John Mason School
OPPORTUNITY | RESPECT | DETERMINATION

Friday 6th November 2026

Parent Bulletin

Dear Families,

Welcome back. I hope everyone enjoyed a restful and refreshing half-term break.

We have enjoyed a week packed with positives. As we continue to raise expectations across the school, our students continue to rise to meet them. The result is a calmer school, with a greater sense of purpose. Most importantly, this gives us the space and time to focus on what really matters: supporting young people to develop into the very best versions of themselves.

Autumn weather

Now that we have reached November, there has been a noticeable turn in the weather. This has brought with it a marvellous palette of autumn colours, but also colder temperatures and plenty of rain!

As you know, ours is a very open school site, with students needing to move outside between buildings throughout the day. A warm and waterproof coat is therefore essential, both for travelling to and from school and for moving around the site. Please also remember that hooded jumpers are not permitted as part of our uniform expectations and will be confiscated if worn in school.

Year 11 and Pre-Public Exams

This week, Year 11 students studying BTEC Health and Fitness have completed their Sports Assessments, while next week the rest of Year 11 begin their Pre-Public Exams in the majority of their subjects. Visual Arts and Hospitality and Catering assessments will follow in subsequent weeks.

This is an exciting opportunity for Year 11 to put into practice everything they have been preparing for over the last four and a half years. We also recognise that this can be a stressful period for some students. Our staff are doing everything they can to support them to be successful and to establish a strong benchmark from which they can build towards their final examinations in summer 2027. We look forward to welcoming all Year 11s into school at 8:00am each morning next week for an Exam Breakfast with class teachers on hand to help with any last minute revision questions.

Productive struggle

For all other year groups, our learning focus is productive struggle. Learning should not always feel easy. Our teachers are challenging students, stretching their thinking and encouraging them to persevere when the answer or solution is not immediately obvious.

We want students to develop the resilience, determination and resourcefulness to tackle increasingly challenging work, while knowing that their teachers are there with the right support and tools when needed.

During my visits to lessons this week, I have seen students working in pairs and teams, collaborating, questioning and challenging one another, while teachers circulate, check understanding and provide additional support or greater challenge where appropriate.

These are some of the most important benefits of a calmer and more focused school environment. It is wonderful to see, and something that we should genuinely celebrate. I would like to thank our students for the positive attitudes they are showing and for the investment they are making in their own futures.

Homework Clubs

A reminder that our very well-attended Homework Club runs from 3.10pm to 4.10pm, Tuesday to Friday.

Due to popular demand, we have also introduced an additional lunchtime Homework Club in C12 every day. Students have access to computers, a quiet space to work and additional support from staff when needed. I would encourage students to make full use of these opportunities.

School bus services

I have heard from several parents and carers about frustrations with some of the bus services that students rely upon to travel to school. We continue to work with Oxfordshire County Council to seek improvements.

We are also pleased to share news of two additional services: the AB84 between Benson and Abingdon and the AB85 between Milton Village and Abingdon. Further information can be found on page 3 of this bulletin.

Welcome to our new Parent Governor

Finally, huge congratulations to our new Parent Governor, Lori Hawkins, who was elected earlier this week.

We look forward to welcoming Lori to our upcoming Local Governing Board meeting later this month. Parent Governors play an important role in bringing the perspective of parents and carers to Board discussions, while contributing to the school's long-term vision, values and strategic direction. Thank you to those of you who put yourselves forward for election into this post.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support. It has been a really positive first week back, and I look forward to seeing us build on that momentum throughout this half term.

Best wishes



Alastair West
Headteacher

AFFORDABLE

SCHOOL BUS

TRANSPORT

TO

JOHN MASON SCHOOL

FROM:

BERINSFIELD
DRAYTON
SUTTON COURTENAY
MILTON VILLAGE
CULHAM VILLAGE
BENSON

JOIN THE BUS CLUB

BOOK ONLINE AT:

esuk.vectare.co.uk

AB85: for Drayton, Sutton Courtenay, Milton village
AB84: for Berinsfield, Culham village, Benson

Questions?
Bus.Club@btinternet.com

KS4 Sports Leaders Training at JMS

A fantastic evening of training our new JMS Sports Leaders for KS4.

We look forward to seeing them working with younger year groups and Primary Schools over the course of the Year. Well done to all that applied and attended the session last night.

