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# Highdown Link

Aspire Achieve

## From the Headteacher

The Link is a great way to celebrate and promote the extra curricular activities which go on at Highdown School.

This edition introduces Emma Turner, our new Head of Achievement for year 8. Readers of The Link will remember the article on Dr Andy Love and his love for reptiles.

Our reptiles are rather a hungry lot and cost of their upkeep is over £20 a week. Reptile club is great and older students work with the younger ones on how to care for the animals. One 6th former had the great idea of asking parents and perhaps local businesses to sponsor our reptiles! If you would be willing to sponsor a tarantula or lizard or (my favourite) a tortoise for their food perhaps you could drop me a line [head@highdown.reading.sch.uk](mailto:head@highdown.reading.sch.uk). We will publish the sponsors (unless they would like to remain anonymous) in the Link.

Our improvement works are going well and we are looking forward to moving back into the English corridor soon. New lighting makes the rooms easier to work in and is more energy efficient.

I hope that 2015 is going well for all families. Highdown School is looking to have its best ever year!

**Rachel Cave**



## Bringing the world into the classroom

From mathematical constructions of Islamic patterns and world geology, to aboriginal art and Chinese theatre, international work is embedded across the school and curriculum. Having an international dimension opens young people's eyes and minds to the realities of the globalised world and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equality and human rights for all.

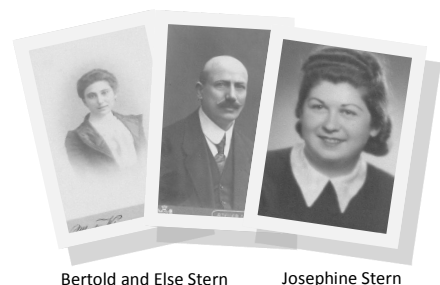
By talking to schools from abroad and studying people across time, our students have a greater awareness of the importance of accepting and appreciating diversity and understanding a modern global society.

## The power of personal stories



Highdown has made new links with Alzubaidia Secondary School. With almost half of all Syrians displaced since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, the school in neighbouring Jordan is a safe haven for 700 Syrian children. To gain a greater understanding of the lives and experiences of Syrian refugees, the school has shared some of the individual stories of young people dealing with trauma and loss.

Personal stories convey depth and detail to experiences. Through assemblies, Miss Solomons, Assistant Headteacher, has been able to share her grandmother's memories of losing her parents, Bertold and Else Stern and sister Josephine, at Auschwitz concentration camp. Allowing students to discover the story behind personal photographs makes for a much stronger connection between the individual and the event. A personal account which untangles the masses and focuses on the individual is the most powerful way to teach the events of the Holocaust, allowing students to empathise with the victims.



Bertold and Else Stern

Josephine Stern

All curriculum areas can contribute to developing the skills, attributes and knowledge that will create active global citizens.



At Highdown Sixth Form Centre, the Sixth Form Pastoral Team is always keen to raise students' aspirations. The January 15 UCAS deadline has passed, and we are delighted that nearly 75% of students in Year 13 have made applications to study at university, either this autumn or next year.

We are also pleased with the number of students who are aiming to join the best universities in the country. Last year two of our students gained places at Oxford University, and this year many more have aimed high and put in applications for Russell Group universities. A lot of this is due to the work of the 'Gifted and Talented' programme that begins in Year 12.

This term sees the beginning of this programme for the current Year 12s. The aim is to make students aware of the opportunities available to help them apply for the best universities in the country – such as the Russell Group, the 24 leading UK universities which have global reputations for their research. So far an initial meeting has been held, and throughout the rest of the year lunchtime seminars will be held to help students raise their aspirations, and aim to have a winning UCAS application ready to send off in September 2015.

These sessions are open to all students, even if they are not interested in applying to Russell Group universities, as all will benefit from the information and advice given!

*Mr Prior, Head of Sixth Form*

## Where are they now?

### Earn while you learn accountancy

Charlotte Ely's dream job is to be an accountant. One of the Highdown teachers suggested an alternative route to University: an accountancy apprenticeship. Reading has all of the top 10 Accountancy firms in the UK and they all offer school leaver positions. It was a no-brainer: learning on the job, developing knowledge and skills, gaining an accounting qualification and earning money - all at the same time!



