

Friday 12th September 2025

## Parent Bulletin

Dear families,

It has been a great week for students to get to know their new teachers as they run through their timetables for the first time.

Following the message from Miss Carvel last week, our year 7s have enjoyed a great start to their John Mason Experience. And it's not just the students who have settled in well, this week you can hear from our new Progress Leader for Year 8 about his experience of getting to know his fantastic year group on page 2.

Every morning, we ensure that students are set up for the day by checking they have their equipment, their planner and timetable, and that their uniform is all in order. It is so important for our young people that these things are correct at the start, if they are not, it only leads to challenges and difficulties throughout the rest of the day. For most students everything is perfect, and I'd like to thank you for sending them to school ready for a successful day.

For a small number of students, we do have issues which our fantastic pastoral team work hard to resolve quickly. If this may be an issue for your child, please can I ask for your support us by making sure that they are ready for school before they leave home. This will always give them a brighter start to their day and ensure that we can focus on getting the very most from their learning in lessons. Please refer to my [earlier letter](#) for common issues that students are having on arrival.

We're looking forward to hearing from our Gold Duke of Edinburgh groups as they head out on their final expedition over the weekend. Whether its adventures or more relaxing, I hope you all enjoy yours.

Best wishes.



Alastair West  
Headteacher



## Pastoral News – Year 8

This September marks my start as a Year Group Progress Leader, and it has been a pleasure to start working with Year 8 at John Mason School. The students have settled into the daily routine applying themselves with commitment to the school's values of Opportunity, Respect and Determination. It has been a pleasure getting to know the students as well as being involved and leading an energised year group eager to take on the start of the new school year.

Equally, there has also been a real buzz building in year 8 over the Cologne trip. 86 students from the year group will be setting off to Germany on Saturday 27th September. On the first day, the group will be visiting the zoo and then doing some sightseeing from a cable car over the river Rhein and the top of the cathedral tower. They will then be practising a bit of German as they look around the town centre and get some lunch. There's a river cruise later in the day before a meal out in the evening. The second day involves a visit to the wonderful Phantasialand theme park, which has some great rides. Both staff and students are really looking forward to a successful trip.

A great start to academic year, well done Year 8!

Ben Gregory  
Year 8 Progress Lead



# Autumn Science Lecture Series

2025



## 5 free online talks exploring Paleobotany



**Dr Sandy Hetherington**

7pm | Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> October

Windows into Prehistoric Ecosystems:  
exceptionally preserved plant fossils from the UK



**Dr Paul Kenrick**

7pm | Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October

Floras Before Forests: fossil insights into plant origins



**Dr James Clark**

7pm | Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November

Bringing the Tree of Life to Life: how phylogeny  
guides our view of the origins and evolution of plants



**Prof Jennifer McElwain**

7pm | Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November

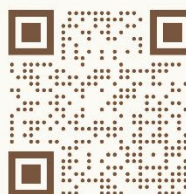
Trees Through Time \*online and in-person



**Dr Julia Gravendyck**

7pm | Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December

Plant Evolution through the Lens of Plant Microfossils



Find out more  
and purchase  
tickets via the  
**What's on?**  
page



# Abingdon GCSE Astronomy Group



The group consists of pupils from any school in Abingdon who are interested in following a GCSE course in Astronomy. Some pupils choose to take the GCSE exam after two or three years of study, but some just attend out of interest and to learn more about the subject. The classes are held in the Yang Science Centre at Abingdon School at the Faringdon Road entrance between 4-5pm on Mondays in Abingdon School's term time. Pupils from Y10-Y13 may attend. They may choose to sit the GCSE exam at the end of Y11, Y12 or Y13. It can be done in a year, but will involve lots of self-study.

The first session will be on Monday 15th September.

For more details contact Alice Perry at Abingdon School; [alice.perry@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:alice.perry@abingdon.org.uk)

Parents and carers who wish to use transport provided by the local authority should refer to the Oxfordshire County Council guidance available at:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schools/travelling-school>

## Extra-Curricular Clubs



We have a wide range of lunchtime and afterschool extra-curricular clubs that cater to a wide range of interests. The list of clubs available can be found on our website under Students and Parents or here for quick access [Extra-Curricular Club List](#)

If your child is interested in a lunchtime club, they just need to pop along, there is no need to sign up. If they would like to attend an afterschool club you will need to enrol them, you can do this via you My Child at School account under the Clubs section. By enrolling them you are securing their place on the club where places may be limited and giving your consent for them to be on site afterschool. All our extra-curricular clubs are free to attend.

## Careers Opportunities

Each week we will inform you of up-coming Careers events that are happening within John Mason School, as well Oxfordshire events and online events that you are able to attend and sign up for.