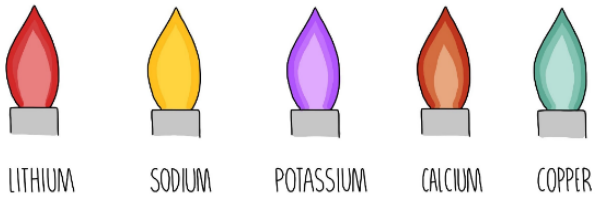


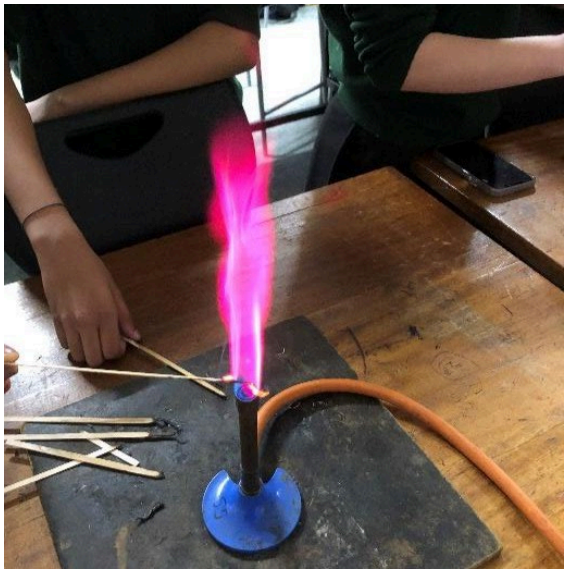
STEM Club

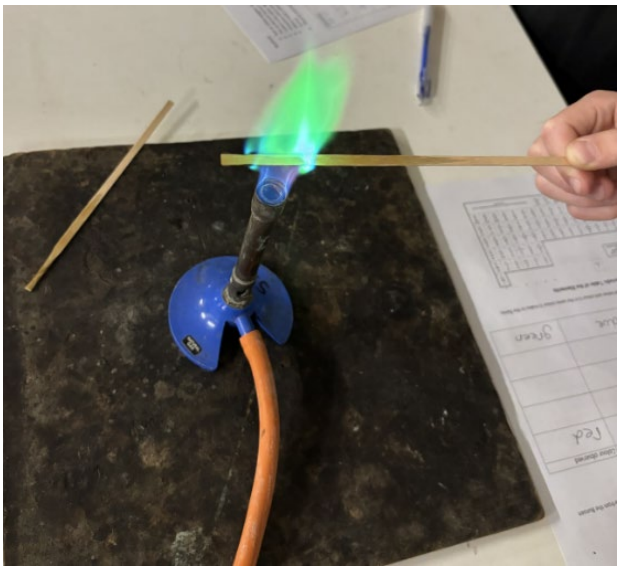
To celebrate Guy Fawkes Night, STEM Club got hands-on with some colourful chemistry by carrying out flame tests on five different chemicals. Students investigated how different chemicals produce different coloured flames when heated, creating their very own mini firework display!

There were two clear favourites: Copper, which produced a striking green flame, and Lithium, which created a vibrant red flame. Students enjoyed predicting the different colours and discovering how flame tests can be used to identify certain metal ions.

A fantastic way to combine science and the excitement of Bonfire Night!







Good news for Homework Club

Our Lunch time homework catch up is now up and running, each day in C12.

This is in addition to the after-school homework club that runs in learning support Tues-Fri 3.10-4.10pm.

Community News



Applications to join the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust Youth Action Group have just opened! The Youth Action Group is made up of a group of committed students aged 11-21, from across Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire who want to contribute to decision-making in their local NHS Trust while building their skills and experience to support them with their future.

This is an extremely popular opportunity with spaces limited to 40.
We are recruiting for new members of the Youth Action Group, and your students can apply to:

- Share their voice & support decision-making within their local NHS Foundation Trust.
- Develop their confidence, teamworking, communication & leadership skills.
- Gain insight into how the Trust operates and potential career paths within Oxford Health.

For more information about this opportunity, please see the linked poster. Applications for the Youth Action Group are open now until 10 a.m. December the 1st, 2026. Please share the application form and poster below with your students and encourage them to apply!
https://bit.ly/OxfordHealthApplication2026

Free Apprenticeship Webinars for Students, Parents & Carers



Please find details of two upcoming webinars that may be of interest to students and their parents and carers.

These webinars support **Gatsby Benchmarks 2 and 5** by helping students and those supporting them understand apprenticeship opportunities and recruitment processes, while hearing directly from employers about what they look for in successful candidates.

Details are below, and promotional imagery is attached should you wish to share these opportunities through your usual communications channels.

Discover apprenticeships at the BBC
BBC apprenticeship vacancies open on the 3rd November. Join this live webinar to hear directly from the BBC about what it's like to be an apprentice, gain valuable insights into the structure and benefits of the apprenticeship schemes, including hands-on training and career development opportunities. The session will also guide you through the recruitment process, highlight what the BBC looks for in applicants, and share practical tips to help your application stand out.
Wednesday 4th November 2026, 16:00 – 17:00
Register here



NavigATE: What to expect from the apprenticeship recruitment process
Securing an apprenticeship starts with understanding the recruitment process. Ideal for prospective apprentices and those supporting them, this webinar provides a step-by-step look at what happens from application to appointment, along with practical tips on how to prepare. Attendees will also hear from the Emerging Talent Lead at the ***Met Office****.*
Thursday 12th November 2026, 15:30 – 16:15
Register here

We encourage students, parents and carers to register even if they are unable to attend live, as all registrants will receive access to the webinar recording and presentation slides afterwards.





OX14 LP

Please find the OX14 LP weekly update linked here, the events calendar can be found here: https://www.ox14lp.org.uk/events/

November

Peer Support Lead training November 17 @ 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm Training for existing PSLs

ChallengED Event – Y8

November 18 @ 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

A collaborative team event for students in Y8 with a focus on STEM.

Please could we also draw your attention to the Atom Society Lecture series. These lectures are held locally and include talks from a range of Scientists and experts in their field. Membership is free for under 18s. We are also looking forward to the upcoming Atom festival with a series of interesting and enjoyable events. Find out more here

Upcoming Important Dates:	
Monday 9th - Friday 13th November	Year 11 Pre-Public Exams
Friday 18th December	School closes 1.05pm
Monday 21st December – Friday 1st January	Christmas Holidays
Monday 4th January	Inset day – No students
Tuesday 5th January	All students return to School

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

Facebook page link here: Facebook page