Researching online, Charlotte approached a local firm for interview advice and know-how from trainees. Two successful telephone interviews, a winning face-to-face meeting and 280+ UCAS points later secured a job offer at renowned Baker Tilly. Charlotte nailed interview questions including: Why do you want the job? What do you feel you'd bring to the team?

After a welcoming induction for school leavers and graduates, Charlotte is currently auditing companies - checking financial statements to make sure they are not committing fraud and are sticking to the UK accounting guidelines. She participates in monthly training sessions. Her apprenticeship is a 2 year progression route which leads to a graduate contract, which Charlotte has now been offered and starts in September.

Charlotte feels as though she has chosen the right path for her since leaving school, and highly recommends this apprenticeship. Start applying September-January.

### Defining your niche

#### Commercially-minded ex-Highdowner Shania Jones talks about investing in her love of fashion

I knew the University of Westminster was the place for me within 15 minutes of the applicant day. Apart from just having a good feeling in the pit of my stomach the Fashion Merchandise course offered a placement year, a study abroad year and great graduate employment rates. After accepting the financial commitment of a 4 year course, it was important for me that I left university with the greatest employment opportunities possible and that I had the most enjoyable four years that I could. I haven't looked back since.

The last four months have been some of the most enjoyable and exciting months of my life. For the first time I have been waking up every day to do what I love and I can't describe how amazing that feeling is. I've made some great friends, joined the university netball team and had some of the funniest nights out.

To anybody who is delaying their decision to go Uni based on money, don't! Taking a year out to save, or not going at all, is a waste of time and opportunity. There is always a way; student finance, student overdrafts, part time/summer jobs. If you really want to go, you'll find a way. Don't take the easy option by not going. You will regret it if you don't.



## Sporting news

### Unstoppable Year 9s win trophy

Drawn initially in group A, the boys started with an impressive 4-0 victory over Blessed Hugh Faringdon. This was quickly followed by a 3-0 win over Denefield, and three consecutive 1-0 victories. All of these victories were made possible because of some very hard work, chasing and challenging opponents.

When we got the ball, other teams found it impossible to stop the boys playing some great attacking football. A combination of great passing, control and movement, meant that the boys were creating chances against even the best teams. These results left the boys top of their group, and through to the semi-finals with a 3-0 win against Theale Green. The final against Willink was a tough game, but the boys scored early and kept possession in a 1-0 victory.

**7 games, 7 wins, 14 goals scored,  
0 goals conceded, and only 2 shots  
against us in the whole tournament!**

Congratulations for a fantastic team effort to Khalid Simmo 9H (c), Giaan Juttla 9K, Alex Aldrich 9G, Harry McDonnell 9G, Jadem Sealy 9K, Bradley Keetch 9C and Arthur Bellamy-Rosser 9H.

*Mr L Potter, PE teacher*



### Eat. Run. Sleep. Repeat.

Elite athletes competed in the Berkshire Schools Cross Country Championships. Sam Rodda 10C in a field of 56 finished in 9th place, which we are pleased to announce qualifies him for the next round of races. Naomi Harris 7C in a field of 109 racers finished in 4th place. A spectacular result achieved through hard work, commitment and dedication. Well done to both.

*Mr Morris, Head of PE*

### Trampoliners to the Berkshire games

Well done to all those that competed at the Reading trampoline championships. It was a tough competition with a lot of competitors in each section. The following girls will be going forward to represent Reading at the upcoming Berkshire games in May: Hannah Butcher 9F, Katie Rodda 9F and Maise Palmer 8F, plus Anouk Webster 8C as Reserve. I hope you do amazingly well. *Mrs McMullan, PE teacher*

## Teacher profile

With a kit bag of footie boots, rich experience and a passion for pastoral care, **Emma Turner** joins Highdown as Head of Achievement Year 8 and PE teacher.



Sport was Emma's saviour against the challenges of growing up in a deprived part of London. Her grit and love of sport had a positive impact on her academically: she graduated from Sheffield Hallam University with a Sports Science degree and completed her teacher training from Brunel University. Working for schools across Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, Emma has balanced PE teaching with being an effective Head of Year.

