

24

Guildford High School
A Year in Review



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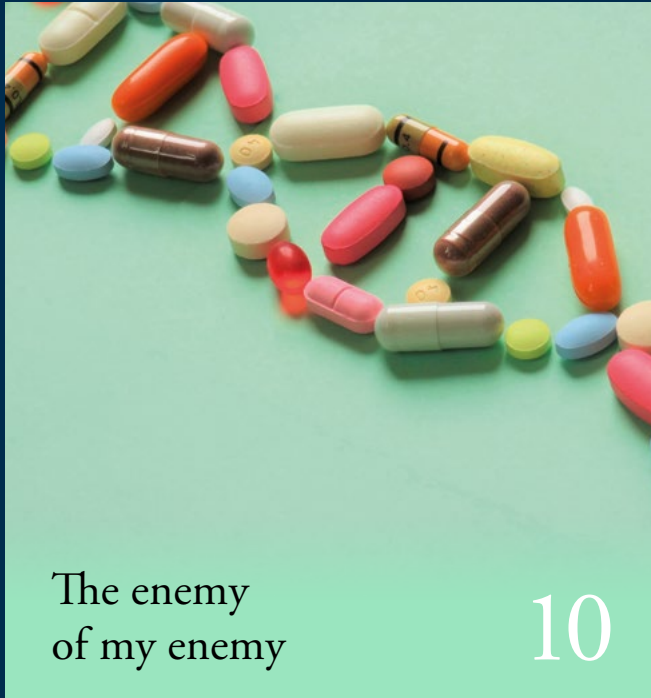
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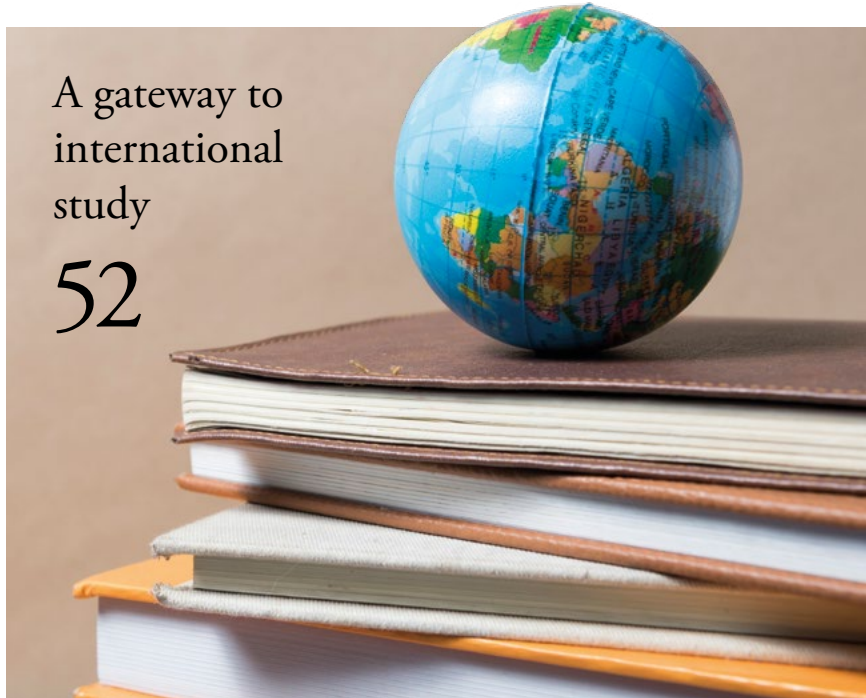
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EVENTS

Head's review of the year

'24 Guildford High School – A Year in Review' celebrates and acknowledges the incredible breadth of a GHS education. Schools today must rise to the challenge of continuing to prepare pupils for the current UK exam system, whilst ensuring we are equipping our pupils with the skills needed to be empathetic leaders of change and adaptable diverse thinkers who are curious, confident and empowered.

Our pupils are exposed to the highest quality education, delivered by outstanding specialists. Our school places emphasis on a love of learning, participation and fundamental knowledge and skills that will be utilised long past GHS. With the emergence of Artificial Intelligence the future workplace looks ever more unknown. The journey that is a GHS education, right from the word go, prepares our pupils to go into this world with confidence, skills and excellence.



