

Senior School



Spring Term 2024

This term always feels like the engine room of the academic year. It's a time when pupils have settled into their new year groups and courses, deadlines start creeping up, and of course there are the mock IGCSE and A Level exams for some to contend with. Whilst it is the shortest term of the year, it can sometimes feel the longest.

This might make you imagine that Runnymede pupils just have their heads stuck in their books and are solely focused on themselves and their own work. That, however, would be to underestimate them. This term has been busier than ever with the school play, History and PE trips, an orchestral concert, House Competitions from debating to quizzes and art. As ever, much of this has been driven by the pupils themselves.

Our new Prefect Team has also been taking a leading role around school. They have been some of the key figures driving the Pupil Leadership Team forward, as well as supporting the day to day running of the school by taking school duties. We are grateful to them for this leadership and support, and are proud of the responsibility they are showing to our community.

As we move into the Summer Term, we will taking the next steps forward in our Digital Action Plan by introducing curfews on our school devices. This will allow pupils to take school iPads home to work with, but ensure that all pupils are able to switch off from their screens and maintain a healthy balance between work and home, You will receive more information on this next term.

| Annabel Hawkins Senior Deputy Head

House competitions

Friendly House rivalry and competition is nothing new at Runnymede. This year, though, there is a new element of competition as the House which leads the House Point total at the end of the academic year will be going on a House trip at the end of the Summer Term. With that to aim for, collecting Positive House Points whilst avoiding the Negatives has never been so important!

Alongside that, there have been a number of other House competitions taking place this term...



House Art

This term Year 10 and 12 Art students have been working on an Art competition.

They have worked in House groups to design large banners which incorporate the crest and history of their House, as well as the school values.

The Austen, Keynes, Locke and Newton teams have had to collaborate and discuss their ideas before deciding on final designs.

The banners will be painted in the respective house colours and we can't wait to be able to display them in the Summer Term ready for adjudication!

| Ms Magnus Head of Art

House Quiz

The first ever House Quiz, organised the Academic Committee Pupil Leadership Team, took place this Friday. It consisted of multiple rounds across different subjects: from academic and intellectual ones such as History and Geography to more fun ones, like Pop Culture and Teacher Family Feud.

Each House had a team of 6 participants across different year groups on stage, and they had to work together to answer questions correctly and achieve points. The Family Feud was one of the highlights of the House Quiz. A few days before the quiz took place, the Academic Committee sent out a survey to sixth form students asking them to vote on what teacher was more likely to do something, such as winning a Nobel Prize. Then, during the Family Feud round, the participants had to guess the teachers who had the majority of votes, and were awarded points based on how close their guesses were to Top 5.

The quiz was a great opportunity to celebrate House spirit and to show the breadth of knowledge that Runnymede has as a community. Well done to the winning house: Austen!

| Alba Year 12



Founder's Day 2024



Each Year on 26th January we reflect on the commitment of our Founder, Arthur Powell and his vision for the school. This year the Headmaster delivered a moving address to the Senior School which allowed use all to consider the values by which the school was set up and we all continue to try to live by. You can read his address below.

In the afternoon, we celebrated his belief in people's freedom to think, and to express one's ideas openly by holding the annual Founders' Debate.

| Ms Hawkins Senior Deputy Head

Founders' Debate —

This year a Balloon Debate was held on Founders' Day. The premise is that our speakers are in a hot air balloon that is losing height rapidly. To prevent the certain death of everybody on board, only one person will be allowed to stay in the balloon. Each speaker has to present themselves and explain what they bring to the world and why they should be allowed to survive.



This year was another lively debate with Sixth Form speakers representing different controversial figures: Julius Oppenheimer (Alec), Walt Disney (Sol), Joe Biden (Sam), Emmeline Pankhurst (Micaela), Nelson Mandela (Ramón). Audience participation was enthusiastic as they voted each speaker out of the balloon one by one, using a decibel reading "Clapometer" set up by Mr White in the Physics department.

Congratulations to all our speakers for their excellent presentations - but particular congratulations go to Ramón for winning the Balloon Debate and representing his House (Newton), and also to Sam for winning the "Best Speaker" award.

| Ms Atkinson Deputy Head (Timetable) and Chair of Academic Committee

Founder's Day Address —

“Today is Founder's Day. It is the 14th anniversary of the death of our Founder, Arthur Powell. It is fitting we spend a little time remembering why the school was founded, and indeed, why it is called Runnymede.

I am the eldest of Arthur's three children. Julia Powell, after whom this building is named, was our mother. She was Spanish. My parents met in Spain, were married in England and then moved to Italy, where I was born. In due course, my parents moved back to Spain. That was 1960. I was sent to a British primary school in Madrid, called Numont, which still exists.

