



## IMPORTANT Term Dates

### February 13

Pancake Day

### February 14

Valentine's Day

### February 17

Random Act of Kindness Day

### February 19

Back to school!

### February 28

English Functional Skills Exams

### March 7

World Book Day

### March 15

Comic Relief

### March 28

Inset / Break up for Easter

## Mental Health Awareness Week

One great way to manage your mental health is to talk about it. Tellmi is a safe app where you can talk about anything.

Click on the logo to find out more.



## Message from Jacquie



It looks like spring is finally 'just around the corner' after the dark, wet, miserable winter! It's a time of new beginnings and fresh starts; looking to the future, living our 'best life' and being our 'best self'.

The poet William Wordsworth wrote about the 'budding twigs spreading out their fan to catch the breezy air' and this made me think about iCollege Year 6 and 11 learners...

It may seem a long way off, but transition to secondary school and post 16 opportunities are not so far away, and for those learners, it's a time to open hearts and minds to the possibilities of the future, focusing on studies and recognising self-worth. The rewards from concentrating on learning may seem a distant goal, but as all adults know, success in school will lead to greater life choices, and ultimately personal satisfaction and happiness.

We will return to school after the half term break on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February and I look forward to seeing you then.



Chinese New Year 2024 is the year of the dragon!

You are a 'dragon' if you were born in 2012, 2000, 1988, 1976 or 1964.

If you are a dragon, you are said to be strong, energetic and outspoken. The dragon is the most auspicious of the zodiac animals, and is associated with good luck, wisdom and success. This year's Chinese New Year celebrations begin on February 10<sup>th</sup>. Families will clean their houses, buy new clothes and meet together to eat good food! To find out more about the Chinese New Year, click [here](#)

## Learn to Live....Live to Learn!

### Pod Plus

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Our first news is that we welcomed two new members of staff to Pod Plus, Rebecca Reilly, who has taken over Jo Farley's class and Elle Stalker, who is our new teaching assistant. They have both settled in really well and the learners have taken to them already.

Although this has only been a relevantly short term the learners have packed a lot into it and in English have written descriptive stories linked to our adventure topic. They have also had the opportunity to be film critics, writing reviews on what the films were about as well as what they enjoyed about them and the type of people the films are aimed at.

In maths the learners have been focusing especially on adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing fractions with different denominators. They have also been looking at measuring angles as well as finding missing angles on a straight line and around a point.

In art, we have been linking the work to our topic work on erosion and the changing landscape. The learners have been completing designs on pebbles as well as creating fossil prints and creating sculptures of pebbles out of clay.

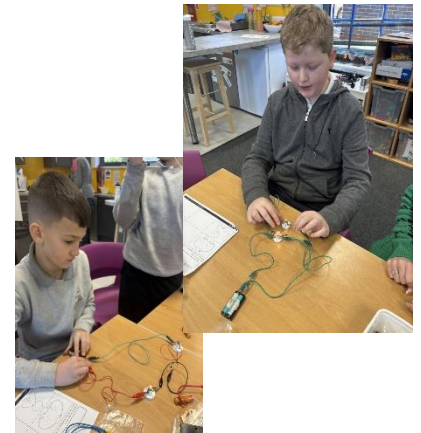
Lastly, we have been studying metals and magnetism in Science and have been conducting experiments around the reaction of different materials. The learners have had a fantastic time with Robin, our new science teacher.



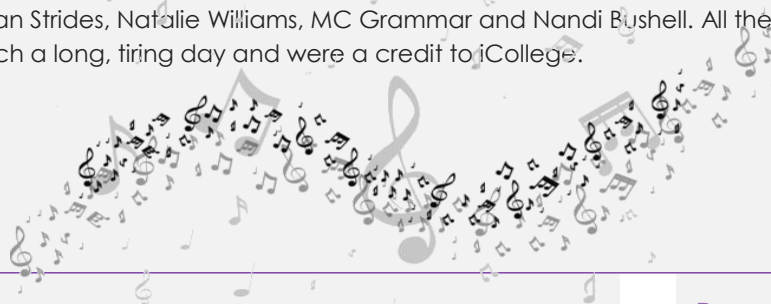
### Pod

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In DT the Learners have been exploring circuits with a view to designing and making their own battery powered lights.



Hans Christian Anderson said, "Where words fail, music speaks" and this week, learners at the Pod have discovered just that. On Thursday 1st February, they went to Wembley OVO Arena to take part in 'Young Voices', the **biggest** children's choir in the world. After months of practising a variety of songs and dances, it was great to finally perform them in front of thousands of people. We were also treated to amazing performances by Urban Strides, Natalie Williams, MC Grammar and Nandi Bushell. All the children coped brilliantly with such a long, tiring day and were a credit to iCollege.



## Inspiration

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Inspiration has had a great start to the New Year. We have really enjoyed our new topic: Space. Both classes have made some interesting displays.