'24 is designed to inspire you with our thoughts on the year and current educational topics, and to provide an insight into the passion and expertise of our staff, both for their subjects but also the art of teaching. The breadth of subjects studied through the GHS curriculum and the passion with which they are taught and valued sets a firm broad, foundation for all our pupils. I hope you will also begin to see how subjects connect – how each allows for mastery in an individual subject, and that the experiences and skills they provide combine. Understanding of the world comes from seeing the connections between these subjects.

This year, our new bespoke programme of academic enrichment has been designed to highlight these links. We continue to strive to open our pupils' minds and foster curiosity. Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Oracy, Philosophy and Natural History are all taught explicitly. I have personally taken great joy this year in sitting in on enrichment sessions, listening to the journey of the Odyssey and how it links in with so much literature and journalism, hearing how our Year 9 pupils have used satellite technology to track local wildlife, and turning off all technology to take part in our Drop Everything and Read morning.

Through this publication you will also hear from our talented pupils, showcasing their knowledge and skills, voicing their motivations for change and forging their own paths. A prime example, The Singer Symposium – our Sixth Form essay writing competition – included inspiring presentations on a diversity of subjects from Black Holes to the Iraq War. I am sure you will find 'The enemy of my enemy' article on page 10 fascinating.

“

The journey that is a GHS education, right from the word go, is preparing our pupils to go into this world with confidence, skills and excellence.”

Karen Laurie, Head



Pupils develop their leadership skills by sharing their passions, depth of thinking, respect and collaborating with one another. Their breadth of thinking and feeling can be seen across a multitude of societies: the Equalities Society, Modern Languages Ambassadors and Amnesty Team among others. Our Green Team have also been active in embedding an appreciation for the environment through education, scientific understanding and practical efforts to encourage our school community to live more sustainably. Our broad curriculum embeds skills, explicitly and implicitly, ensuring our pupils find their own passions and potential, and have an academic educational experience that allows them to tackle any path they choose.

The role we play as educators, peers and parents in building confidence in our young people underpins every aspect of school life. This confidence is built through many aspects.

Confident teamwork was showcased this year in the musical productions of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat and Oliver, and the creatively brave production of Chaos. A plethora of sporting success, both individual and team, are a credit to a bold athletic development programme giving access to sport for all, as well as supporting athletes reaching the highest national levels.

“

‘24 hopes to inspire you with our thoughts on the year.’

We continue to embrace friend of GHS and Olympian, Greg Cackett’s idea of ‘compassionate competition’ as we work to build physical literacy for all pupils. This among other initiatives ensures the ongoing wellbeing of our community. The May Concert is a standout example of individual and collaborative excellence achieved through hard work and respect – an individual playing a piano concerto supported by 70 fellow musicians who together form the Symphony Orchestra, was breathtaking. The concert was a testament to what can be achieved when a purpose and passion is shared by all its participants. These activities bring with them challenge, emotion and, above all, friendship.

Finally, we hope that ‘24 will give you a glimpse into our pupils lives beyond the school gates, and into the world. We share insights into an increasing migration to overseas universities and closer to home, how we work with local partners to build community in Guildford and its surrounds.

I feel incredibly fortunate to be Head of this school, which is built on respect, kindness, compassionate relationships and inspirational teaching and which offers an exceptionally broad education that is rich, fun and enduring!



Drama

Mesi P–K, Year 12

Out of the





When I first auditioned for *Chaos* by Laura Lomas, I had no idea what it was about. Of course, I did my research, but I was still left confused as the publisher's website wrote only this: *'A girl is locked in a room. A boy brings another boy flowers. A girl has tied herself to a railing. A boy doesn't know who he is. A girl worries about impending catastrophe. A woman jumps in front of a train. A boy's heart falls out of his chest. A butterfly has a broken wing.'*





Laura Lomas's play *Chaos* is a symphony of dislocated and interconnected scenes. A series of characters search for meaning in a complicated and unstable world. Bouncing through physics, the cosmos, love and violence, they find order in the disorder of each other.

