



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM  
SCHOOL

# UOB SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Spring Edition 2022 | Issue 06



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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Parents, Carers, and Friends of the School,

I write with the spring 2022 term now behind us, to introduce the University School's spring newsletter.

I reflect on the last few months and feel grateful for the manageable level of impact we have encountered from the pandemic ongoing. This is not to diminish the detrimental effects on wellness for those who have fallen ill, and we are in no way complacent with watching and responding to our School's Covid-19 position moving forward. It has however been possible to retain an even keel in terms of daily operation and educational priorities, given the generous flexibility of School staff covering for colleagues where needed.



We also find ourselves able to step-up wider and joyful aspects of our provision. Fixtures and events which enrich our core offer are more feasible, more evident, and more adventurous – supporting so richly our intent to widen horizons, open eyes, and foster character. At the time of writing I look across the School forecourt where two minibuses will whisk away children and members of staff for their latest Duke of Edinburgh experience – and I invite you to enjoy learning about other activities and accomplishments through this edition of our newsletter.

We look ahead to the summer term from Monday 25 April – and indeed preparations for the coming School year 2022/23. We now know the details of the children and families who will be joining the University School from September 2022 into year 7, and our minds are already focused on induction plans to ease anxieties that can understandably arise from transition from primary to secondary schooling. I extend a warm welcome to our new families as we look ahead.



For our pupils in year 11 and students in year 13, teachers and leaders at the School continue to prioritise a range of academic and pastoral preparation – empathetic of the important tasks ahead for those young people – and ambitious to support each to successful progression come August. If your child is a member of one of our public examination cohorts I encourage that you support them in putting in place a balanced revision programme over the two week School holiday period – alongside time for rest, relaxation, and recreation. When the examination period arrives we wish all of our children success.

It is difficult to compose sentiments restricted to a foreword to recognise the far-reaching trauma and troubles nationally and globally at this time – and indeed their impact closer to home and within families where more directly affected. The tragedy and courage so evident in equal measure of those displaced or defending homelands in Ukraine and elsewhere, makes me especially appreciative of leading a School so determined to foster humane and optimistic citizens.

To close, whilst we all enjoy a short time over this holiday period to rest and breathe, we find ourselves also at holy periods. I therefore wish you a peaceful Easter, Ramadan Mubarak, or joyous Pesach.

With kindest regards,

**Colin Townsend**  
**Principal**

“

Kindness is more than deeds. It is an attitude, an expression, a look, a touch. It is anything that lifts another person.

*Plato*

*Greek Philosopher (Athens) 428 – 328 BC*

”



# FOSTERING A CULTURE OF READING AT UOB SCHOOL

"Reading is the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman, and child can realise his or her full potential."

*Kofi Annan.*

Reading is the greatest gift that we can give our children and young people, and at University of Birmingham School we firmly believe that reading is truly a superpower! Through reading we feed our imaginations, encounter new places and ideas, understand emotions, learn, relax, escape, and explore. We learn empathy, meet others like ourselves and others who have very different lives...all from the comfort of our desk, bed, or favourite chair.



We have always had a strong culture of reading at University of Birmingham School thanks to the commitment, passion, and vision of the staff. As an avid reader myself, I have been actively building an Author Wall and have benefited immensely from the kindness of hundreds of authors and illustrators who have sent letters and messages to our pupils to help inspire a love of reading and engagement with books. We are truly grateful to every single author and illustrator who has taken the time to send a message, and the discussion and inspiration that we have drawn from the responses has been invaluable in strengthening our culture of reading in School.

For the last two years we have been part of the 'Cheltenham Festivals Reading Teachers = Reading Pupils' programme which has further helped us to ignite a love of reading amongst teachers and pupils. Set up in 2016, the national network of teachers reading groups aims to inspire reading for pleasure through reading and sharing a wide range of high quality children's books throughout the year with pupils and providing feedback and reviews. The outcomes of being part of the West Midlands Group hosted by Peters Books have been:

- Increased knowledge and a love of children's books, selected annually by an expert panel.
- Sharing and generating teaching ideas.
- Receiving free book resources.
- Building ideas for developing a school reading community.
- Joining a national network of teachers and writers.
- Raised standards of attainment in speaking and listening, reading, and writing.



We have also been part of the UKLA's 'Teachers as Readers' Programme and have forged links with EmpathyLab which is the first organisation to build children's empathy, literacy, and social activism through a systematic use of high-quality literature.

