



# Highdown Newsletter

February 2025



Follow us

## HEADTEACHER ROUND UP

**'It must be love, love, love'**  
Madness

I so enjoyed watching our fantastic students performing 'Our House' the musical this week: the actors were engaging, dynamic and oh so talented; the musicians were professional, impressive and full of character and the staging, lighting and costumes were managed spectacularly. I could not have been prouder to present the group with 4 nominations for the National School Theatre Awards, including: Best Actor and Best Actress in a Musical, Best Ensemble and Best Musical 2025. What a wonderful way to round off such a brilliant first term at Highdown.



But it doesn't stop there: our Year 12 Biologists are studying salt marshes in the Isle of Arran as we speak - after a gruelling 4am start they woke up to sunrise over Loch Ranza.

I do hope that you take the opportunity to relax and refresh over the February break and I very much look forward to seeing what the new term brings (hopefully some sunshine).

As ever, please do get in touch with feedback about my first half term at Highdown:

[head@highdown.reading.sch.uk](mailto:head@highdown.reading.sch.uk)

**Ms. L Mathews**  
Headteacher



## HARDWORK HEROES

Here are this term's Hard Work Heroes after being congratulated for their sustained level of effort and application this term. They received their certificates and book token reward from Mrs Grantham and then chose a book from the Highdown Book Vending Machine.

As Mrs Grantham told the group, "hard work and effort are among the top indicators of success" and that is why we reward students for exhibiting these traits at Highdown. Keep up the good work everyone!



Is it time to make the jump into teaching?



Applications for our 25/26 trainee teacher cohort are now OPEN in your area!

Are you interested in learning more about training to teach in the Oxford & Reading areas?

We are hosting 2 x virtual information events via Zoom on Wednesday 8th January at 10am and 6pm to let you know about the available routes into teaching at one of our Good or Outstanding Ofsted rated schools in the region!



Visit our website for the Zoom meeting links and further information using this QR code:



f Gifftsh X GLFSchoolsTT GLFITTT g gifftsh.org e info@gifft.org



# SCHOOL INFORMATION

## IMPORTANT DATES

<b>Mon 17 Feb</b>	Trip returns from Isle of Arran
<b>Mon 24 Feb</b>	Back to School @ 8:40am
<b>Mon 24 Feb</b>	Year 11 MFL Speaking Exams Begin
<b>Weds 26 Feb</b>	Primary Schools Netball Festival
<b>Thurs 27 Feb</b>	Year 8 Hockey Tournament, Ascot
<b>Thurs 27 Feb</b>	Year 8 Box Clever performance of MacBeth
<b>Fri 28 Feb</b>	Ramadan Begins
<b>Fri 28 Feb</b>	Year 10 & 11 Blood Brothers Theatre Trip 6pm-10:50pm
<b>Fri 11 July</b>	Please note, INSET day changed from Fri 27 June. It is now Fri 11 July!!

## HOUSE POINTS

<b>Caversham</b>	<b>111,043</b>
<b>Grove</b>	<b>114,722</b>
<b>Rosehill</b>	<b>112,315</b>
<b>Mapledurham</b>	<b>106,512</b>



[CLICK HERE](#)



Lunch Menus  
are here

Free  
School  
Meals   
Are you entitled?

  
Term Dates

your  
school  
lottery 

>> click to support us!



## WINTER READING CHALLENGE

Congratulations to the following students for completing the winter reading challenge. They each received a prize for taking part.

Ivy Wells 7G  
Bella Sheppard 7G  
Advika Badkur 8C  
Aaradhya Satpute 8D



# VE DAY<sup>©</sup>

## 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

A SHARED MOMENT OF CELEBRATION

### 8 M A Y 2 0 2 5

Click [HERE](#) to watch a video from Mrs Duncan about the Highdown VE Day Museum and how you can get involved!



# OUR HOUSE A MUSICAL TRIUMPH

Over the last three nights, audiences have been wowed by the amazing talents of our students at Highdown School & Sixth Form Centre as they watched this year's musical production of Our House. The cast, crew, and showband gave their best energy every night, and they were incredible.