All the information this gave me was that the play was very aptly named *Chaos*. But then the rehearsal process began. We sat looking confused at the brightly colour coded Excel chart that was our cast list, then began to read the play together. One of our castmates even made a huge mind-map, finding all the places where the stories linked. Slowly it all started to make sense – the butterfly, the boy, the train station, the ball – I could begin to appreciate how intricately and beautifully written this play really was.

Chaos is best described as a cacophony. A girl passionate about climate change, a butterfly with a broken wing, an unrequited love, a sibling relationship. All one after the other. The epitome of this cacophony is perhaps the penultimate scene. In this, all the story lines begin to come together, in a jumble of chalk, bouncing balls, assorted colours of yarn and key lines said repeatedly. As fun as this scene was to work on, it was also a massive challenge. It required concentration, an exact knowledge of what you're doing at any given time, and (most importantly) teamwork. This teamwork was a key feature of the cast, with members ranging from Year 10 to Upper Sixth, as we all had to collaborate to untangle the plot effectively and portray our characters authentically. *Chaos* is an ensemble play which offered a variety of ways to showcase both individual and collective talent; with some scenes requiring the whole cast on stage!

We became a tight-knit cast and crew who could trust each other and have fun together – although much of this should be credited to our director Mr Jones, who prioritised harmony within the group, always giving us fun (though rather competitive) warm-up activities and created what we called a 'compliment circle' before each performance, allowing us to appreciate each member of the production's team.

During one rehearsal, another castmate made a comment that stayed with me throughout the play. They said, "*Chaos* is like being inside a teenager's brain." We discussed this at length, and the more we talked, the more we realised how relevant this play actually was. Whether it was having a crush, your sibling annoying you, problems with your parents or feeling anxious, *Chaos* had something for everyone. And when it all came together in a mess of colour and sound and confetti, it created something beautiful. So maybe, on a deeper level, the play teaches us to find beauty in the mess, to find harmony in the chaos.

Overall, *Chaos* was a quintessential example of drama at GHS. It was the perfect mix of collaboration, creativity, and cleverness, thus creating an absolutely captivating piece of theatre that all audience and cast members could fully immerse themselves into.

Partnerships

Jennifer Hall, Director of Partnerships

Ripple effect:

The power of school partnerships in building stronger communities

At the heart of all partnership work, in school life and beyond, are relationships. Time spent getting to know one another, understanding each other's goals and challenges, where common ground lies and how you could work together is always a worthwhile investment. It is this investment in 'tea and chat' that lays the foundation for reciprocal, productive and sustainable partnerships to be built. Such partnerships create a more vibrant, inclusive community for us all.

In addition to our membership of United Learning, over the last four years Guildford High School has focussed on building and growing our relationships with local schools and community organisations. We work with many of our local schools and are a founding member of the West Surrey Partnership. The latter is a cross-sector, cross-phase partnership involving over 25 schools in and around Guildford. We aim to work together for the mutual benefit of all pupils and staff regardless of school, situation or background.

I am frequently asked, what's the purpose of partnership work? On the surface, it is easy to see how the sharing of our resources and expertise may benefit our partners. What is less seen, is how we also benefit greatly.



Frances Tophill visits the GHS school garden for a workshop with our partners.

The self-confidence that is built when you can share your love of reading with someone much younger than you who isn't that enamoured with books, the sense of worth and value felt when you return the next week and the book you suggested has been read and loved; the sixth former who is feeling stretched but makes time to get involved, 30 minutes later equilibriums are rebalanced, perspectives have been challenged and perhaps most importantly a new relationship has been forged.

With all our partnership work we endeavour to share our passions. One of our recent projects is in the allotment garden. This year our resident Maths and Politics teacher, Miss Sturge, was named 'RHS School Gardening Champion of the Year'. This accolade was awarded particularly for her dedication to spreading her gardening love with our partners.

