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The termly magazine from Dragon School

# Dragon Tales



Spring Term 2026



# HEAD'S WELCOME

Dear Dragon Families,

Thankfully the clouds lifted after half term – I think the first half of term was the wettest I have known. Spring is a time for growth, and it has been wonderful to see green shoots of talent emerging on the sports field, the stage, in music ensembles and in the classroom.

In the following pages you will read about the breadth of opportunities our Dragons have enjoyed and through the range of activities they have completed, striving to be the free thinkers we want them to become.

Philanthropy and entrepreneurship have been a golden thread over the last few months, with music events alongside local primary schools, the disbursement of the incredible £120,817 raised at the Dragon Sale, the C Block Governors' Challenge and the Young French Entrepreneurs' endeavours. We remain true to our desire to raise future philanthropists, further proof being the number of Dragons who continue to fundraise through individual challenges.

I have been reading a book entitled *Belonging* by Owen Eastwood and he considers the human need to belong and references the concept of Whakapapa in Māori culture:

When the sun shines on us we are alive, we are strong. For we have passed down to us a culture that immerses us in deep belonging. We feel safe and respected. We share beliefs and a sense of identity with those around us and this anchors us. We share a purpose with them.

I hope this edition of *Dragon Tales* will illustrate this sense of connection that we all feel to the Dragon values of Kindness, Courage and Respect and the strength of the community to which we all belong. Let's look forward to when the sun shines next term.

With best wishes

*Anna Giddons*



# SPRING TERM AT THE PRE-PREP

There is generally not much awe, wonder or joy to be found in the dark days of January but they were all palpable at the Pre-Prep. Our two weeks of Dragonauts STEM learning gave the children a range of exciting learning experiences that perfectly ignited the curiosity and creativity of both our young Dragons and their teachers. When summing up a term, it can be tempting to focus on the big events, like the wonderful Year 3 performance of 'Marcy and the Riddle of the Sphinx' which was enjoyed by all, audience and performers alike. I do feel, however, that it is important to note the small things – like the everyday acts of kindness, the willingness to help others and determination to embrace their learning – that make the Pre-Prep community such a happy one.

Annie McNeile, Head of the Pre-Prep



Reception thoroughly enjoyed Dragonauts at the beginning of term, learning all about the planets in the solar system through STEM experiments and craft activities. They explored various stories, traditional tales and animations, including designing their own crazy vehicles to take part in Wacky Races. They also developed their early programming skills by learning how to program a robot to move. The children had lots to share when learning about the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle and habits, and why these are important! It is lovely to see the children gaining confidence throughout the year during their Show and Tells, and their fascination with our year-group ducklings was infectious.

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**Year 1** have had a wonderfully creative and imaginative term; they launched straight into Dragonauts exploring the planets, space travel, and what it might take to journey beyond Earth. The children shone with their teamwork and collaborative problem-solving, especially during our astronaut training morning and they loved our visit to the

Wonderdome. After dreaming about the future of space exploration, we travelled back in time to 1666 to investigate the Great Fire of London. The class examined historical evidence, created their own Samuel Pepys-style diaries, looked at maps of London, created clay rats, and rounded off the term with a lively workshop where everyone dressed up and brought history to life.

**Year 2** immersed themselves in Clean Up! by Nathan Byron this term, exploring its themes across the curriculum. Throughout the term, we have focused on what it means to care for our environment and the small changes we can all make to protect our planet. The children learned about the identification and classification of marine animals, and discovered how ecosystems such as coral reefs work in harmony. Later in the term, we turned our attention to recycling, thinking carefully about what we can do in our daily lives to help look after the world around us. Their hard work during swimming lessons culminated in the Swim Festival, where they demonstrated impressive technique, determination and team spirit.

A major highlight was our visit from Professor Bubbleworks, who delivered a bespoke workshop full of "wow" moments. The clear favourite was when each child had the chance to stand inside an enormous human-sized bubble – an unforgettable experience for all!

Another special event was our Gratitude Café, where the children transformed the gym into a warm, welcoming space to celebrate the important people in their wider circle of care. They sang songs, enjoyed cake, chatted proudly with their invited guests, and ended the event by presenting a piece of personalised artwork to each visitor.