On Tuesday, they performed for Year 5 and 6 students from five local primary schools. We received lovely feedback about how much they enjoyed the production and the energy and talent on stage. The office admin staff could even hear the students' singing songs from the show as they left, a testament to how much they enjoyed the performance.

A particular highlight of the show was the performance of "Baggy Trousers." The high-energy dancing was amazing, and it was incredible to see how the students could dance and sing at the same time.

The journey of the cast has been truly inspiring. From the initial auditions to the final curtain call, the students have shown remarkable dedication and growth. They spent countless hours rehearsing, perfecting their lines, and mastering the choreography. The camaraderie and friendships formed during this time have been a significant part of their experience, creating a strong sense of community and teamwork.

We are also thrilled to announce that we have been nominated in four categories for the National Schools Theatre Awards: Best Musical, Best Ensemble, Best Actor in a Musical for Rohan Hinds, and Best Actress in a Musical for Emma Kelsall.

Lucy Ray was an exceptional Stage Manager, ensuring everything ran smoothly behind the scenes. The responsibilities of a Stage Manager include coordinating all aspects of the production, managing rehearsals, communicating with the cast and crew, and ensuring that every performance goes off without a hitch.

Here is what some of the students involved in the show had to say:

"I love being involved in the community of the cast. We all bond and create friendships together. It's so much fun, and it is so rewarding to see the end result."

"It is lots of fun as you can be backstage as well, and you make friends throughout the journey."

"I think it's amazing to see the show come to life with the sets, the music, the lights, and sounds. It's amazing. I'd always look whilst being part of the tech team and wish that would be me on stage. It's that good."

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all the people who volunteered their time and energy to help us make this production possible. Your dedication, hard work, and support have been invaluable, and we couldn't have done it without you.

We also say goodbye to year 13 students Bea Schofield and Maisie Smith, who have been integral to the production family over the years. We wish them all the best for their next adventure.



**Mrs Lake**

Performing Arts Curriculum Lead



# SCHOOL HELP



## RUBBISH GAMES

On Thursday 03 April, Highdown will be holding its first Easter Fete named the **Rubbish Games**. Each vertical mentor group will be creating a game/activity out of recycled materials. Please can you support your son/daughter by providing them with the recycling their vertical mentor group requires.

In addition, if you have any additional recyclable materials you wish to donate, we would be happy to take them. We would be especially grateful if you could provide us with any of the following:



- Cardboard
- Newspaper/magazines
- Plastic bottles
- Egg cartons

## SCHOOL UNIFORM SHOP

Did you know....  
our School PTA run a  
secondhand uniform service?



In need of a Highdown School blazer? Or any other badged Highdown School uniform items or PE kits at bargain prices?

Do you have outgrown uniform that you don't know what to do with?

I sell and collect pre-loved Highdown uniform, all money raised goes towards Highdown School's PTA.

Contact me to arrange donations and purchases [alinapetito@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:alinapetito@yahoo.co.uk)

Thank you.

## HAIR & BEAUTY



**Our hair and beauty teacher, Mrs Jacobs, would be very grateful for donations of the following:**

**Facepaint**

**this can be out of date as it is used on mannequins**

**&**

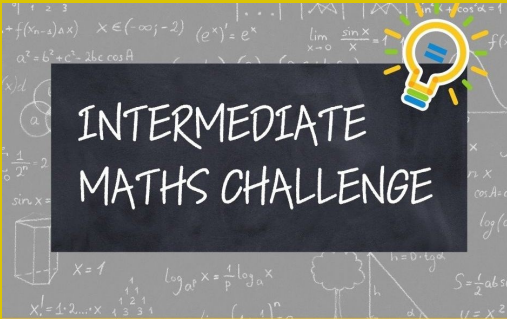
**Nail polish  
new or in very  
good condition**