When the time came for me to go to Senior School, my parents were divided as to where to send me. My father in favour of me going to boarding school in England but my mother, being Spanish, was against that idea. She wanted me to go to school in Spain. That was where the trouble started. There were only Spanish schools in Spain. In those days, Spain was ruled by a right-wing dictator, Franco, who had come to power after victory in the Spanish Civil war. Under Franco, education, and all cultural activity, was controlled by the State. The state dictated what could be said or not said, was allowed or not allowed; anything which was at odds with that, was forbidden and punished by law. Essentially, what the State allowed was anything which enabled Franco and his supporters to remain in power. Moral and religious respectability and justification were furnished by some influential sectors of the Church. So, we had a situation in which education was controlled by the State and the Church.

Our Founder was a liberal, a humanist and an atheist. He believed people's freedom to think, and to express one's ideas, should have no limits. He was clear he was not going to educate his children in a school where what was taught could not be questioned, and what one thought could not be expressed freely. In what must have been a lengthy and fraught process, my parents decided that the only solution was for them to start a British Senior School. (The only memory I have of those pre-Runnymede days is of driving around neighbourhoods in the North of Madrid, on Sunday afternoons, looking at houses which might be converted into schools).

In September 1967, Runnymede College, British Secondary School opened with 42 pupils. Although my memories of those years are rosy, the shadow of the regime under which we lived, shaped the early years of the school. Spanish pupils were not allowed to register in foreign schools because what they were taught was not controlled by the State. Religion was not taught either, which was unthinkable in those days. Most bizarre of all, was that the text books my father bought in England, had to be approved by the censor. This was farcical beyond belief, because the censors could not read English. Getting the books through customs involved a time-honoured practice know as bribery. Perhaps the darkest moment in the early years, was when a Spanish teacher was arrested, not because his lessons were bad but because he expressed support for Fidel Castro. He was reported to the police by a parent who was a Cuban exile. Although he was released the same day, after my father went to the police station with the British Ambassador, it was a rude shock.

The school of course, was called Runnymede because it is at Runnymede, a water meadow on the river Thames, that Magna Carta was sealed in 1215. Magna Carta was the first document in which an absolute monarch recognised that there were limits to his power and that his subjects had rights which, from that moment on, were enshrined in law. Since then, Runnymede has been a symbol of liberty and the natural rights of man against an oppressive or unjust government.

When I was at university, I had a friend who liked to misquote Voltaire: “I may not agree with what you say but I will die defending your right to say it”. I am not suggesting you should do anything so extreme, but I do hope that as Runnymedians, you will defend people's rights to express their opinions in all walks of life. Perhaps more importantly than that, I encourage you respectfully, to call into question everything and anything with which you disagree. Those of you here today are growing up in a world which is far less free, democratic or liberal than it seems. Fascism, populism, political correctness and wokeness are all alive and well and, each in their own devious ways, seeking to thwart freedom of expression. Political extremists deal in lies and incitement to hatred; the politically correct attempt to curb how we speak, what we say and who is allowed to speak where. From where I stand, they have far more in common than any of them would like to admit. It is your duty and your privilege, as educated, sophisticated, affluent members of society, to defend our liberties. Strive to remain independent and critical of what you read and hear. We are in your hands.”

| Mr Powell, Headmaster

House Families



PSHE topics are delivered in different ways throughout the year, whether through assemblies, Form Group discussions, external speaker presentations, or through House Families.



House Families involve pupils from different year groups but within the same House, who meet together to discuss ideas and share experiences. Last Term the Sixth Form members led a session during November's Anti-Bullying Week.

This term during Children's Mental Health Week in early February, Year 9 and 10 presented information about mental health issues and how we can support ourselves and others. The sessions were well-planned and interactive whilst helping pupils to develop their presentation skills.

| Mr Blake Deputy Head (Pastoral)

Antigone

The actors of the Senior School put on a wonderful performance of Sophocles' 'Antigone', one of A level Drama's set texts, for two nights at the end of term.

In the play we met Antigone in the aftermath of a civil war as she rages perilously against her Uncle Creon's decree not to give her beloved brother, Polynices, a sacred burial. Creon's unrelenting pride triggers a chain of events catastrophic to the house of Thebes where the ultimate price is paid.