Their strategy builds on new scientific evidence showing the power of reading to build real-life empathy skills and supports our work on Character Education and the pursuit of virtues to help us flourish and build a better world.

### Good Reads

More recently we were absolutely delighted to receive a request from Books For Keeps Magazine asking for contributions to their Good Reads section from our pupils. Books for Keeps is the UK's leading independent children's book magazine and with over 12,500 reviews on their website and more than 2,000 articles, including interviews with the top children's authors and illustrators, this was a golden opportunity for our pupils to contribute to the great work they do to promote children's books and a love of reading.

The Good Reads section of the magazine is a hugely popular feature where pupils are asked to identify and recommend a good book that they have recently read and submit a one hundred word review. It was a fantastic experience for our pupils to reflect on and celebrate their reading and engage in some fantastic book talk by championing books that they have read and loved. We are truly grateful to Andrea and the lovely team at Books For Keeps for the opportunity to write the reviews and contribute to the great work that they are doing to promote children's books and it was a joy for us all to see them in print.



[Read the pupil book reviews here.](#)



# UOB SCHOOL EXPLORERS

Our Geography students are passionate about the planet and constantly seek out opportunities to explore the world they live in to make it a better place.

A level Geography students enjoyed a four day residential in North Wales at the Rhyd-Y-Creiau Field Studies Centre near Betws-y-Coed in January. Students were able to explore coastal environments, forest land, and a tourist resort whilst developing their geographical investigative skills.

Students met with field studies council staff to discuss potential future career aspirations, enjoy a bonfire under a starlit sky, build a woodland den, and take part in an orienteering challenge. Everyone had a great time, worked extremely hard, and experienced new environments with some much needed fresh air.



## THE LAND OF FIRE & ICE

Over the Easter break, sixty of our GCSE pupils and A level Geography students will be travelling to Iceland, 'the land of fire and ice'. Our geographers will be enjoying an array of natural wonders including dramatic glaciers, explosive geysers, volcanic beaches, stunning waterfalls, and bubbling mud pools.

This will be an unforgettable experience for our pupils and students as they develop their geographical knowledge as well as build their sense of awe and wonder of the natural world.



# PURPLE DAY

Raising awareness for Epilepsy and Purple Day, Year 11 pupils Tara and Warisha prepared this highly informative presentation for their peers and staff highlighting the importance of understanding what epilepsy is.

"I feel epilepsy needs to be spoken about more as it is a condition that affects people in many unexpected ways, such as causing anxiety and other issues that people may not realise." *Tara.*

## What is Epilepsy?

- Epilepsy is a condition that affects the brain.
- We all have electrical activity constantly happening in our brain. However, people with epilepsy have a sudden burst of intense electrical activity, so the messages become mixed up. The result is an epileptic seizure.
- Epilepsy can start at any age and there are many different types. Some last for a limited time and the person eventually stops having seizures. But for many, epilepsy is a life-long condition.
- Epilepsy is one of the most common serious neurological conditions in the world. It affects around 600,000 people in the UK. This means that almost 1 in 100 people in the UK have epilepsy.

## What are epileptic seizures?

- The burst of electrical activity in the brain is released through the form of epileptic seizures.
- There are many different types of seizure. What happens to someone during a seizure depends on which part of their brain is affected and how far the seizure activity spreads.
- During some types of seizure, the person may remain alert and aware of what's going on around them, and with other types they may lose awareness. They may have unusual sensations, feelings or movements. Or they may go stiff, fall to the floor and jerk.

## How epilepsy can affect daily living

- Epilepsy is usually a lifelong condition, but most people with it are able to have normal lives if their seizures are well controlled.
- Some people may choose to avoid triggers like strobe lights, avoid becoming too tired, and manage stress.
- In certain circumstances, people who have had uncontrolled epileptic seizures within the last year may not be able to drive or do other activities like laser tag, go karting or use machinery.
- Epilepsy can also take a toll on young people by affecting their attendance and schoolwork, which may lead them to struggle with their behaviour and concentration. This can lead to other issues such as anxiety and depression.

## EEGs

- An electroencephalogram (EEG) is a recording of brain activity. During this test, small sensors are attached to the scalp to pick up the electrical signals produced by the brain.
- An EEG is one of the main diagnostic tests for epilepsy.
- This test can be conducted at the hospital (where they may sleep deprive you to induce seizures to measure in the scan), or the patient may be let out of the hospital and told to wear it for a few days to measure their seizure activity during their everyday life.



# OUR SHAKESPEARE

Pupils from University of Birmingham School reimagine Shakespeare's stories in Birmingham.