**Please drop donations into the school office—thank you.**



## MATHS CHALLENGE



"I can do it and I will do it"

This January we saw the largest ever turnout for the UK Mathematics Trust Intermediate Maths Challenge with 150 Highdown Mathematicians from Years 8 to 11 taking part and we are extremely proud of all of them. The results are now in and certificates will be awarded early next term. Special mention goes to:

**James C (Y8), Jasper L (Y8), Katie C (Y9), Hagne C (Y9), Jacob P (Y10), Daniel R (Y10), George B (Y10), Samuel B (Y10), Juho R (Y10), Jamie P (Y11) and Ryan C (Y11)** who all qualified for the follow-on Kangaroo rounds in March.

**Sam S (Y10), Alfie D (Y10), Amir K (Y11) and Griffin B (Y11)** who qualified for the Mathematical Olympiad, placing them in the top 0.15% of students nationally!

Want to see what they were up against? You can try the challenge yourself here <https://ukmt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/IMC-2025-Paper.pdf>

Our amazing Year 7 and 8 Mathematicians will have their chance to compete in the Junior Maths Challenge in May. Details of training sessions and how to sign up will follow nearer the time.

**Mr Dineley**  
Maths Head of Curriculum

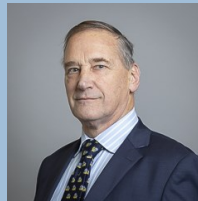


## HOUSE OF LORDS

The Earl of Lytton took part in a 45-minute online question and answer session with fifty Year 11, 12 and 13 politics students as part of the popular 'Learn with the Lords' programme.

During the event, the Earl of Lytton talked about the role and work of the House of Lords, before answering questions from students on a range of topics including his voting record, his interests and the future of the Lords.

Alfie Gill (12A) said, "He had a thorough knowledge and answered lots of question in depth. It was really informative."



**Mrs Chamberlain**  
Politics Teacher

## INTERMEDIATE PHYSICS CHALLENGE



Supported by Mr. Hutchinson, Mr Stickley and Mr Aldous, eleven students took part in the online Intermediate Physics Challenge in March. Through problem-solving practice in class and at home, they sharpened their skills before putting themselves forward to compete.

Their efforts paid off, with every participant earning a medal certificate—2 gold, 6 silver, and 3 bronze. Huge congratulations to all involved! We hope to see these problem-solving skills flourish in the upcoming on-line paper IPC, and many more in years to come.

**Mr Aldous**  
Science Teacher



## APPRENTICESHIP WEEK AT HIGHDOWN



The careers team have been active this term in providing students with a wide range of opportunities and meaningful encounters with the world of work.

This term the spotlight has been on apprenticeships and has involved students in a range of year groups.

Year 7 have learned about their school as a workplace and were introduced to the concept of apprenticeships through a speaker from Reading College; this will no doubt help sow the seed for ideas about the types of careers our students may wish to explore.

Year 9 and 10 have all taken part in apprenticeship talks about careers in health from the NHS and we are delighted to say that our Apprenticeship Evening was the biggest and best one yet with 15 stalls full of a range of information from local and national companies as well as a talk from Varsha at ASK (Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge Programme). Over 100 parents and students attended and took away information to help support and inspire ideas for the future. If you weren't able to attend our evening or would like further information about apprenticeships and the opportunities they offer, I recommend looking at Amazing Apprenticeships:

<https://www.amazingapprenticeships.com/>

We are excited for next term when we have a full range of activities planned in Science Week, we also have employability master classes coming up and work experience is starting to be explored!

**Mrs Grantham**  
Assistant Headteacher



## PEPPARD BUILDING SUPPLIES



It was a pleasure to welcome Nic Butler, Managing Director of Peppard Building Supplies, to Highdown this term to see our SATRO construction course in action.

Peppard have generously sponsored this programme which enables a small group of key stage 4 students to study an additional qualification in Introductory Construction. This course includes practical units in joinery, electrics and plumbing, as well supporting students to develop an understanding of health and safety, careers and organisational skills.