A huge amount of work went into the rehearsals and performances, with a beautifully designed set inspired by Picasso's Guernica. All pupils should be congratulated for their determined, hard work and commitment and terrific performances. Special thanks to all the staff who were involved in the production, and particularly to Mr Sowden for whom this was his final Drama production after 30 years at Runnymede.

| Ms Lambert Head of Drama



Orquesta Iuventus at Runnymede

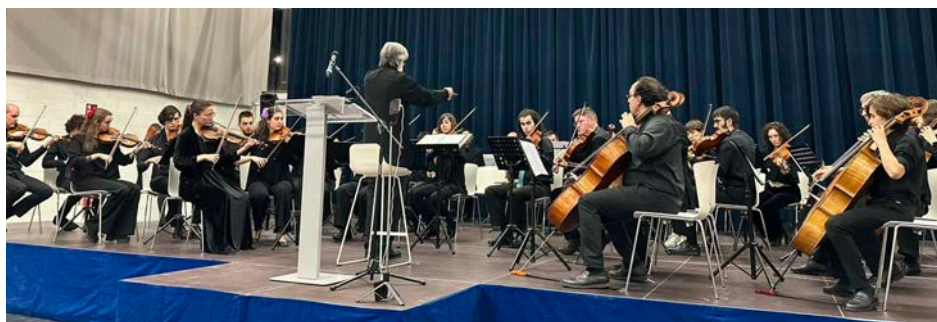
On Saturday 10th February, a large audience of pupils, parents, alumni and staff of Runnymede College were treated to a magnificent performance of classical repertoire.

Taking place in the Julia Powell Sports Hall & Auditorium, our very own Olympia Bonte Blázquez was the soloist in Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 4 in D major, K. 218. Talented string players from both the Prep and Senior school joined forces with the players of Madrid's Orquesta Iuventus, which then continued to play Mozart's famous Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550.

Following the rapturous applause for the performers after the drama, passion and beauty of Mozart's music, Alberto Cortina Balmaseda in the VI Form joined the orchestra on drums for a piece of symphonic rock, which was a surprising change of gear, and a truly uplifting finale.

This was the first edition of what will be an annual benefit concert for the school charity. This year, of course, we are raising money for Fundación Aladina, which is a children's cancer charity, working across Spain. There could not be a more worthy cause. The Music Department at Runnymede is passionate about providing opportunities for performance for pupils across the different phases of the school.

| Mr Blake Head of Music



Old Runnymedian visit

We had the great fortune to have a visit from Dr Pablo Cavannagh who came to speak to some of our top Year 12 scientists considering a future in medicine. He was incredibly informative and shared his experiences about studying in both the UK and Spain.

We are very grateful he was able to return to the school and share his words of wisdom with our students. It was also wonderful for him to go on a tour of the school and bump into some of his former teachers which remembered him fondly.

| Ms O'Driscoll Head of Sixth Form



Extended Project Qualification

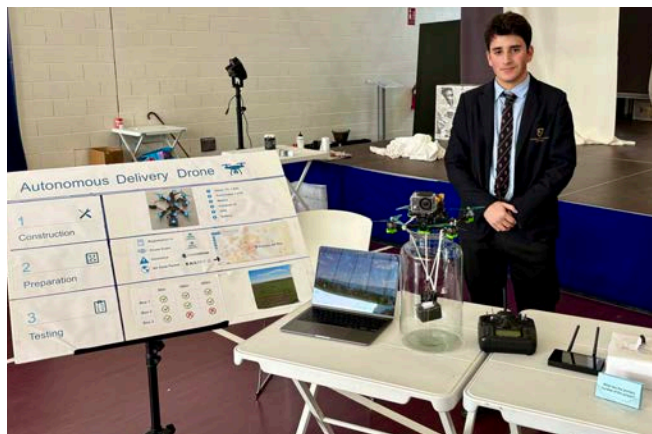
On Monday 18th March, ten Year 12 students held a fair to present the findings of their Extended Project Qualifications.



There was an incredible diversity of projects on display, from *Pink Power: how the Barbie marketing campaign utilises colour as a psychological tactic*, to *The potential of drones in the delivery industry: to build an autonomous drone which can successfully deliver a standard package*, and *The reason for the emergence of over-investment in the Premier League and its impact on the UK economy*.

Attendees were treated to colourful and detailed stalls from which students answered questions about their projects with impressive fluency and showing off their incredibly deep knowledge. They were all clearly the experts in the room.

| Mr White Extended Project Qualification Coordinator



Fundraising



The Charity Committee has continued their great work fundraising for the school charity - Fundación Aladina - this term.