**Year 3** immersed themselves in the magical world of Marcy and the Riddle of the Sphinx, using the story to inspire rich discussions, imaginative writing and deeper thinking skills.

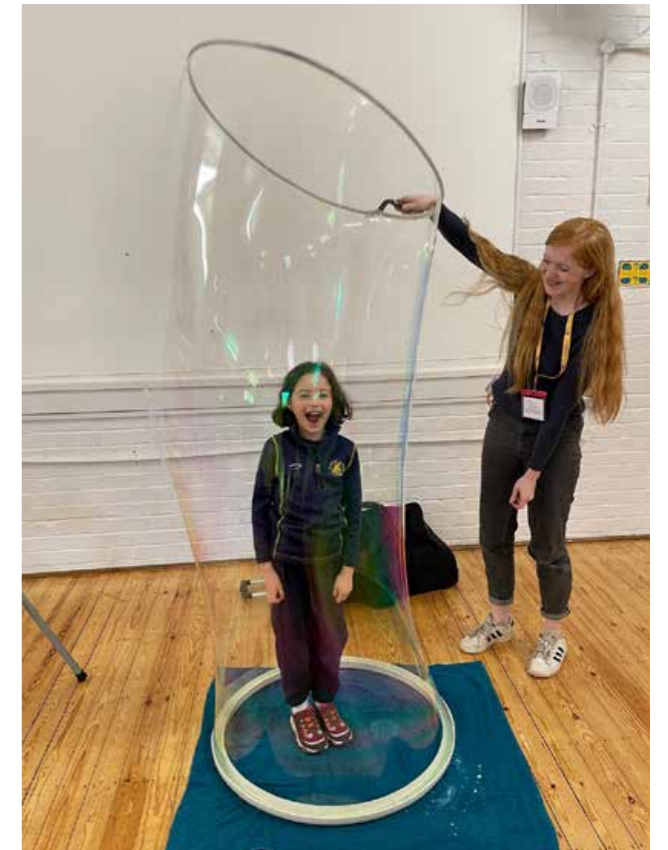
Our History lessons have taken us back to the fascinating world of ancient Egyptians, where each class explored pharaohs, pyramids, daily life and the incredible achievements of this early civilisation.

In RS, the children have been learning about the story of Easter, reflecting on themes of hope, new beginnings and the importance of kindness.

In Maths, the children have been developing their confidence with multiplication and division, using a range of practical strategies and problem-solving activities to deepen their understanding.

The absolute highlight of this term was the wonderful Year 3 production, where the children explored Marcy's bravery as she journeys through ancient Egypt, drawing parallels with their own learning adventures. The story sparked wonderful curiosity and enthusiasm, making the play a personal journey of courage, resilience and adventure for all.

It has been a wonderful term full of curiosity, creativity and enthusiastic learning.



# SPRING TERM AT THE PREP



Jungle Jonathan's visit early in the term was a wonderful opportunity for E Block children to see and touch some exotic animals and learn how they adapt to their environment.

Throughout their Drama lessons this term, each of the Y4 classes have been working on their traditional tales and, in the recent showcase, the children were full of confidence, energy and smiles as the audience laughed and cheered along to these performances.

