



# Provision to raise aspirations, stretch and challenge our students



**John Mason School**  
Excellence Through Creativity

**What happens when you plug in a gherkin?**

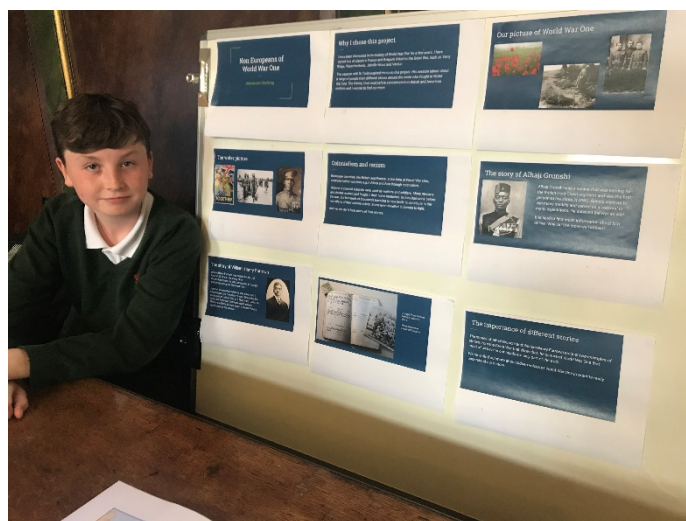
**What does 'infinity' mean?**  
**What is it like to live abroad?**

**Why do people have different accents?**

**How do you build a website?**

## **Push their knowledge and learning forward**

At John Mason School we believe in being the best that we can be. Because we are an inclusive community, that means we need to make sure everyone's needs are met – including those with a passion for a particular subject or who are looking for learning challenges beyond the classroom. Different students will be excited about different areas of the curriculum and it is these passions which can go on to form life-long interests and even careers. It is a key principle of good teaching that students should feel challenged in all their subjects and this is a responsibility all of our teachers take very seriously. We also offer an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and trips to inspire students' passions for learning.



## **Aspirational Pathways**

Research suggests that an important part of encouraging students to hold high ambitions for their future is building these aspirations when they are young. From year 7, we will be working to support our students to aim as high as possible. Beyond the Symposium offer (see below), we will invite academics and leaders of business, industry and science in to talk to our students about different pathways and how to achieve the qualifications they need for these. We arrange visits to a range of universities throughout their time in school and invite back former students who have followed both the university and apprenticeship pathways to talk to our students about their future.

Throughout their time in school we are working with our partner colleges (Trinity College, Oxford and Peterhouse, Cambridge) to offer a range of visits, talks and sessions designed to raise aspirations and encourage students to aim as high as possible for their future beyond school. The HPQ transition project at the end of the year 11, the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award and the EPQ in JMF6 are all designed to ensure that our students have the academic credentials to apply for the country's top universities and apprenticeships if they so desire.

When they reach Sixth Form, students will attend targeted tuition pathways sessions to support different types of application: Oxbridge and Russell Group Universities, apprenticeships, foundation and performing arts courses and a selection of others based on the students' visions that year. They will be supported to write applications, prepare their portfolios and prepare for admissions tests.

## How do we target students for these programmes?

We believe that every student has the potential to excel in at least one area, given the right support and opportunities. To recruit for our symposium, raising aspirations and other extra-curricular offers one main driver is students' passions. We want to ensure that provision is available for any student who has a strong interest in a particular subject or future pathway, from year 7 up.

We also work to ensure that we're not overlooking students' potential because they have not shared it with us, or because they have yet to realise their own strengths and talents. To help us target students we look at the results from the student's Cognitive Abilities Test (CATs) that they take early in year 7. This externally assessed test is designed to evaluate students' reasoning and potential in three main areas of learning: literacy, numeracy and non-verbal intelligence. Once the results are in, we look closely at the top 10% of the cohort. We also take into serious consideration the teachers' recommendations of students who are excelling in their subject areas, suggesting they may benefit from further stretch and challenge beyond the classroom.

## Symposium 2020-21: Learning to Excel

### Sim'pəʊziəm

**Definition:** *An academic conference, or meeting, such as a scientific convention.*

'Symposium' is a program designed to expose our students to high-level academic and practical expertise from the very start of their time in John Mason. It is designed to stimulate their love of learning both within and beyond the curriculum.

Beyond this we are particularly proud of our prestigious Symposium offer. This enables students from all key stages to access lectures and seminars led by external speakers from industry and academia. Students also complete an independent research project and present on this to parents and guests at one of our partner universities in the summer term. This both gives them a valuable foretaste of studying at the highest levels, but also gives them a chance to explore areas of academic interest that go far beyond the national curriculum.

Students apply to be a part of 'Symposium'; the process consists of a letter of application, endorsement by class teachers and shortlisting based on prior attainment and current data. Positive discrimination takes place for disadvantaged students who meet eligibility criteria.



Students can choose to apply to one, or more, Symposia depending on their personal interest areas. In 2019-20 we ran symposia in the following disciplines:

- English Literature and Philosophy
- Mathematics
- Computing
- Sciences
- Mandarin
- Social Sciences and Humanities

The successful applicants enjoy six 'taught' sessions in their chosen Symposia, usually led by academics, people from industry, writers, philosophers and teachers.

Each 'Symposium' is overseen by a *Challenge Champion* from within the relevant faculty. The *Challenge Champion* for each 'Symposia' becomes responsible for organising and supervising the six taught sessions for their area whilst the Symposium Coordinators ensures that all sessions are quality assured, challenging and fun.



The six taught sessions for each Symposium will take place between October and April. We will endeavor to make sure that sessions do not clash, so that students can feasibly attend more than one Symposium, if they wish.

Subsequently, students then choose one (or more) of these taught sessions as a stimulus for their own dissertation/project. In this they will be supported by the Symposium Co-ordinators. Finally, students will present their projects at an academic conference they themselves organise, with family and friends invited. In 2019 this conference was held at Trinity College, Oxford.

The symposium programme has been strongly supported by a range of academics and partner universities including both Oxford and Cambridge.

Feedback from previous students, parents/carers and colleagues is overwhelmingly positive.

**A detailed schedule of when each Symposia's sessions will take place will be published shortly, with details of how students can apply.**