Over the last 18 months a group of children from four of our partner schools have visited the garden on a weekly basis. Each group visits for at least half a term, spending an hour in the garden. The children have planted bulbs, sowed seeds, painted raised beds, helped organise the greenhouse and made festive tree decorations – all edible for the local wildlife. The visiting children look forward to each session and we look forward to seeing them, hearing about their weeks and school life. We have regular catch-up gardening sessions with each group allowing us to keep in touch.

Lacrosse lies at the heart of many a sporting life at GHS and so naturally we have been imparting its joys to our partners. What we hadn't anticipated was the true leveller that learning and teaching a totally new sport is – when no one has played it before all are equal, teaching groups of 30 beginners requires different thinking and, over the last academic year, we have shared our love with over 200 primary school children. All have had at least two sessions, all have loved our coach, nicknamed 'the American Katie', and her teaching approach. The sixth formers who have joined us have been challenged to 'teach' their skills and have laughed alongside their younger peers. We've learnt that arming an exuberant, enthusiastic Year 5 pupil with a potential weapon should be approached with caution but the joy on their face when they catch their first ball is a sight to behold. Their enthusiasm is infectious and we return to GHS reinvigorated and, invariably, having learned a thing or two.



GHS coach, Mrs Koi, mid-match with pupils at Loseley Fields Primary School.

“
With all our partnership work, we endeavour to share our passions.”

Since 2020 we have forged a relationship with the Guildford Community Wellbeing Team based at The Hive. They look after the most vulnerable families in our local area. Our pupils have led our Christmas collections for presents, they have organised donations for their Hygiene Bank and, most recently, Easter eggs were donated to Cherry Trees, a children's hospice. Both are local charities at the very heart of our community.

Our partnership strategy is evolving. The ripples that began back in 2020 are gaining momentum. Our relationships are built on trust and understanding. This year we want to have more pupils visiting us here at GHS and more of our pupils involved in our Partnership Programme. The aim is to continue the ripple outward in the hope that we all grow together.

Andrea S, Year 13

The enemy of my enemy

HOW PHAGES CAN BE OUR FRIENDS

In 2015, two professors at UC San Diego went on holiday to Egypt. On the last night of their cruise, Dr Steffanie Strathdee was woken up in the middle of the night by her husband, who had suddenly become ill. At first, she assumed he had food poisoning, and she waited for him to fall back to sleep. After a few hours, she realised that it might be more serious and called for the doctor. He administered routine antibiotics and told them that he would improve.

He got worse, and soon he was complaining of backpain, which did not match the diagnosis of food poisoning. In fact, those symptoms were being caused by pancreatitis, which was induced by a gallstone. But that was the least of their worries. The gallstone had also created an abscess, which was filled with acinetobacter baumannii bacteria.

Dr Strathdee knew about this bacterial species from having worked with it in her university degree. She remembered it as a weak bacterium that was low risk and treated easily, but in just 25 years, it had become a superbug capable of closing down hospitals. In other words, the strain was resistant to every antibiotic. With the currently limited options for treatment, there was nothing the doctors could do. ¹



Dr Strathdee and Tom Patterson.

Phages

(noun)
short for bacteriophages or 'bacteria eaters'.¹

“

Bacteria and the human immune system have always been in a sort of arms race.”

C. Mitchell



Bacterial infections are common and usually treated easily. Over time, however, some bacteria develop mutations which prevent antibiotics from being able to target them. These bacteria form strains, such as Dr Strathdee's husband's, which we are not currently equipped to treat.

The process of antibiotic resistance is increasing at an alarming rate. In 2019 alone, more than 1.2 million people died worldwide as a result of antimicrobial resistant (AMR) infections, and if nothing changes, by 2050, 10 million people are expected to die from these infections every year.²

Bacteria and the human immune system have always been in a sort of arms race, both evolving to counter each other's attacks. Bacteria have incredibly efficient mechanisms for this, such as horizontal gene transfer (HGT) and rapid reproduction.