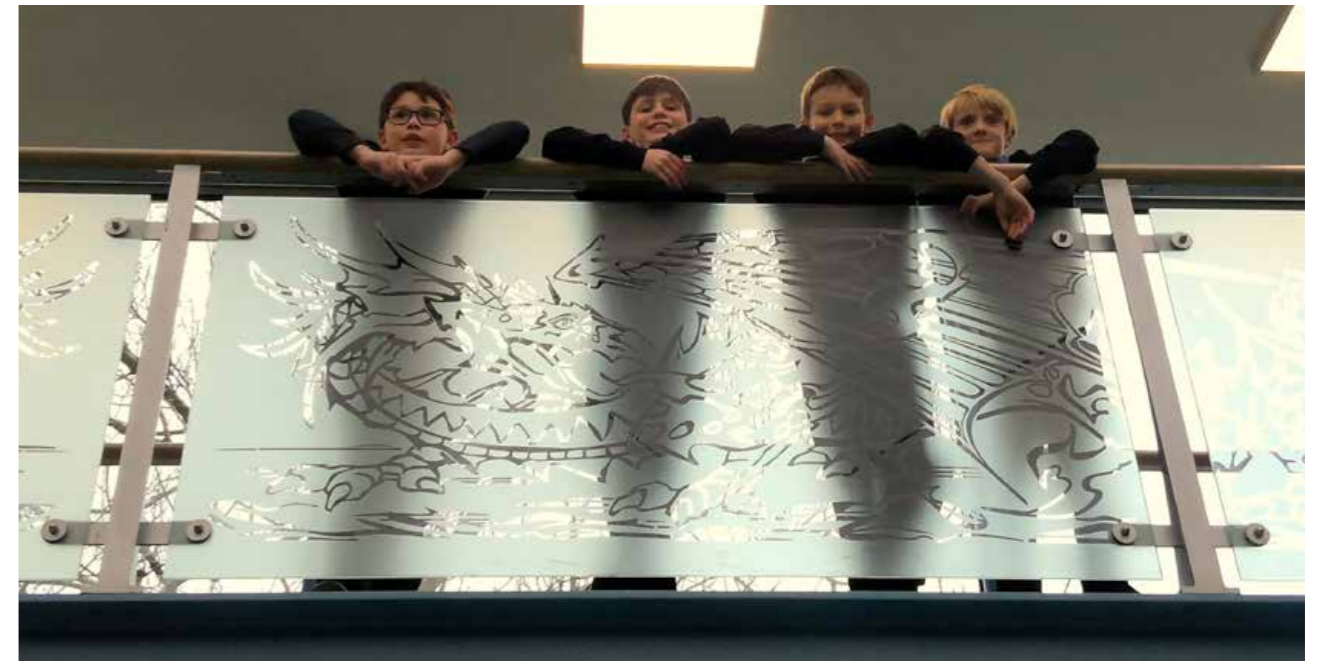
The last two weeks of term have been a wonderful celebration of everything that has been achieved. Their House activity morning, celebration assembly, drama showcase, sports festival, music concert and cross-country have all been a delight to watch.

Middle School began the term with the joyful rhythms of Gamelan Day, where pupils welcomed visiting schools and immersed themselves in the unique textures and patterns of Indonesian ensemble music. The shared experience of learning and

performing together set a wonderfully collaborative tone for the weeks that followed.

For C Block, the focus on future school admissions has been a significant milestone. Over 80% of pupils attended interviews or taster days – many attending more than one – and the determination, resilience and maturity they displayed throughout the process has been impressive. With many offers now received and others still to come, pupils continue on their individual journeys, with further interviews scheduled next term and some preparing for entrance assessments next year.

Other highlights have been the visit from Jonathan Jungle Roadshow for D Block, and C Block's classical plays. Abingdon music workshops, the Percussimo outreach programme with Oxford Philharmonic, and the Middle School Concert have shown huge enthusiasm for music, whilst entrepreneurial creativity and teamwork came to the forefront in the C Block Governor's Challenge



Charity Event, with pupils showing real flair as they planned, promoted and delivered fundraising initiatives. With monies still coming in, they are set to have made over £5,000 – quite an achievement!

Many from C Block also enjoyed the added excitement of their French trip to Normandy, offering immersion in language and culture and giving pupils a chance to put their classroom learning to the test in authentic situations.

Reading, creativity and imagination were in abundance during World Book Day, which included a lively author talk from M. G. Leonard and a buzzing Book Fair that reignited a love of stories across the School. The community also came together to mark Children's Mental Health Week, offering space for reflection, connection and well-being.

For A and B Block we have seen achievements across academic, creative and sporting areas. B Block students have shown

exceptional effort, already achieving over 1600 pluses, while A Block are on track to surpass their 1200 target. A Block exam week was conducted to a very high standard, and B Block pupils approached their assessments with maturity and focus.

Creatively, the standout highlight was the superb production of 'Footloose', featuring many A and B Block children, alongside excellent performances in the Spring Chamber Music Concert, Strings Concert, the Spring Concert and successful LAMDA and ABRSM music examinations. B Block students also embarked on the exciting Young French Entrepreneurs project, developing their own businesses ahead of their trip to Lille.

Beyond this, pupils have embraced opportunities such as swimming relays, reading initiatives and the Dragon Award Scheme, demonstrating service, commitment, kindness and courage throughout. The term concluded with a celebratory assembly, recognising the enthusiasm, resilience and achievements of all Upper School pupils.

