

The termly magazine from Dragon School

Dragon Tales



Autumn Term 2023





HEAD'S WELCOME

Dear Dragon Families,

In some ways it seems like yesterday that we were enjoying the golden days of Autumn with rugby and hockey matches, swimming galas, variety shows, Battle of the Bands and dare I mention future school assessments and exams. At every turn Dragons engage every ounce of energy into doing their best.

The final week of this term should always be sprinkled with some magic; we hope you enjoyed the festive cheer each morning. Childhood memories of this time of year are so precious so we hope we have locked in some magic with reindeer, elves and even the Grinch! The Sale provided a sparkling finale with the 'Swifties' in our community raising such a generous donation.

In typical Dragon style as this term ends, we are raising money for charities who support those in need. At a time of year when many religions are celebrating light overcoming darkness it is important to share our light and be grateful for all that we have.

Wishing you peace and goodwill,

Anna Giddons



SOCIAL IMPACT

Children and staff kicked off the new academic year by voting for our new School Charities of the Year. We are delighted to be working with three more inspirational charities this year, Asylum Welcome, a local charity that offers information, advice and practical support to asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable migrants living in Oxfordshire; FareShare, a national charity that tackles the hunger crisis and food waste by redistributing good, nutritious food that would otherwise be wasted to those that need it most; and World Land Trust, an international conservation charity that protects the world's most biologically significant and threatened habitats. No sooner had the votes been counted, two of our year group fundraisers were

underway – the epic D Block Colour Run, which miraculously fell between two torrential rainstorms, and the E Block 'Waste-Less' Bake Sale, which saw our E Blockers make an amazing array of sweet and savoury goods using store simple cupboard ingredients which often get ignored!

This term we also opened our Dragon Community Larder at the Prep site. Each week our generous community have been donating non-perishable food and essentials that are collected by Oxford Food Hub – along with the weekly 250 hot meals prepared by the Dragon catering team – and then distributed to individuals and aid organisations across the city.





DRAGON SALE

The Dragon Sale was founded in 1943 and this year's Sale marked its 80th anniversary. With over 85 pupil stalls and a literary line-up to rival Hay, it really was another fantastic year. The anniversary has prompted us to take a moment to consider the incredible impact the Sale has had on us as individuals and all those that it supports – a truly remarkable achievement. It has also been an excellent opportunity to trawl back through the archives, and some highly amusing old Draconian articles, and find reassurance in the fact that whilst the timing and some of the content may have changed a little over the years, very little else has....

The Draconian, Christmas 1956, p. 12726 – The last morning brought the most popular announcement of the Term, that all classrooms would be out of bounds from Ilam. At that hour the Old Buildings were taken over by the stall-holders, the hucksters and the hagglers, with a sprinkling of confident men, and long before three o' clock a queue of willing victims was waiting outside for the Christmas Sale to open. Inside the goods on offer ranged from a puppy (live) to a pheasant (dead), from a humble Christmas card to a lordly kilt. And the attractiveness of the various lotteries and raffles must have caused a sharp slump in Premium Bonds.

The Spring term looks as exciting as ever, with many more fundraisers on the way, visits from our School charities, and some wonderful music, drama and STEM workshops planned with our local partner schools. A huge thanks to all the brilliant children and staff that give so much time and energy to the Dragon's social impact programme, and to the wider community of friends and family who do so much to support it.



AUTUMN TERM AT THE PRE-PREP

The term started during a heatwave in September and ended in deepest darkest December surrounded by twinkly lights, tinsel, elves and reindeer! The new Reception Dragons settled beautifully in September and showed us just how far they have come since those first tentative days with a wonderful Nativity play. All the children have worked hard in the classroom, played hard on our wonderful new playgrounds and sung their hearts out in the various concerts which launched Christmas in fine style. I thank them all for their company, curiosity and cheery spirit!

Annie McNeile, Head of the Pre-Prep



Another new academic year and 48 new and very excited young Dragons ran through the gates to start school in September. They have quickly made friends and settled into Dragon life. The Reception topic theme was 'The Everywhere Bear', based on a story by Julia Donaldson about the class bear that gets lost and goes on adventures including a trip on a fishing boat, a visit to the recycling centre and ends up in the local library. All Reception children had a chance to take the Dragon bear home for a sleepover too. Luckily, he didn't get lost! We enjoyed a visit from Little City who brought the most brilliant role play set up where the children could explore all manner of different professions and occupations such as garage mechanics, a vets' practice, doctors' surgery, supermarket and building site. Our calendar was full of events after half term, with Bonfire Night, Remembrance Day, Diwali, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and of course Advent and Christmas ending with the performance of their amazing nativity play 'The Twinkly Nativity'.