SATRO is an educational charity which aims to develop the aspirations of young people by supporting them to nurture their passions and explore possible career pathways.

**Mr Clawson**  
Assistant Headteacher





## YEAR 12 SCIENCE AMBASSADORS

Well, they've done it again...and again! Our fabulous Year 12 Science Ambassadors have been to Thameside and the Heights Primary schools to deliver and support experiments investigating 'forces' that they had designed themselves. This is what the Year 5 teacher at the Heights had to say about our Year 12s:

"The Year 12 Science Ambassadors were fantastic representatives for Highdown on their visit to Year 5 at The Heights Primary School. They led group experiments expertly and helped the Year 5 pupils to make connections with the results and the scientific content. Their responsibility, leadership and communication skills were evident when engaging with the younger children, showing strong interpersonal abilities that will serve them well in future academic and professional endeavours. The Year 5 pupils will not forget the experience the Year 12 students gave them, including introducing their reptile friends!"

**Dr Love**

Biology Teacher



## GIRLS ARE INVESTORS



The Economics department were grateful to be visited by Naomi Dickinson, an Investment Specialist from Bluestone, last week along with Ms Mathews.

We have two teams of Year 12 Economics students being mentored by Naomi for the GAIN Investment Challenge. GAIN stands for "Girls Are INvestors" and involves a ten-week programme of extracurricular sessions on investment analysis working towards a stock pitch.

A student recalled a thought-provoking fact from the first session: although women are statistically better investors than men, only 12% of investment trust managers are female.

We hope the GAIN Investment Challenge will go some way to change this in the future.



**Mr Hutchinson**  
Maths, Statistics &





# Year 12

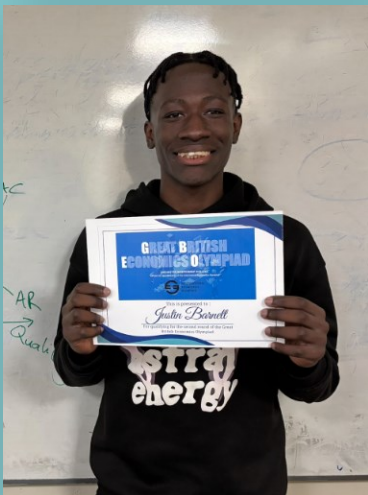
## OLYMPIAD



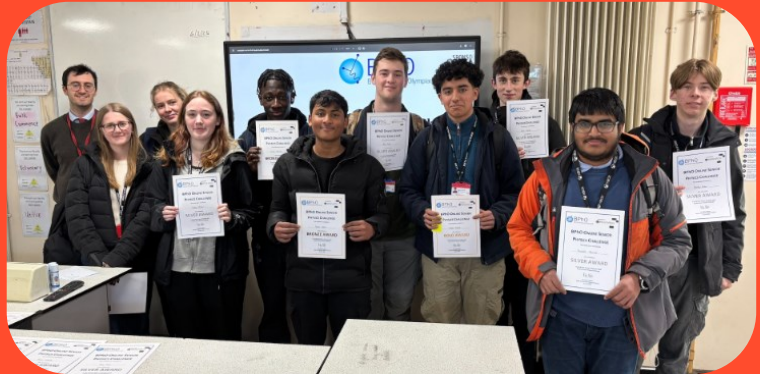
Highdown Economics took part in the Great British Economics Olympiad this year with students from Year 10 to Year 12 participating. It was challenging and thought-provoking and we had our first ever student progressing to the second round of the Economic Olympiad.

Congratulations to Justin Barnett in Year 12 and good luck in the next stage. We hope to participate in future years with some extra experience under our belts. Well done to all who took part.

**Mr Hutchinson**  
Economics Teacher



## SENIOR PHYSICS CHALLENGE



Supported by Mr Aldous and Mr Verebelyi, sixteen A-Level Physics students participated in the online version of the Senior Physics Challenge. We considered this a warm-up event for the upcoming written Senior Physics Challenge open to all Year 12s. We've spent several lunchtimes honing our problem-solving skills and it paid off handsomely with certificates for all. One gold, eight silvers and seven bronzes in total.