# BOARDING LIFE



This has been an exciting and memorable term for our boarders, filled with fantastic moments and shared experiences. The boarders have continued to thrive and have participated in a wide variety of celebrations and activities. From lively talent shows and Astro games to escape rooms and bake-offs, the children have revelled in every activity.

The weekend activity programme has once again been a highlight. A private screening at the Curzon cinema, an action-packed visit to Ninja Warrior, zorbing on the Dragon Fields, a fiercely fought paintballing trip, and an Upper School outing to Iffley Road to watch England U19s take on Japan was a huge hit. These activities were selected through the Boarding Council, ensuring that pupil voice continues to shape the boarding experience at the Dragon.

Throughout the term, many of our Senior boarders have particularly enjoyed supporting the Junior Houses by organising games, spending time with younger pupils, and helping to build a warm, inclusive community. This sense of leadership and togetherness remains one of the great strengths of boarding at the Dragon. The boarders have also adopted their School Houses with enthusiasm and the inaugural great House Quiz in Spectrum was a huge success.

Our boarders continue to grow as freethinking, curious and confident young people, embracing their "home away from home" and contributing to the vibrant life of our boarding community.



# DRAGON QUEST

We have had a great Spring Term in Quest with some exciting additions to the repertoire!

Get Medieval has been training up Dragons in the art of medieval sword fighting, while Step 2 Street Dance managed to put together a dance routine and shoot a music video, which looked mightily impressive, with Trickz 'n Flipz still getting people head over heels for it.

Dragon Cadets have been exploring military tactics out on the fields, aided by their laser guns. In a similar but different way, Dragons at Risk have been safely learning the ins and outs of the legendary military board game.

Adventure Dragons was back with axe throwing, archery and the laser maze.

Skippers has been a hub of activity, with some amazing music being performed and written, with a little knitting as well. Meanwhile, next door in the Lynam hall, we continue to be blown away with the quality of the musical theatre performances from West End Dragons.

Ultimate frisbee remains a soaring success, while the Powerplay Dragons have been busy preparing for the cricket season.



# ARTISTIC DRAGONS

This term, Dragon pupils have explored a diverse range of artistic themes, techniques and materials, developing their creative skills and artistic expression.

A Block focused on the human figure through the imaginative "game of consequences," creating collaborative and unexpected figure studies rather than traditional posed portraits. They also explored bold colour and patterns inspired by Matisse's stained-glass windows, experimenting with shape, light and composition.

B Block explored the theme of books and scrapbook-style artworks filled with found objects, textures and expressive mark-making techniques.

C Block have studied still life, using oil pastels to study water glasses with careful attention to reflection and transparency. They also created sculptural interpretations inspired by Wayne Thiebaud's cakes, exploring form, colour and texture in three dimensions.

D Block investigated the theme of water through hockey scenes, swimming pools and koi fish ponds. Using acrylic paint and watercolour, they experimented with layering and blending techniques to capture movement, reflections and the fluid qualities of water.

E Block focused on texture, producing miniature weavings inspired by skies and fields, carefully selecting colours to reflect the landscapes they observed. They also worked on texture through paper engineering, constructing layered and tactile surfaces. Finally, they explored cherry blossoms in paint, developing their understanding of colour, composition and delicate brushwork.

Across all year groups, our Dragons have demonstrated creativity, experimentation and skill development, producing a fantastic range of work that showcases their growing confidence as artists.



# MUSICAL DRAGONS



It has been a wonderful and fulfilling Spring Term in the Music department, made all the more uplifting by the recent weather. Early mornings seem so much better if the sun has woken up before you!

The term got off to a very early start with two events in the first full week: our ever-successful Gamelan Day, the Dragon once again playing host to numerous children from our local primary schools, and later that week on the Sunday the Oxfordshire heats of the European Piano Teachers' Association Piano Competition. Our Dragon pianists not only took part but many have qualified for the Nationals in London later in the year.

The first half of term came to an end with our rousing annual Orchestral Day in partnership with Oxford Philharmonic this

year featuring the percussion section – Percussimo! The day involved 110 children from nine local primaries as well as our own talented percussionists all raising the roof of the Lynam Hall with their joyful sounds.