It has been a wonderfully busy first term for our youngest Dragons, and we're incredibly proud of how well they have all settled into school life!

Year 1 settled into the new academic year with confidence and demonstrated a palpable enthusiasm to learn across all areas of the curriculum. Through their topic, Healthy, Happy Me, they investigated the five senses by participating in a variety of experiments and they learnt to recognise the importance of respecting individuality and uniqueness. They explored their core texts I Want My Hat Back by Jon Klassen and Wild by Emily Hughes with curiosity and enjoyed a hands-on drama workshop all about storytelling. Each week, the children wrapped-up warm and went on their Muddy Dragons excursions, learning new skills and observing seasonal changes. The term came to conclusion for Year 1 with a joyful performance of

Christmas songs and poems to their parents in the last week of term.

Year 2 have thoroughly enjoyed their Castle Topic adventure, which was centred around a modern interpretation of Rapunzel. The children learnt all about the Normans and why they started building castles. The topic finale was a Past Presents Workshop where they learnt all about knights, followed a structured format of training for war, set the scene and enacted out the key points of the Battle of Hastings using bespoke foam weapons and armour. The highlight of the day was where the teachers and LAs were trapped inside the castle whilst the Year 2 children dramatically carried out an epic siege! The fabulous book Traction Man by Mini Grey has been used as inspiration for the children to write their own action-packed stories and comic strips. Mini Grey came in to do a workshop with the pupils and the children loved hearing about how to write a book and learnt about how to illustrate their ideas. In addition, the children were spoiled with a visit from Lego Stem workshops and worked together to build a Lego fairground ride, which they programmed themselves.

Year 3 started the year learning all about British coastlines through the Cornish Legend 'The Mousehole Cat'. We were treated to a traditional Star-gazey Pie for lunch and enjoyed an orienteering trip at Hill End. This term we have immersed ourselves in a shared topic with E Block, exploring life in the Victorian era. We travelled back in time with an immersive day in a Victorian school, museum and toy shop, and have been learning about important people and inventions that shaped history. We ended the term with a magical Christmas Presentation of carols and music in the Lynam Hall.

A wonderfully busy term that culminated in an abundance of Christmas joy and spirit!





The E Block children have completed a most successful first term on Bardwell Road and it has been a joy watching their confidence grow since September. They have taken part in over 70 hockey, rugby, cross-country and swimming fixtures and proudly swam for their form in two Swim Relays. On all these occasions E Block displayed the sporting values of discipline, courage and respect.

In September E Block braved a very wet trip to Whittenham Clumps and showed huge resilience in the face of such inclement weather! They very much enjoyed the team bonding exercises and getting to know their classmates outside the school environment.

In October they headed off to the Chiltern Open Air Museum. E Block were 'taken back in time' to a strict Victorian classroom and imagined themselves as working Victorian children. The cake bake sale for Fair Share was another sugary highlight. In a short hour, E Block raised an impressive £711.10, selling an array of impressively sticky and delicious goodies.

E Block have very much enjoyed singing and practicing in their ensembles groups every Wednesday. Their musical talent was showcased at the E Block concert. A number of E Block children also impressed the Dragon community at the Battle of the Bands!

E Block Extravaganza put on a wonderful production of Ebenezer. It was a rip-roaring performance full of laughs, wonderful singing and excellent acting.

In between all this, E Block have been working incredibly hard in lessons and getting used to the Bardwell Road site. Many have been taking part in music and LAMDA lessons as well as making the most of the many extracurricular clubs after school. A huge well done to all.

For our Middle School it has been a busy but exciting term. In September we welcomed our new D Block cohort as well as some new C Block. All children settled in well to the busy routine. D Block had a wonderful afternoon raising money for the Fare Share charity with an exciting Colour Run and came home all

colours of the rainbow. Meanwhile C Block were prepping hard for the ISEB Common pre-test, which took place after half term in a calm and well-rehearsed manner.

We have had both formal and informal concerts, pantomimes, hockey, swimming and rugby matches galore, as well as a plethora of exciting Quest choices, clubs and activities.

Middle School children have risen to all the challenges offered and have ended term on a high with a celebratory assembly showcasing some of the amazing things we have been doing.