Congratulations to everyone involved and we hope to see everyone at future problem-solving lunchtime sessions in preparation for the next Senior Physics Challenge in March.

**Mr Hutchinson**  
Maths Teacher



### BPhO SENIOR PHYSICS CHALLENGE

**Highdown Quiz Club**  
Starting Friday 11th October at LUNCHTIME in M3  
Year 7 - 10

POINTLESS  
UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE  
MASTERMIND  
500 HEADS  
CHASE

This year we will start competing against other schools so will be selecting a Year 9/10 mixed team.

Laptops are useful.  
Wikipedia is king.

Mr Hutchinson and Mr Fasham

**HUTCHINSON** **Fasham**

The Gallery: every day  
**8.15 - 8.40**

Your fuel for school: cereal, toast, juice and more.

**Breakfast Club**



# YEAR 10 & 11

## THE ATTITUDE FOR SUCCESS

Well done Year 11 for a fantastic half term. It is great to see all the hard work and dedication as I walk around your lessons. Currently there have been nearly 650 (and counting) intervention sessions recorded - these are lunchtime or after school revision sessions - as attended this term, clearly showing the engagement many of you are putting into your studies.

As you are all aware, students with good attendance are generally those best prepared for their examinations. Therefore, it is very encouraging to see that 48 of you achieved 100% attendance this term.

Have a lovely half term.