Stan's Cafe have been working with pupils from University of Birmingham School to reimagine Shakespeare's stories in Birmingham. The resulting exhibition saw 150 diptychs go on show in the Shakespeare Memorial Library at the Library of Birmingham from 15 February until the end of March 2022. Shakespeare vs Birmingham is the second in a series of five-community curated exhibitions created as part of the 'Everything to Everybody' Project.

Pupils were challenged to re-stage Shakespeare on their doorsteps through photography. They took inspiration from Shakespeare's plays and then matched their own photographs with some from the amazing collection of 15,000 photographs dating from 1899 and from all over the world that are part of Birmingham's historic Shakespeare collection. The result is a series of brilliant, often playful diptychs that speak to how Shakespeare relates to the worlds and lives of young people today.

James Yarker, Artistic Director Stan's Cafe said: "Exploring the photographic archive that is part of the vast Shakespeare collection alongside the pupils from University of Birmingham School has been great fun.

"It has been a privilege to be able to access this amazing resource and to see the wealth of images in the collection. Watching how pupils have responded to Shakespeare's plays with their own photographs has been really interesting and engaging. Finally matching these contemporary images with historic production photographs has given us a fascinating insight into how Shakespeare's plays have been interpreted over the last hundred years or so. We can't wait for people to see the new artworks on show in the Shakespeare Memorial Library, I think everyone will really enjoy them."



The exhibition sees an array of fascinating images from the archive placed alongside new images. One diptych pairs a beautiful photograph of a graveyard featuring flowers and a headstone with a production image from Hamlet in which Shakespeare's prince considers his own mortality and the passing of time while holding up the skull of Yorick. Another diptych presents a photograph of an embroidered handkerchief alongside an archive image from a production of Othello, whose plot hinges on the manipulation of an embroidered handkerchief which Othello was given by his mother. A third juxtaposition sets an image of a saucepan so big that it could be used as a cauldron against a production photograph of the witches huddled over the cauldron in Macbeth.



Ewan Fernie, 'Everything to Everybody' Project Director said: "The photographic collection in the Shakespeare Memorial Library is vast, including amateur and professional photographs from across the world. We are delighted to share the particular pictures which the pupils and students from University of Birmingham School have chosen, and we're even more excited to exhibit them alongside the new artwork which this great collection has inspired them to produce themselves. The treasure-trove of Birmingham's secret Shakespeare horde, their own talent and the involvement of the brilliant Stan's Cafe has made for a great show!"

The 'Everything to Everybody' Project is an ambitious celebration of one of the UK's most important cultural assets: the Birmingham Shakespeare Memorial Library – not just the first great Shakespeare library in the world but also the only great Shakespeare collection which belongs to all the people of a city.

The 'Everything to Everybody' Project is a collaboration between the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City Council, with funding contributed by National Lottery Heritage Fund and History West Midlands 'Everything to Everybody' will give this uniquely democratic Shakespeare heritage back to people and communities across Birmingham.

To achieve this, 'Everything to Everybody' is working in conjunction with anchor institutions and arts organisations such as Stan's Cafe.

Find out more about the project and others via the [Everything to Everybody website](#).





# VISITING PARLIAMENT



In March, A level students of politics visited London in order to take a tour of Parliament. This tour revived our knowledge of the infrastructure of Parliament, reminding us of the bi-cameral systems that are outlined in our A level politics syllabus.

Our conversations with the tour guide and a member of the House of Lords resulted in the trip being especially informative and insightful, allowing us to gain a personal perspective on what being a Member of Parliament consists of.

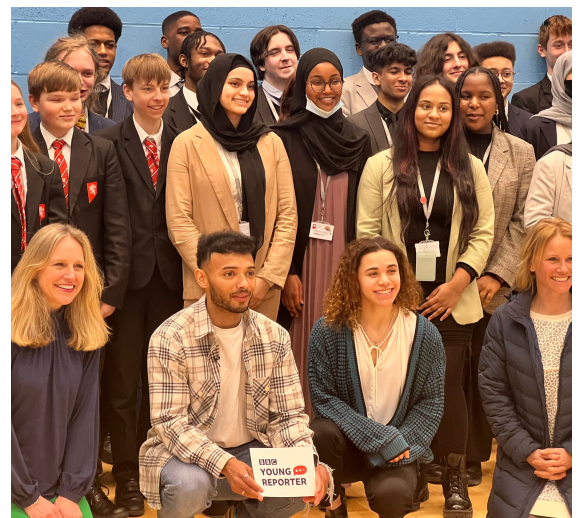
Our tour also took us to the Supreme Court, where we gained an understanding of the judicial branch of Government and toured the many different rooms where court cases are often debated – a topic our politics class found most interesting. The remainder of the day was spent navigating the London Underground and other key landmarks – a perfect blend of learning and sightseeing! An experience our class will never forget.