Valentine's Day carnations were sold to Senior School pupils and delivered in their hundreds! The Second Hand Sports Sale was particularly well supported with shoppers picking up bargains including ski gear, tennis racquets, roller skates, children's bikes and much more. It raised an impressive €1600! Thank you to all those who donated items.!

| Ms O'Driscoll Head of Sixth Form & Charity

World Book Day & Literacy Week



In celebration of World Book Day and Literacy Week, the Senior School has been getting creative.

Form groups discussed the books that they were enjoying reading and then decided on one title together. The challenge was then to transform their classroom door into a work of art that reflected that book

The results were amazing: it was wonderful to see students enthusiastically striving to recreate their favourite scenes, be it the arena from The Hunger Games, or the skyline of London from Peter Pan - the corridor of Locke even suddenly had trainers hanging from the ceiling in homage to Louis Sachar's 'Holes'. The winning doors received lots of House Points for their impressive efforts!

| Ms Tupper Head of English



On Our Visit to 'The Berlin Wall: A World Divided' Exhibition, January 2024

Between August 1961 and November 1989, for twenty-eight years, the world was divided by a dark line: the Berlin Wall. Now the images, the shadow, the stories and the wall itself are on display in Madrid until 28th April at the Fundación del Canal de Isabel II. The History Department took all Year 10 and Year 11 pupils to see it in January, as this topic is an important part of the IGCSE course and of course world history.

The Wall was the tangible symbol of what Winston Churchill called the "Iron Curtain", the most concrete image of the Cold War. It divided the Soviet Empire from the West and Berlin, where the two worlds met. It was one of those places where history is still perceived as threatening, but also as a reminder of what some, and then all, managed to defeat and leave behind. Or so we thought.

The Wall went up on the night of 11 August 1961. Nobody expected it. At first it was just barbed wire, just enough to make the division of this world almost impassable. Both the USSR and the German Democratic Republic had their reasons for doing so. The kind of reasons that are difficult to explain openly, but which, after endless discussions, seem to make some sense until they are carried out. Then it all came rushing in and, as is often the case at certain moments in history, the lives of many people, and with them a part of the world, changed forever.

In the exhibition, everything is thought out. Outside, in the entrance courtyard, near the front door, is the cockpit of a turret - a 'Postenhäuser'-. When you enter, it looks like a relic, but afterwards, on your way out, it is difficult not to feel the watchful power of that world.

There is hardly any preparation. Entering the first exhibition room, the visitor is overwhelmed by the colour of the objects, which are all so sombre and faded that you can almost smell the dampness and desolation of that East Berlin. Add to this the sepia tones of the photographs, which were born being old because the photographer seems to have captured them as they were; political propaganda, the nuclear threat, the rebuilding of war-ravaged cities... Thus, when the language of things has prepared us, the abstracted, distant and anxious gaze of the "barrier breakers" begins. At this moment, one cannot help but feel the despair that was born with the Berlin Wall.

Once built, the Berlin Wall became a sad symbol of isolation for East Germans and for the world. Soon its history became part of the history of the 1960s, with the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Vietnam War. Then, unchanged, the long 1970s, with the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the despair of the oil crisis and the long war in Afghanistan that began in '79. And finally, the 1980s: first with Brezhnev and his successors, and then, though not clearly perceived beyond the Wall, with Soviet structures already beginning to totter. From 1985 it was a dizzying time, with Gorbachev elected General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and, from 1988, head of state of the USSR. In May 1989 there were protests and repression in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, and shortly afterwards the Berlin Wall came down, as it had risen, in one night.

As long as the Wall was there, many people tried to escape, always in the same direction. Some of them got away, but the feeling is that in all of them there was more fear than determination. Like jumping out of vertigo. About 5,000 people managed to escape, many were imprisoned and served long sentences, and 99 died in the attempt. And so it went on until there were hardly any options left. In a way, the atmosphere recreated in the Canal exhibition, the photos of all those in whose lives the Wall played a key role, and the message about the importance of the Wall and the defence of freedom, are all present there and conveyed to the visitor.

When you leave the exhibition, think of all the many places in the world where, at this very moment, there is a wall like that one or not so different. And then, think of the 9th of November 1989, the day the Berlin Wall came down. It was a very enriching experience from which all Runnymede pupils undoubtedly benefitted.



Dates for next term's diary... We look forward to seeing you there:

Wednesday April 17th - Year 9 Parents' Evening from 16.15

Thursday April 25th - Take a Runnymedian to Work Day

Thursday April 25th - Year 11 Study Leave

Wednesday May 22nd - Year 10 Parents' Evening from 16.15

Saturday June 8th - Senior School Prize Giving from 10.00

Friday June 21st - Year 13 Leavers' Presentation from 16.00



EST. 1967

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