There have been many highlights this term in Upper School, with a huge amount of commitment and energy from the children. Our themes of 'service' and 'taking responsibility' have been seen in action day by day with the way the children have committed to their learning, the huge number of extracurricular activities, as well as showing support to one another during the day and into the evening, for our many boarders.

Some highlights have been the ever-increasing number of pluses children have been getting due to the focus and effort in

lesson time, B Block performing on stage during a whole school assembly in Anti-Bullying Week to highlight key messages, and the proactive nature of the ambassadors in their various roles, whether supporting younger children during drama sessions, giving tours of the school to visitors or just willingly tidying up and serving around the site.

The long list of children signing up to serve in different areas of the school via our Dragon Award Scheme continues to grow, and the way our A Block have conducted themselves during exam week was something to be commended, and most recently watching the Sports Ambassadors leading a Wake and Shake on a crisp Tuesday morning in the playground, managing to gather children from all year groups as well as staff to engage with their moves!

The Autumn Term is long and at times tiring, but the Prep children have continued to push themselves in all areas of school life, and truly deserve a well-earned rest amongst the festive celebrations!

BOARDING LIFE



Boarding continues to flourish with our Houses providing a home from home experience for our full and flexi boarders. The girls in Cherwell and boys in Dragon House have enjoyed their newly refurbished Houses and living in luxurious comfort. The newly created kitchen area in Cherwell has been a huge success with the girls often baking and cooking up a treat with In-House suppers on the weekend.

There have been numerous highlights for the term with the Boarders taking part in Park Runs, the Oxford Half Marathon, and Sunday trips to Chessington, Laser Tag, Cotswold Wildlife Park, Gravitee Golf and bowling. Christmas also saw a number of celebrations with In-House trips to the Christmas Markets and the pantomime, as well as some fine House performances

at the Christmas Miscellany. Term concluded with the House Christmas parties and disco, House Suppers and Boarders' Carol Service at St. Andrew's.

The dorm decoration competition remains fiercely contested and the Boarders have made their dorms personalized and decorative. The diversity of the boarding community has been celebrated with a number of Houses holding International evenings where children have the opportunity to celebrate their culture, food and music.

Boarding at the Dragon continues to thrive, and more memories continue to be made. We look forward to the Spring Term and lighter evenings, enabling even more fun to be had!



DRAGON QUEST

Quest remains a highlight of the week at the Dragon. As ever, the diversity of the offering is quite something! The children can move from Dungeons and Dragons to Basketball, or from Lego engineering to performing musical numbers in the Lynam Hall (the performances have been quite spectacular)!

We have been really proud of our Dragon Helpers this term. These are senior pupils who have been assisting certain sessions, whether it's through leading choreography, coaching sport or being a Dungeon Master. Watching the children take on these roles with pride and professionalism is fantastic to see.

We're excited about some of next term's additions, on top of new sessions we've already enjoyed this year such as lacrosse, illustration, handball or Rubix cubing. There also can't be many prep schools out there where pupils are being taught how to play Aussie Rules!

Quest Prime continues to blossom, with a number of new parents getting involved with the football, touch rugby, netball or yoga. Everyone is more than welcome to join us; it's a great way to have fun and meet other members of our community and we look forward to seeing you in the Spring Term.





This term saw the casting for both Upper School productions of A Midsummer Night's Dream and Sister Act, which will both happen next term and are very exciting events to come.

We were also treated to an excellent Upper School Variety Show where 12 acts performed in a Friday evening Spectrum event. The acts ranged from comedy to dance to spooky Halloween storytelling; the event was well attended and celebrated by both parents and pupils.

The major events of the term were the E Block Christmas Bonanza of Ebenezer and the return of the C Block Pantomimes. Ebenezer, the second of the new E Block Christmas Bonanza's after last year's inaugural production, included a cast of 30 E Blockers and was a rip-roaring success. Great crowds flocked to see this Christmas classic on Friday, 1st of December and they were treated to a feast of great acting and singing. The production even included a snow machine at the end of the performance. All of the E Block that performed did so

with confidence and skill, and there are certainly some potential acting stars in this year group to watch out for in the future! Congratulations to all of the cast and to Ma Pogose, who directed and produced her first Dragon production in style.