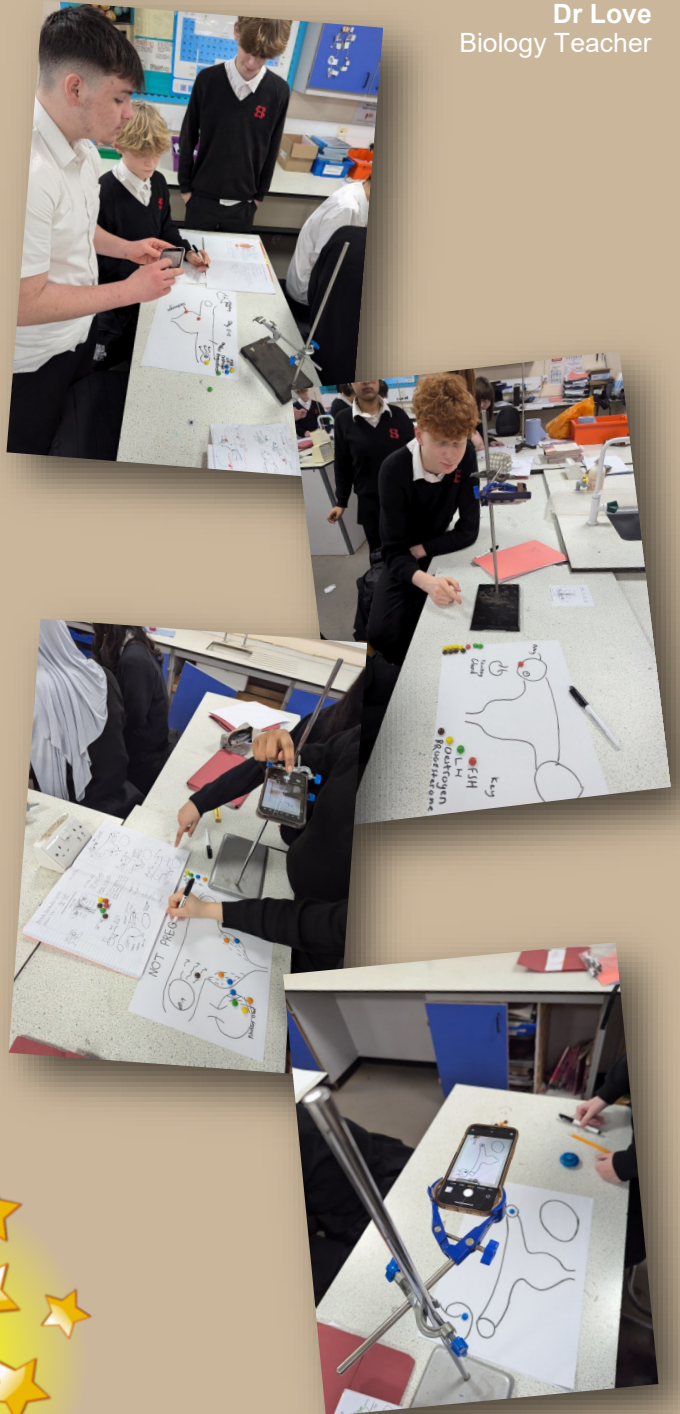
**Mr Lester**

Year 11 Head of Achievement

## STOP START ANIMATION IN BIOLOGY

Year 10 have been making animations of the different hormones in the female reproductive cycle. They are using stop start animation to show the sources and actions of the 4 hormones FSH, Oestrogens, LH and Progesterone.

**Dr Love**  
Biology Teacher



### Stars of the Week

- 10C Abigail Mann
- 10D Jacob Payne
- 10E Dmytro Novytskyi
- 10F Alex Igov
- 10G Mya Roy
- 10H Ella Jones
- 10J Bessie Riches
- 10K Max Etherington
- 10L Rowan Bain





## *Stars of the Week*

- 9C Jakub Miskuf
- 9D Imogen Coyne
- 9E Adarsh George
- 9F Brandon Cripps
- 9G Matilda Newman
- 9H Emily Todman
- 9J Riley Stace
- 9K James Taylor
- 9L Maya Birru



## *Stars of the Week*

- 8C Albie O'Neil
- 8D Salim Bushnaq
- 8E Daniel Dury
- 8F Joseph Kingswood
- 8G Jude McEwan
- 8H Evie Titchener
- 8J Isobel Harland
- 8K Amelia Wilson
- 8L Oscar Zhang

## AUDIENCE STARSTRUCK BY BOXCLEVER



I really enjoyed the Romeo and Juliet performance by Box Clever Theatre and the different approach the company took to retelling the story and reflecting the hidden messages clearer rather than having to infer our own ideas like in the original text.

Throughout the whole performance, the narrator presented a time traveller-Esque, being able to pause the timeline whenever. When he paused the story, he spoke to the character almost trying to get them to evaluate what they had done. I think this also made the audience think about the meaning of the different scenes and understand why Shakespeare chose to present it this way. As well as this, the whole performance was given a modern sense and the actors were very interactive with the audience. The music, body language, slang, and breaking of the fourth wall mixed alongside with the original Shakespearean language made us engage with what the characters were thinking and feeling and easily understand the story.

Seeing the story presented in this way physically in front of me was very captivating and I feel it helped build onto analyses we previously made in our English lessons and gave a deeper empathy to the characters because their feelings were easier to grasp.

Overall, a brilliant performance and retelling, it showed that the company really focused on how the audience would perceive how they performed it.

**Annie Compton**  
Year 9 Student



## MY SCHOOL IS A WORKPLACE

As part of their personal development and careers education program, Year 7 have been exploring the different job roles required to make an organisation work. They have been interviewing our tremendous support team and finding out that there is a lot more to running a school than they thought. With all the information gathered, they are now going to work in teams to organise, display and present the information and by doing so, improve their own employability skills. We were very impressed with the range and depth of the questions posed and the impeccable of manners of our year 7 students. Well done Year 7!