*Gabby E and Aamna N, A level Politics Students.*

# BBC YOUNG REPORTER

Pupils at University of Birmingham School had an incredible opportunity to find out more about media skills and broadcasting careers by attending the BBC Young Reporter Festival hosted at the University Sport and Fitness Club. Pupils who are studying GCSE and A level Physical Education (and those interested in careers in the media), had the opportunity to put questions to a panel consisting of Liam MacDevitt, Lizzie Greenwood-Hughes, Melissa Sharman, and Molly Thompson.

They learnt about the competitive world of top ranking sports and how the panel turned their passion into a presenting and producing career. Pupils and students also heard about turning large scale sporting events like the forthcoming Commonwealth Games, into TV, radio, and online content that gets us cheering on our favourite athletes and sports stars – using courage, creativity, and resilience to make it in the world of sport.



[You can view the discussions online here.](#)

# SENSATIONAL WIN FOR UOB SCHOOL PUPIL

Year 9 pupil and para athlete Madeline won bronze (with a PB time of 8.46) at the 60m Muller Indoor Grand Prix. Madeline ran against adults, including the current 100m Paralympics Gold Medalist Sophie Hahn MBE, making her the youngest participant in the race!

It was a sensational performance and we are extremely proud of her achievement. We cannot wait to see where her sporting journey and career will take her next.

[Click here to see Madeline in action.](#)



## Game Changers

Game Changer Ary has been selected to carry the Queen's Baton in Birmingham at the forthcoming Commonwealth Games. We were incredibly inspired by his application, humility, passion for inclusion, and his determination for change – to be a game changer!

"I'm really happy that I've been selected, because it's the first time I've experienced something like this. I'm very much looking forward to it." Ary.



**Well done!**

### Pupil with the most green stamps this term:

Cris R in Year 10 with 173 stamps.

### Form Group with the most green stamps this term:

7S with 2602 stamps.

### Pupils with most green stamps in each year group:

Year 7 Haris S with 167 stamps.

Year 8 Levi C with 122 stamps.

Year 9 Millicent G with 143 stamps.

Year 10 Cris R with 173 stamps.

Year 11 Jan L with 99 stamps.



# THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME...



Eight lucky University of Birmingham School pupils and students have just returned from a trip of a life time to the USA. Over 80 pupils and students applied to go on the 'Aristotle in Arizona' trip, fully funded by the Turing Scheme, to explore how other schools teach character education and also find opportunities to develop their own courage, compassion, and resilience. The eight pupils and students were selected after completing a detailed application form on why and how this trip would change their life, and were then interviewed by Professor James Arthur and Dr Tom Harrison from the Jubilee Centre for Character Virtues at the University of Birmingham.

Our explorers spent three days hosted by Dr Rob Jackson, CEO of the Great Heart Schools in Arizona, working alongside other pupils studying classical texts and engaging in Socratic debate. Our pupils and students then had the opportunity to teach lessons about Birmingham and British culture including a lesson in chocolate tasting and a history of the up and coming Commonwealth Games.

The growth in all of our young people was vast, especially the way they got stuck into delivering lessons to the pupils at Great Heart and sat lessons about Greek Mythology and Latin. One of our pupils commented on how she has "changed as a person because of this trip and is so much more confident now than before."

As part of the trip the group also had the chance to go on a conservation walk in the Arizona Desert, visit the Botanical Gardens to find out how climate change is impacting the native flora and fauna, and find out more about the conservation work that is taking place to protect it. They star gazed using telescopes with a real life astronaut from NASA too!



No trip to Arizona would be complete without a chance to see Phoenix Suns play basketball, riding with cowboys through the desert, and eating pizza the size of the state itself!



"Glendale Prep students and staff prepared a farewell BBQ for us before we left. They brought their puppies with them, which was really cute!" *Joshua, UoB School Pupil.* The warmth received when the pupils were there was lovely, and long lasting friendships have been made.