Committed to the pastoral welfare of students, Emma supports the academy's vision of high standards and academic achievement across the year group through effective behaviour management and strong parental partnerships. She is looking forward to getting to know the Year 8 students and their parents and developing a personal approach to student learning. Emma is happy to discuss concerns or answer questions from parents.

Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre Presents

# hairspray

The Broadway Musical

On Tuesday 24,  
Wednesday 25 &  
Thursday 26 March 2015  
at 7.00pm  
in the School Hall

Tickets: £6 - Adults  
£4 - Students & Concessions  
and can be purchased from  
the Finance Office

Book by  
Mark O'Donnell &  
Thomas Meehan

Music by  
Marc Shaiman

Lyrics by  
Scott Wittman &  
Marc Shaiman

This amateur production is presented by  
arrangement with JOSEF WEINBERGER LIMITED  
on behalf of MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL of New York



## Rocket-powered car brings learning to life

Budding Year 7 and 8 scientists and engineers sent an inspiring day with the UK-based Bloodhound SSC team who are working to set a new world land speed record of 1000 mph. There were three workshops: a session with Dynakars, a Bluetooth teaching device which records

movement of a small car; a tour of a realistic model of the Bloodhound SSC and its working parts, and a hands-on session making air-propelled mini cars which were raced against other designs. The winners of the race

will have their names printed on the fin of the real supersonic Bloodhound SSC when it is made.

Congratulations to the overall winning team: Sophie Underwood 7D, Madison Grey 7D, Amy Combrinck 7E and Becky Stone 7H.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Extra-curricular Clubs

See programme of lunchtime and afterschool clubs at the 'School Life' menu at [www.highdown.reading.sch.uk](http://www.highdown.reading.sch.uk)



The final total raised for the NSPCC from Number Day in December is an amazing £817.12. Thanks to all students who baked, built bridges and solved puzzles!

## Theatre review: War Horse

Nick Stafford's adaptation of the heart-warming novel by Michael Morpurgo proved to be a truly brilliant and emotional piece of theatre in which we followed the story of Albert and his equine friend, Joey.

The true nature of everything equine is beautifully captured in the wooden framework, translucent fabric skins, and extraordinary mobility of the puppets. The minor details and movements bring to life the character of Joey. The outstanding human cast work perfectly in sync with the puppets.

Joey's magical transformation from a timid, skittering foal into a dignified stallion formed a memorable moment on stage. Albert and Joey's close connection and bravery is highlighted and elevated through the time period in which the main themes are terror and horror, this contrast makes the relationship of man and horse stronger and more emotional. This production will have you laughing and crying with joy.

*Merle Suleyman 10C*



### £55.85 raised for Ebola

A formidable trio spent their break and lunchtime selling delicious hand-made cakes to hungry students. Congratulations to Isabel Eade 7J, Holly Lock 7H and Grace Douglas 7H.

### Safer Internet Day 2015

Let's create a better internet together

BitC (Business in the Community) organised volunteers from Symantec to come and deliver the Safer Internet message to Highdown students. This global celebration highlights positive uses of technology and explores the role we all play in helping to create a better and safer online community.


## Dates for your diary

23 February	FIRST DAY OF TERM 4
5 March	Year 11 Art Trip to London
6 March	Year 9 writing for teenagers conference <small>(invitation only)</small>
11 March	Parents 4 Learning evening
11-12 March	Year 11 Chinese Speaking Exam
12 March	Year 10 Parents' Evening
19 March	Year 7 Parents' Evening
19 March	AS Photography Exam
23 - 26 March	Year 11 Languages speaking Exam
24 - 26 March	Hairspray School Production
26 March	AS Art & AS Graphic Communication Exams
30 March - 5 April	Beijing Trip
31 March	Year 8 Consultation Evening
31 March	Year 8 reports
1 April	Parents 4 Learning evening
3 - 20 April	EASTER HOLIDAY

Report student illness to the Attendance Officer on 0118 9015823 before 9.30 a.m.

Are you student feeling anxious? Find support and advice at [worried@highdown.reading.sch.uk](mailto:worried@highdown.reading.sch.uk)

School Reception: 0118 9015800 | [office@highdown.reading.sch.uk](mailto:office@highdown.reading.sch.uk) | [www.highdown.reading.sch.uk](http://www.highdown.reading.sch.uk)

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