**Dr Capaldi**  
Deputy Headteacher



## Stars of the Week

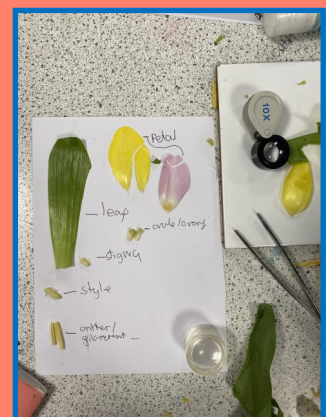
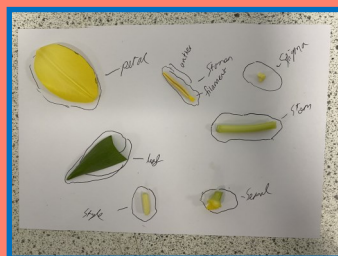
7C	Faye Markwell
7D	TBC
7E	Elsa Diamond
7F	Leanna Wong
7G	Mathew Gan
7H	Ruiqi Zhao
7J	Jim Hawkins
7K	Evie Woodcock
7L	Al-Deen Sayed



## SCIENCE WITH 7C

7C have been busy dissecting a flower during their science lesson and learning about the structures involved in sexual reproduction in plants.

**Mrs Bonnet**  
Science Teacher





# Highdown Newsletter



Saturday 22nd February  
12.45-1.45pm, 1.45-2.45pm or  
3.45-5.15pm

## High Score Newbury



£6 per person  
Family Fun

25 Cheap St, Newbury RG14 5DB

Bookings must be confirmed in advance please email  
activities@spotlightuk.org

www.spotlightuk.org Reg Charity 1129258



### Parenting Special Children

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025

## Neurodivergent Parent/ Carer support group for Reading based families.

**What is the Neurodivergent Parent/Carer Support Group?**

Pilot monthly support group for Neurodiverse parents/ carers (diagnosed/ self identify).

A supportive, non judgmental space offering connection and shared understanding of navigating family life, balancing our own unique strengths and challenges.

Through shared experiences and discussions, we will explore a variety of topics and prioritize well-being.

Whether you're looking for new perspectives, practical tips, or simply a community that understands your journey, you'll find connection and support here.

**Date & Time**

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025  
7-8:30pm

**Venue**

Online via Zoom

**Cost**

Free

**To book**

<https://parentingspecialchildren.co.uk/events/neurodivergent-parents-carers-support-group-feb-2025/>

**Email:**

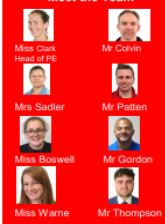
[mary.vdmerwe@parentingspecialchildren.co.uk](mailto:mary.vdmerwe@parentingspecialchildren.co.uk)



## SPORTING SPOTLIGHT

Highdown Physical Education Department Newsletter  
Monday 25th November 2024

### Meet the Team



Welcome to... matches. It was great to... week but this... The County... The Abbey... A... preparation for the... attached extra... curricular...

CLICK  
[HERE TO](#)  
READ

### FIXTURE RESULTS

#### Last Weeks Results

Yr 10 Boys Rugby County Cup Game Vs St Crispins (postponed)  
U142 Girls Football League Final Lost 1-2 ME Wokingham, Won 3-0 Wern  
Won 6-0 Bulmershe



### Upcoming Fixtures

#### This Weeks Fixtures

Wednesday 26th November U12 Girls Football Round 2 Away @ Denefield  
Thursday 27th November U15 Boys Rugby County Cup Vs St Crispins Home @ Highdown  
Thursday 27th November Yr7 & Yr8 Hockey Vs The Abbey Away @ The Abbey

#### Next Weeks Fixtures

Wednesday 4th December U12 Girls Football Round 3 Away @ JMA

GOOD LUCK

## 8-17 olds - Play Waterpolo in Berkshire from 30<sup>th</sup> March onwards



Calling anyone between the age of 8-17 who can swim and want to have fun whilst getting fitter, stronger and making new friends – waterpolo could be exactly what you are looking for - join our team!

Waterpolo is a fast paced action packed Olympic sport that is loved by most people who try it! It is a competitive team sport where 2 opposing teams of players use skill, strength and teamwork to try to score more goals than each other by throwing a ball into a goal.

We need new players who can swim – if you or your potential player is currently swimming at a swim club, that is a great start!