"It's changed my life. I've never travelled out of Birmingham before and it's made me see what incredible opportunities the world has to offer if I'm just a little braver to take more chances." *JO, UoB School Pupil.*

"We were so different and our countries couldn't be further apart but we all connected on a human level and underneath it all realised we're just teenagers who want a bit of fun and to make sure we have something left of this planet to give to our children." *MJ, UoB School Pupil.*



"As a member of staff here at UoB School, I had the chance to look at different types of pedagogy (teaching practices) at the schools in Arizona, and include these practices within my classroom. It was interesting to see how the US schools taught character education, and we found it useful to share ideas with each other. This trip allowed our pupils and students to acknowledge their own learning but also take responsibility of the learning of others (when teaching pupils) - they demonstrated virtues of listening, empathy, kindness, teamwork, and acknowledged each other's strengths." *Mrs H Stemp, Subject Leader for Physical Education.*

The group have come back longing for more, and the School will be putting in the next bid to the Turing Scheme soon.



# THE BOOK NOOK

Updates from our School Library...

## WORLD BOOK DAY 2022

We celebrated World Book Day this year with a week full of literary themed activities, including quizzes which garnered over 500 entries from across the School, with Sixth Form students winning with the most correct entries.

Author Ewa Jozefkiewicz (pictured) visited the School and gave an inspiring talk to Year 7 and 8 pupils. Ewa delivered a creative writing workshop where pupils wrote an opening to their own mystery stories!

You can have a look at our Virtual Library here which has been updated with all new content – book trailers, reviews, and author reading.



## READING FOR PLEASURE ENRICHMENT

Friday afternoons have become a haven of peace in the library providing Sixth Formers a space to take time out of their busy study time and simply read for pleasure.

Reading has been proven to reduce stress, improve empathy skills, and widen vocabulary. Feedback from students suggested that they found it difficult to fit it within their schedule, so this enrichment is perfect for them.



## CHESS PLAYERS

The library is now a hub for chess fans this term as two keen Year 9 pupils have inspired their peers with their chess playing, so much so that the library now hosts multiple chess games at lunchtimes!

It has been wonderful to see such enthusiasm on display and witness kind and thoughtful behaviour from older pupils when interacting with those from lower year groups.

## Top borrowers this term:

- |                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Oscar C Year 8  | 6. Atika R Year 7      |
| 2. Eshal A Year 7  | 7. Inayah I Year 7     |
| 3. Kashif B Year 7 | 8. Lakhshawin K Year 7 |
| 4. Azka F Year 9   | 9. Nabeel A Year 7     |
| 5. Abdul A Year 7  | 10. James M Year 7     |

## TOP CLASS: 7T

borrowing the most books for the second term running!



# IN OTHER NEWS...



## Number crunchers

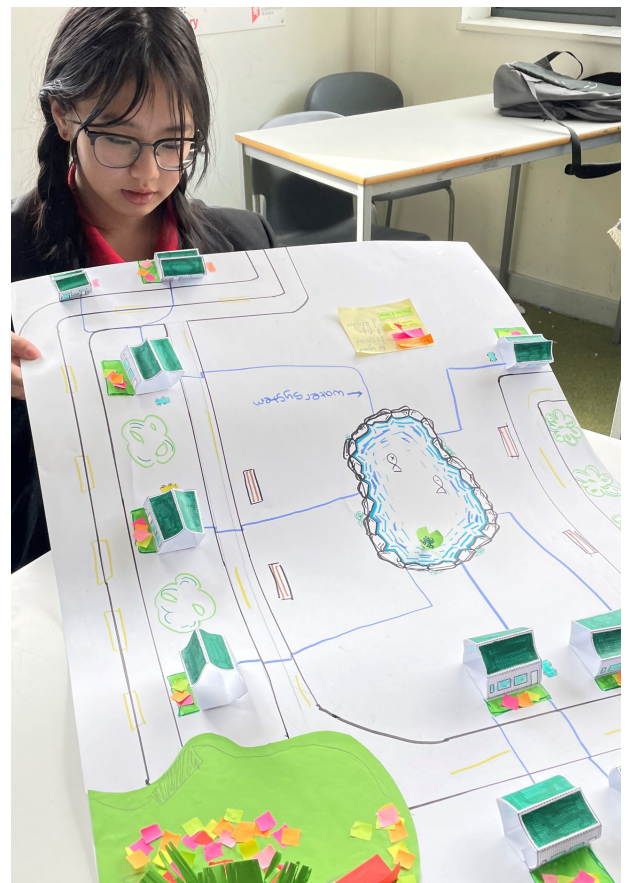
A team of Year 10 pupils took part in an Advanced Mathematics Fest at King Edwards Camp Hill Boys School. Everyone had a great time. The teamwork and problem solving skills demonstrated were incredible. Well done to all who took part.