We have read the book, 'Man on the Moon'. In the story, the main character doesn't believe in aliens, but as readers, we have spotted lots of aliens in the pictures. We designed and made our own alien using airdry clay.



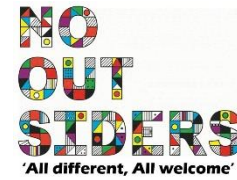
In Elm class, we made a rocket with lots of special features like a keypad to enter and boosters on the side.

We also painted aliens and wrote descriptions. KR's description says, "My alien is a hairy creature with long toenails that are painted red. She also has three strands of hair with a sparkly bow. She lives on a colourful planet where all the aliens have thick hair. I wouldn't like to meet her because she is boastful. Erin-jnyel [the alien] eats other alien's hair so hers can grow thicker, which is a bad habit."



## Forest School goes dough – nuts!

Last week, we made Forest School Doughnuts on an open fire!



This is the ethos we are adopting at iCollege. It promotes inclusivity and community cohesion to prepare young people for life as global citizens. <https://no-outsiders.com/>

As part of No Outsiders, at Inspiration, we have started looking at a scheme of picture books that teach about difference and equality. One of our books this term was 'Kenny lives with Erica and Martina'. It helps children to understand that being different isn't something to be afraid of.



## Intervention

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At Intervention, we've been learning to cook spaghetti bolognese. Learners could season, and choose which vegetables to add. We made banoffee pie for dessert.



Now we can impress our loved-ones on Valentine's Day with a 2-course meal!



## Artists inspired!

This term, learners at Pod Plus have been creating work as part of their unit on erosion by investigating Land Art and looking at the work of Andy Goldsworthy. The learners explored creating cairns with rocks both inside the classroom and out. Two learners even engaged in their own time independently building outside. We also worked with sand to create a collaborative concentric circle piece in the sand, and learners worked with masking fluid and watercolours to produce cairn inspired paintings with some fantastic results.



Meanwhile, iCollege has been showing its wonderful creative skills by featuring in the Base's exhibition, GENerate. The work was fantastic, especially this Keith Haring-inspired piece by learners at Integration.



## Integration

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Using the theme of Native Americans and Nature, Rowan has achieved a fantastic tonal drawing using graphite. He worked really hard over several art lessons.



In addition, we have been doing some walks and spotting the signs of spring. Our planters have started to sprout and we are looking forward to them brightening up the front of our building!

## Valuable addition to Careers lessons at Independence

Careers lessons have been joined by Simon Hannon, volunteer and financial advisor.



Simon has given learners a real-life insight into the financial aspects of working life. It has enhanced understanding of such topics as take-home pay, deductions, budgeting, borrowing risks, saving and pensions. Of course, it has also meant inspiring the possibility of a career path in an area of finance.

We are very lucky to have an extensive programme of guest presenters throughout the year. If you have an area of expertise you could share, contact Ali: [ahaynes@icollge.org.uk](mailto:ahaynes@icollge.org.uk)

## Independence

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Young people at Independence are working hard towards their GCSE exams in the summer term. They have been completing Functional skills exams in Maths and English to help prepare them.

Many are attending work experience placements in a variety of sectors including animal care, mechanics, retail, charity and fitness.

After half term, we have more functional skills exams and then the **Practice GCSE exams starting on the 4<sup>th</sup> March for the whole week.**

In social time, Independence young people are enjoying our new dartboard, improving dexterity, and also their mental maths!



## Our iCollege Community

Starting with his wonderings about the death and destruction in Gaza and Ukraine and the possibility of World War III, Tom then bemoans how school and his parents keep reminding him to focus on his GCSEs, scorns the time he's spent in 'isolation' following disruptive behaviour, and rounds it all off with 'and we're all gonna die anyway.' He looks at me expectantly, as if to say, 'Right, Mr. Counsellor, what are you going to do about all that then, eh?'

The anxieties elicited by the givens of human existence (death, the freedom to make of our lives as we will, our ultimate aloneness, and the absence of a clear meaning to life) rear their heads in all sorts of ways in our conversations with young people. Tom's anxiety announces itself with Sartre's lovely phrase 'the vertigo of possibilities'. Each time we meet it feels as if he's telling me 'Part of me wants to have a go, and part of me can't be bothered; no one's the boss of me, and can't you just tell me what to do; oh, and anyway, A\*s and good behaviour won't protect me from death.' Rendering intelligible these different takes on what it means to be alive, without offering false solutions, and sticking with him as he grapples with the existence pain we all face, gradually helps him to bear his anxiety and to understand that he's not getting anything wrong in finding it hard, and that it's not as personal as it feels. *iCollege counsellor*

### iCollege Alternative Education achieves quality standard for careers work

We have been recognised for our outstanding careers work following an assessment on 15<sup>th</sup> January. We have been awarded the national Quality in Careers Standard, awarded under licence by Ixion. This standard is given to schools and education providers who can demonstrate the importance they place on careers and how they support learners to make decisions about their life after school.

