration has been looking forward to the festive period with learners foraging and then making their own Christmas ornaments. The Practical Skills lessons have been all about making learners busy: sawing, sanding and drilling to produce some amazing pieces of work that would not look out of place in any home



First 'Governor's Art Awards'

Annette, school governor and all-round fantastic person has been meeting with learners and delivering these 'hand-made-by-your-art-teacher' awards to very deserving learners from each unit.



Shaynade:
Integration



Rosie: Pod+



Kara:
Intervention

Lacey:
Independence



Our iCollege Community



'Oh my days, they're doing my head in again!' Becky's been having difficulties with her friendship group this term. Her opening our sessions with this lament reminds me of Sartre's line from his 1944 play *No Exit* that 'Hell is other people'. Making sense of our drive towards sociality in a world of relational aggression is hard work. To help Becky try to live in her world of fallouts and make-ups, I've shared the 19th century German philosopher Schopenhauer's metaphor of the porcupine dilemma: he imagined these creatures huddling together for warmth on a winter's day, then feeling the jab of each other's quills, prompting them to separate, only to succumb to the cold and thus re-congregate, spike each other again, separate, and so on. Humans and porcupines alike take some time to find the optimal distance at which to interact, perhaps settle for a while, only then to irritate one another again. There's no way out of this dilemma: the proximity we seek is so often the source of our pain. And of course, we often hurt one another without intending to. Becky could withdraw from the world, thus avoiding the 'quills' of her friends, but she knows that that way isolation and anguish lie. So, it's practise, practise, practise, puzzling out the give and take of interpersonal dynamics, slowly getting the hang of them as she learns about her own spikes and how to navigate those of others.

iCollege counsellor

A Note from Governors

As Christmas and New Year approach all too quickly, the governors would like to thank all staff and learners at iCollege for their continued commitment and energy. It has been made all the more difficult recently with the return of covid infections, especially at Independence. Governors do very much appreciate all that staff do to ensure that young people can continue to learn and be supported in their learning in so many constructive ways.

One of our governors, Annette Priestly, has been working with Rob Cordery in art to set up an art award for learners at each of the iCollege units.

Presentations to the successful learners have taken place recently and have been warmly received by them and their families. This initiative will continue next year. It is really inspiring to see how staff, learners and governors are working together in such a creative manner.

There is another volunteer recruitment day at the Corn Exchange on Saturday, 13th January. Several iCollege governors have been found through this whole day event. Many voluntary organisations come together, and it is always very well attended by potential volunteers. Governors will, again, be manning a stall on this day, hoping to recruit, and also to promote the work of iCollege. We still have vacancies for a parent governor and a support staff governor; we are always keen to provide further information on what these roles entail.

A very happy Christmas to all staff and learners!



Inspiration goes to the food bank!

Ciara took a food donation to the West Berks food bank.



Donation from iCollege crated and awaiting sorting.



Food parcels waiting for collection by delivery vans.



Christmas treat donations.



Ciara adding satsumas to the bags.



Each item is sorted into categories.



Each parcel is dated, weighed and numbered for families.



Getting into...Dance!

At iCollege, there are many young people who have hobbies outside of school...

I'd like to introduce you to Ella (Y11) and Jack (Y8) who love to dance!

My name is Ella and I've been dancing since I was 6 years old. It's nearly been 10 years! I got into dance as an after school club doing shows for local fairs and our parents. As the years went by, my confidence grew. Soon I was put in for exams and passed them with honors, and I began to realize that dance wasn't just an after school club anymore. After climbing the levels and grade ladder for a while, I got an invitation in the post about joining the dance school competition team. I was over the moon! I was in the under 10s category. It took almost a year to even be placed. Now I am in the over 14s/under 16s silver gold category.

I love dance because it generally makes me really happy, although there are a lot of discouragements when it comes to competitions because you don't always win - that's just life.

Dance helps me to express my feelings, and helps me with my self-esteem.

I go to dance 2/3 times a week on a Wednesday and a Friday, and sometimes a Saturday. Competitions are always on a Sunday. Of course everything is money and I think the most expensive thing is the costumes, but you can make costumes yourself. Every dance school will be different but you have to pay for the classes, costumes, show and competition entry tickets. If you know what dance school you wish to attend, just look for extra information on their website.

Ella



My name is Jack and I go to Pod+. I do street dance, tap dance, acro' and ballet. I dance at Kenet School on a Wednesday, A Space on a Tuesday and Bucklebury school on a Friday. On Wednesdays and Fridays, my teachers are Becky and Izzie and on Tuesdays, it's just Becky. I enjoy doing dance. It's the only thing I have ever stuck with. It

makes me feel happy.

There was this day where me, my mum and my step dad came to our kick boxing class early and saw a dance class finishing off.

If we didn't come early that day, I would probably still be looking for something to stick with.

Jack



You feel your body start to shake
like you're out in a blizzard on a cold
winter's night
But this isn't that type of shiver.
Palms sweaty

Heart Racing.

You feel it all coming up –
Adrenaline really kicks you now.
Not knowing whether you're going to
explode...

or

compose...
Tears rolling down your cheeks like
you're sad.

But no, you're mad.

No one listens
No one's there
And suddenly, sweat is rolling from
your hair.

Too late to turn and look for answers,
you hear your heart beating like ten
tap dancers.

Thinking why you let yourself get like
this?

Then

Red.

Not knowing what you've done
And the feeling of regret has overspun.

Now you're thinking: why did I get so
mad...

But that's anger.

Don't mistake it for being bad.

Jasmine (Y11)

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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