## Learning about sustainability in enrichment

Pupils have been involved in a six-week project with Willmott Dixon, learning about sustainability within the construction industry and putting their learning into practice by designing their own 'Green Village.'

Finding out how the industry has adapted to become more sustainable now and for the future. Pupils received their Bronze Industrial Cadet Certificates after completing their designs.

"I really enjoyed the enrichment programme it was fun. I enjoyed the arts and crafts and building the village, I knew very little about the construction industry before completing the programme. It has made me think differently, I thought the construction industry was just full of old men in neon green jackets, but I now know much more about lots of different job roles and also that it pays a good salary. It is important to make the right choices and think about the environment when building for the future." *Miki, Year 8 pupil.*



**WILLMOTT DIXON**



# UPDATES FROM THE SEND TEAM

We remain very aware that the inclusion team have had limited opportunities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic to invite parents and carers into School to network and receive additional support from professionals and our team. We are planning our first parent drop-in session with Ann Remes, from the Communication and Autism Team, in the Summer Term which will focus on supporting teenagers with autism.



Once a date has been finalized for this session this will be shared through School communications and parents and carers will be asked to book a place if they would like to attend. We look forward to welcoming you into School for what will be an informative session.

If the networking sessions prove to be popular, we plan to run a rolling program of these across the academic year for parents and carers to be able to gain additional guidance and advice from the SENDCo and external professionals, as well as informally meet with other families to discuss and share support strategies. If there is a particular area that you would like to see built into our program please let us know by contacting Miss Poulton (SENDCo) at [k.poulton@uobschool.org.uk](mailto:k.poulton@uobschool.org.uk).

## **Autism Support Update**

The Birmingham Local Authority have been working hard to reduce waiting times to be seen by a specialist through investing in extra support teams. A separate organisation called 'Healios' (an online provider of autism assessments) has been commissioned to assess children and young people over 7 years of age who are on the NHS waiting lists. This has been in place for several months and they had completed 1555 ASD assessments before Christmas and continue to support to date. Another organisation 'Clinical Partners' are now working with the children under 6 years of age who are waiting and as part of a pilot and will see 100 children for face-to-face assessments. An all-age autism support service is currently in development following consultation with experts by experience, services and commissioners. Next steps for the service include recruitment to roles and development of a dedicated website and phoneline, with a go live date of 01 April 2022- this will be communicated with parents and carers at UoB School as soon as we are made aware of it.

## **National updates- big national changes are planned for SEND**

The Government has recently released a green paper titled 'right support, right place, right time' which outlines the changes that the Government is proposing to make on a national level to try to improve services for young people with SEND and their families. If you would like to read what they are proposing, you will [find the green paper here](#).

# TERM DATES

## Summer Term 2022

**Term Starts: Monday 25 April 2022**

BANK HOLIDAY: Monday 02 May 2022

**Half Term: Monday 30 May to Friday 03 June 2022**

\*Staff Professional Development Day: Thursday 30 June 2022

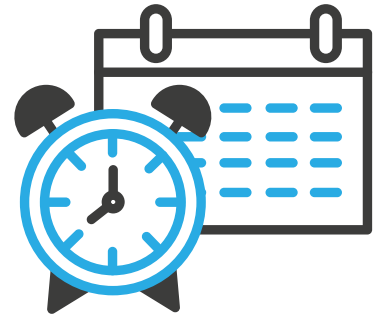
\*Staff Research Day: Friday 01 July 2022

\*Platinum Jubilee School Closure: Monday 11 July 2022

**Term ends: Friday 22 July 2022 from 12.15**

\*no pupils or students to attend/non-teaching day.

[View full term dates here](#)



## Useful Contacts & Information for SEND

### Birmingham Local Authority SEND updates

[www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk](http://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk)

A wealth of information and support from pre recorded webinars to support parents and carers of young people with SEND.

### Birmingham Healthcare Services

[Visit the website here](#)

#### Occupational Therapy

0121 683 2325

#### Speech & Language Therapy

0121 466 6231

#### Physiotherapy

0121 466 5193



## Friends of UoB School

The Friends of University of Birmingham School is the School's PTA and is open to all parents and carers of pupils and students at UoB School, as well as all staff.

Our aim is to create a collaborative environment for events and activities for the entire School community.

The Friends would love to hear from parents and carers who may be interested in getting involved with the group. Please email the group at [friends@uobschool.org.uk](mailto:friends@uobschool.org.uk) or find us on [Facebook](#).





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