It is a statutory duty for schools to 'secure independent careers guidance' for all learners from Year 8. Achieving the award shows that the head teacher, governors and leadership team at iCollege embrace, promote and endorse quality careers education and recognise the part it plays in the overall success of the school and its young people. We offer a range of activities to introduce learners to the world of work, including work experience, events with local employers and regular opportunities to meet with careers professionals. Jacquie Davies said, "We are thrilled to have achieved the national Quality in Careers Standard awarded by Ixion. At iCollege, we recognise the important role school plays in helping learners develop their knowledge, skills and experience so they can go out into the world and achieve personal success. This standard has provided a flexible framework that enabled us to audit our work on careers and ensure our learners are receiving advice, practical support and experience so they are prepared for the next stage of their education, employment, self-employment or training."



## Hello and Goodbye!

We would like to say a warm welcome to: Robin Ireland (science), Rebecca Riley (Pod+ teacher), Kerry Varley (admin) and Shannon Chalkley-Dyer (TA).

Robin says, "I am a science teacher with a quarter of a century of experience! I am covering four of the iCollege

bases, and have found a great team spirit and genuine care for the learners. I

am a big fan of rugby and am the safeguarding officer at Rams Rugby in Reading"



We also say goodbye to Anneli (TA) and wish her well as she heads off to the West Midlands to be a paramedic!

### A Note from Governors

The New Year – 2024 – and the new term are very much underway now. Life at iCollege is as busy as usual. Governors have been busy too. At the recent West Berkshire Volunteer Fair, governors took charge of one of the many stalls there. Our aim was to encourage visitors to the fair to find out more about the range of work that iCollege does and to encourage them to think about whether they could join the management committee or offer a work placement of some kind. We talked to many people, some of whom were willing to give their names for further discussions about how they might become involved with iCollege. It was also very useful to talk to some of the other organisations represented at the fair, find out more about the work they do and see whether there might be opportunities here to link with some aspect of iCollege's work.

Governors recently formed part of a panel looking at the appointment for the new role of Co-Head. After a rigorous interview process, Jo Farley has been appointed to this position. Many congratulations to Jo: As governors, we all wish her very well in her new position.

We still have vacancies for a Parent Governor and a Support Staff Governor. Please let us know if you would like to be provided with further information on any aspects of these roles. Do get in touch with our clerk, Jill Hills, if you would like to know more: [jHills@icollge.org.uk](mailto:jHills@icollge.org.uk)

## Getting into....Athletics!

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

I'd like to introduce you to Ruby (Y8), who is really into athletics.

#### Why did you get into athletics?

I started a couple of years ago when I was at the end of year 5. My dad took me to Reading Athletics Club, which is based at Palmer Park. I really enjoyed it straight away, and I was particularly good at long distance events like the 800m and the 1500m. I think I'm good at these events because I have good stamina and lots of determination.



#### Have you ever participated in any events for your school?

When I was at Little Heath, I took part in the county cross-country event and I competed against hundreds of others, finishing 65<sup>th</sup> out of all of the girls. I was really proud of myself and it made me want to keep improving.

#### Are you still doing athletics now?

I got a little bit frustrated because my coaches at Reading Athletic Club wanted me to move into the shorter distance events so I stopped running for my club. I will definitely do athletics for my school though when I get the chance and maybe join another club in the future because I really enjoy it.

#### Do you take part in any other sports?

I used to play football for Tilehurst Football Club and I played up front. I once scored a hat trick (3 goals) in a game against Henley.

#### Do you prefer football or athletics?

I prefer athletics because I only have to depend on myself. In football, sometimes your teammates let you down or moan at you but in athletics, it's all on you.

#### HOW TO GET YOUR KIDS HOOKED ON ATHLETICS:

- Do it together
- Keep it fun
- Get your kids to invite their friends over to join in
- Stay positive and be encouraging
- Watch sports together

<https://www.readingac.com/junior-club>

<https://www.newburyac.org.uk/young-athletes>



Learners from Independence were taken on a trip to Reading College on 29<sup>th</sup> January. They visited departments of interest including Esports, hair and beauty, construction, sports, music production, art and design and catering where the team was preparing a pheasant dish with apprentice chefs for paying customers.

We will be supporting Year 11s with applications for Reading College during Careers and Adviza meetings over the next few weeks.

Upcoming dates:

Sat 2<sup>nd</sup> March: Berkshire College of Agriculture event (10am-2pm)

Sat 2<sup>nd</sup> March: Sparsholt College open event

Wed 20<sup>th</sup> March: Newbury College open event (4pm)

Thurs 18<sup>th</sup> March: UCAS Discovery event, Winchester (10am)

Wed 29<sup>th</sup> April: BcoT open event (4.30pm)

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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