The second half of term has been one splendid concert after another with a lovely intimate Chamber Music Concert in the beautiful acoustics of the Sadler Hall and the thrilling bombastic sounds of our biggest pre-select groups playing to a full house in the Lynam Hall for our Spring Concert. The grand finale included Dragonetti, Concert Band and Dragon School Choir – well over 100 children, all performing the Bill Withers classic, 'Lean on Me'.



# DRAGONS ON STAGE



The first half of the Easter term brought with it the Upper School's production of 'Footloose'. The energy was electric over the course of the three-performance week, and we are still hearing snippets of 'Holding Out For A Hero' from children moving through the hallways. The 60-strong cast delivered an engaging and mature piece of theatre, sugar-coated with top-class singing and dancing. Congratulations must also go to the 50 additional students who volunteered across several production areas who greased the wheels of this incredible achievement – well done!

Ahead of Performance Week, we ran a workshop morning for the Year 3 children at the Pre-Prep site where they were introduced to the story of Footloose and were treated to some in-progress performances from some of the lead performers. The children enjoyed dressing up as some of the characters and trying out some of the dialogue, which helped their understanding when they arrived to see the matinée performance.

We also continued our outreach programme with Windale Primary School. Children from Years 4, 5 and 6 got the opportunity to learn choreography and melodies for three songs from 'Footloose' and performed on the Lynam

Hall stage with the pit band supporting them. They then finished their trip to the Dragon by watching the matinée performance of the show, and they were heard singing along as our cast performed to them. It is always a highlight of the year and the impact on those children is clear.

The Middle School got a chance to showcase their talents in the Variety Show in March. Singers, comedians, actors (and everyone in!) between brought their interests to the forefront, delivering a night of talent and hilarity to their audience.

Towards the end of this term, we were treated to the E Block Drama Showcase, where each Form performed a comedic adaptation of a children's story. The Gruffalo roared, the Wolf blew, and the Ugly Duckling blossomed in her new life at the police station. Having every child across E Block onstage performing is such a wonderful opportunity for the children, and it does such a great job of setting them up to audition in the future.

The Summer Term is bringing 'Shrek The Musical' to life as the Middle School musical. B Block will be starring in a studio production and A Block will get their chance to shine with the A Block Revue as their final performance on the Lynam Hall stage. We look forward to seeing you there!



This season has been marked by excellent performance, teamwork and commitment across all sports. From national qualifications to unbeaten runs and impressive tournament victories, pupils have embraced every opportunity with enthusiasm and determination.

It has been an outstanding term for hockey, with notable achievements across the age groups. The U11A boys enjoyed a highly successful season, finishing as IAPS Regional runners-up and qualifying as National finalists. Meanwhile, the 1st VII boys completed an unbeaten run in all regular season fixtures, a testament to their consistency, skill and collective focus.

Netball continues to thrive throughout the School. The 1st and U11A girls celebrated success as IAPS Regional tournament plate winners, showcasing tactical maturity and resilience during high-level competition. We had great success across all age groups, reflecting the depth of talent and enthusiasm across the programme.

Our football teams delivered another term of strong performances. The 1st Team girls completed an unbeaten season, demonstrating impressive development and teamwork. Tournament successes included the U10A girls, who claimed titles at both the Chandlings and Bradfield events, and the U11A

boys, who lifted the Bruern Abbey Tournament trophy.

The U13 boys emerged victorious at the Farleigh Cross Country, producing a commanding team performance and highlighting the strength of endurance running within the School.

This season, six relay teams and nine individual swimmers qualified for the IAPS National Finals. In addition, both the U11 Boys' and Girls' Medley and Freestyle relay teams qualified fastest for the ESSA Southeast Championships, reflecting their speed, discipline and technical excellence.

The cricket programme enjoyed further success indoors, with the 1st Team girls finishing as Oxfordshire Indoor Cricket runners-up.

The whole-School sporting landscape has been exceptional. Across the term, 76 teams in hockey, netball and football participated in an impressive 492 fixtures, reflecting both greater opportunity and growing pupil engagement. This season has showcased the values that underpin School sport with courage and respect to the fore, and every pupil contributing to a vibrant and thriving sporting community.