With the Lynam Hall decorated with over 100 posters and 200 balloons, it was time again for the return of the C Block Pantomimes, now a Dragon Christmas staple. This year's production even included a surprise performance from the C Block tutors, who had great fun performing a short version of Peter Pan. All of the 128 children in C Block played named parts and over the course of 70 minutes we were treated to seven short classic pantomimes: Jack and the Beanstalk, Cinderella, Snow White, Aladdin, Robin Hood, Beauty and the Beast and Sleeping Beauty. Well done to everyone involved in what was a tremendous afternoon!

Please look out for A Midsummer Night's Dream and Sister Act next term, both of which promise to be great shows!



MUSICAL DRAGONS



It has been another bumper term for music here at the Dragon and the second half of term has been a veritable Twelve Days of Christmas, with all our various concerts and events. The first half of term saw our Middle School Strings visiting Downe House for their Orchestral Day, playing music from the movies. In the second half of term after a moving Remembrance Sunday Service, complete with Concert Band and Dragon School Choir, the Lynam Hall was turned up to 11 and was rocked to its foundations with a fantastic Battle of the Bands. For the first time this year the winning bands were treated to a trip to Stowe School for a whole day of rock and pop music and recording their winning tracks in the studio. Our termly Gamelan Day also went without a hitch, exposing dozens of local children to the culture of Indonesia.

Our final weeks of term were a cornucopia of artistry and entertainment, with each year group giving their own concert, our fantastic sold-out Aspiring Music Scholars Concert, the full-school Carol Concert in St Edward's 1000-seater auditorium, and the term culminating in our own atmospheric 9 Lessons and Carols at St Andrew's. What a way to bring in the glad tidings of Christmas!



Our Artistic exploration began this term, with the A Block Art Scholars who embarked on an inspiring art trip to St Ives. Immersed in the rich artistic heritage of the coastal town, they engaged with local galleries, interacted with resident artists, and drew inspiration from the breathtaking landscapes. Natural forms became our muse with the A Block pupils' as we examined the intricacies of flora and fauna, finding inspiration in the organic beauty that surrounds us. A Block then explored the precision and intricacies of the mechanical world, dissecting machinery, gears and tools to discover the inherent beauty of mechanical objects.

B Block delved into the captivating realm of architecture. Exploring the lines and structures that shape our built environment; we captured the essence of buildings, bridges and urban landscapes, adding a dimension of precision and design to our artistic repertoire. They followed this up with an exploration of art from different cultures, producing African Masks and American Pop Art to broaden our understanding of art as a universal language.

C Block ventured into the vast landscapes, experimenting with various techniques to convey the grandeur of nature. From serene countryside's to dynamic urban panoramas, C Block took us on a visual journey through diverse terrains and moods.

They experimented with various techniques fostering a deep appreciation of the natural elements.

D Block honed their skills with the intimate study of portraiture, where they captured the nuances of facial expressions and personalities on canvas. They have produced tonal studies, painted in the style of Jean-Michel Basquiat, been influenced by Klimt and used a variety of mediums. Through fun and in-depth exploration of shading, composition and colour, they sought to convey not just likeness but the essence of our subjects and the subtleties of the human spirit.

Moving beyond faces, the exploration of colour took centre stage in E Block, with dedicated studies aimed at understanding the psychology and harmony of hues, allowing us to infuse our works with depth and emotion. Their vibrant work showed an understanding of the visual spectrum which will help them to develop as artists as they progress through the school.

Collectively, our artistic journey this term has been a rich tapestry of creativity, blending the precision of portraiture, the expansiveness of landscapes, the intricacy of natural and mechanical forms and the vibrant world of colour studies and architectural wonders into a tapestry of artistic growth and expression. Well done to all our Dragons!



SPORTY DRAGONS



It's been another extraordinarily busy term on the sport fields for our Dragons. In total, 56 rugby and hockey teams have played in 412 inter-school fixtures, which is an incredible statistic. This is an increase on last year with more of our children playing than ever before! We are very proud of all the pupils who represent the school and very much appreciate their efforts. There have been some tremendous successes across all sports. The Girls U11A and U12A both qualified for the national hockey finals, where they put in a highly creditable performance. The 3rd VII and U10A also excellent terms. Our cross country and swimming squads have excelled as has our equestrian team. The U13B, U12A, U11A and U10A boys rugby teams both all had wonderful seasons. It was also great that we have managed to extend our programmes for our Younger Dragons. The E Block boys and girls played in over 60 fixtures across the term and our Year 3 participated in festivals at both St. Hugh's and Bardwell Road. In the spring our focus turns to football, hockey and netball. We look forward to welcoming the children back to the pitches and courts in 2024!