At John Mason School we design our Careers Programme around opportunities, ranging from Human Library, Future's Day, Work Experience and Mock Interviews Day to name a few. We want them to have the ambition to succeed in all that they do and to provide them with the best opportunities when they leave us.

# POST 16 OPTIONS MADE SIMPLE



Use the information below to help you understand the options available to you after Year 11.

IF I ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING GCSEs ...	I CAN MOVE ONTO LEVEL ...	AND CONSIDER THESE OPTIONS ...	AND APPLY FOR ...
<small>THESE ARE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS YOU MUST CHECK WITH YOUR LOCAL PROVIDERS</small> 5+ 5+ 5+ 5+ 5+ inc English Language and Maths at a Grade 4 Exact requirements vary according to the subject	3	A LEVELS	3 or 4 SUBJECTS
4+ 4+ 4+ 4+ 4+ inc English and Maths at a Grade 4 and above	3	T LEVELS	1 SUBJECT
4+ 4+ 4+ 4+ 4+ inc English and Maths at a Grade 3 Exact requirements vary according to the course	3	VOCATIONAL COURSES	1 to 3 SUBJECT COURSES
3+ 3+ 3+ 3+ inc English at a Grade 3 and Maths at a Grade 2 2+ 2+ 2+ inc English at a Grade 2 and Maths at a Grade 1	2 1	VOCATIONAL COURSES	1 SUBJECT COURSE
4+ 4+ Exact requirements vary according to the employer. 3+ 3+	3 2	APPRENTICESHIPS	APPLY FOR VACANCIES
What if I get grades below 2 ?	ENTRY 3 PRE-ENTRY (ENTRY 1 & 2)	VOCATIONAL COURSES FUNCTIONAL SKILLS COURSES	1 SUBJECT COURSE

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Speak to your Careers Adviser to help you explore the options in more detail.

Post-16 can be a difficult decision to make and it is important that our students understand the different routes that can be taken. We have our own Careers Advisor, David Bingham, who will meet our Year 11 students for a one-2-one appointment. We will also have a number of speakers come in and discuss their options, as well as local careers fairs that will take place.

We highly recommend students visiting different colleges to get a feel for the establishment as well as being able to speak to staff there.

Below are a number of opportunities for this to take place, as well as the links to sign up for them.

## Oxfordshire Events

- Abingdon & Witney College Open Days  
Abingdon & Witney College are holding open events at their Abingdon and Witney campuses on **17th September from 15:30 - 19:00**. Students can tour the facilities, meet tutors and current students and find out all about the courses on offer.  
<https://abingdon-witney.ac.uk/events>
- ACE Training Open Mornings  
ACE Training are holding a series of drop in open mornings on **Saturdays from 10:00 - 12:00** for students interested in a career in construction, with the next ones taking place on **20th September** and **25th October**. Students and their parents/carers can tour the facilities, meet the staff and find out all about the apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships available.  
[Download a flyer.](#)  
<https://acetraining.co.uk/events-calendar>
- Discover routes into Medicine  
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust are holding a discover routes into medicine event for students in **Year 10 and above** on **2nd October from 17:00 - 19:00** at the John Radcliffe Hospital. This is an opportunity for them to meet doctors and medical students, get top tips for applying for medicine and getting work experience and to ask any questions about careers in medicine to an expert panel.  
[Download a poster](#)
- IF Oxford  
Oxford Science and Ideas Festival takes place from **17th October - 2nd November 2025**, with more than 100 exciting events and activities for adults, children and young people across 30 venues in and around the city and beyond. Hundreds of researchers from universities and companies, individuals working or volunteering in arts, charities and community groups across Oxfordshire come together to create IF Oxford.  
<https://if-oxford.com>

## OTHER EVENTS

- T Levels Week Webinar  
T Levels Week 2025 will run from **13th - 17th October 2025**. This Amazing Apprenticeships webinar on **16th September from 15:30 - 16:00** will discuss ideas and resources to help make your T Levels Week a success.  
[www.amazingapprenticeships.com/events/get-ready-to-celebrate-t-levels-week-2025](http://www.amazingapprenticeships.com/events/get-ready-to-celebrate-t-levels-week-2025)

## Upcoming Important Dates:

Saturday 13 <sup>th</sup> September –	Gold DofE Assessed Expeditions
Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup> September	
Friday 26 <sup>th</sup> September	School Photographs: years 7, 9, 11
Saturday 27 <sup>th</sup> September	Koln Trip (Year 8)
Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> October	Year 11 PIE
Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> October	Berlin PIE
Wednesday 8 <sup>th</sup> October	Year 8 PIE & Welsh Farm
Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> October	Open Evening and School closes at 1.10pm
Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> October	Inset Day

For a complete list of upcoming events please view the school calendar on our website here:

[Calendar - John Mason School](#)

Term dates for the academic year are on our website here:

[Term Dates - John Mason School](#)