HGT allows bacteria to pass genes for useful characteristics between organisms, in order to rapidly equip the whole population against the attacker. Bacteria also reproduce at a much higher rate than animals. This increases the frequency of mutations and makes them better at adapting to new environments.³

It is this ability to adapt so quickly that has allowed bacteria to become resistant to antibiotic attack. Though antibiotics have been functional for over 100 years and continue to be used, they fall short of being the fail-safe treatment we hoped they would be. Antibiotics are non-living chemicals, so they cannot mutate to work around bacteria's protection strategies. Once resistance occurs, antibiotics become completely useless. And that is not where the limitations end. Some antibiotics are bacteriostatic, which means they can actually exacerbate resistance. By only limiting growth rather than killing, they allow the bacteria to mutate and then pass on their genes by HGT to create a resistant strain.

There is another aspect to consider when thinking about treatment of bacterial infections. Over time, our attitudes to microbes, including bacteria, have changed. In recent years, the importance of our microbiome has been highlighted, and with it, the incredible complexity of our relationship with these symbionts.³ Using antibiotics, which have such a broad spectrum of activity, can offset the delicate balance of our microbiomes. There is a term for this imbalance of microbial species: dysbiosis – the opposite of symbiosis – and scientists have linked it to a whole host of conditions, including IBD, obesity, and even depression and autism.⁴

As we deepen our understanding of microorganisms and new aspects of pathogenesis are discovered, it is clear that antibiotics are becoming a limited form of treatment. In the case of AMR infections, such as *acinetobacter baumannii*, they are already useless. However, Dr Strathdee was determined to find a solution.

She turned to the archive of medical articles in search of anything about AMR infections. That was when she hit upon an article about phage therapy. Phages, short for bacteriophages or 'bacteria eaters', are actually the most abundant of viruses. However, these viruses are not a threat to us. In fact, they only infect bacteria, which gives them the potential to be used as a treatment of bacterial infections.³

This treatment had rarely been used before in the US, but Dr Strathdee was willing to try anything. After convincing the doctors to attempt this, they worked with researchers from around the world to source and purify the right phages for treatment. After nine months of phage therapy, Dr Strathdee's husband made a full recovery.¹

Although it is relatively new to most people, the idea of using microbes, which are often associated with disease, to benefit us by eliminating harmful bacteria, actually originated around 100 years ago, when bacteriophages were first discovered. Throughout the 1940s, there were some successes with phage therapy, but with complications due to poorly designed experiments and a lack of understanding that phages were highly specific and could not be used to treat all bacteria. Soon after, penicillin was administered successfully for the first time. This was such a massive breakthrough in medicine that scientists ignored early signs of resistance, which were in fact found almost immediately, and it overshadowed any research into phage therapy.²

Despite its recent resurgence, phage therapy has many potential advantages over antibiotics. Most of these rely on our improving understanding of microbiology and the relationship between microorganisms. Crucially, phages and antibiotics are different in many aspects. Rather than being non-living chemicals that we must develop, phages are the most abundant biological entities in the world, found in almost every environment, and they have been infecting bacteria long before we existed. To illustrate just how powerful they are, it would theoretically be possible for just one phage to eliminate a whole population of bacteria, as they will replicate without intervention.^{3,5}

To return to the idea of the arms race, while we can have no hope of antibiotics adapting to target mutated bacteria, phages can and do develop different ways of countering bacteria's mechanisms for protection. Since they first appeared, phages and bacteria have been in a co-evolutionary relationship, both adapting to keep up with one another, and they will continue to do so. If we could manipulate which phages live in our bodies and when, we could have a chance at keeping up with bacteria's efficient adaptations.³

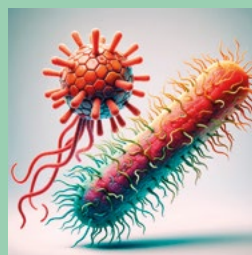
1.2M

People died worldwide as a result of antimicrobial resistant (AMR) infections.

It is important, when considering phage therapy, to question the negative connotations associated with microbes, and to remember that ideas about 'good' and 'bad' microbes were invented by us and do not capture the complex relationships that we have with these entities. Often, microbes are associated with uncleanliness and disease or thought to be 'unnatural'. However, we now know that phages exist in our bodies in vast numbers. It is currently estimated that as much as half of all the biological matter in our bodies is not human, and the most numerous entities in there are viruses.⁶ Phages already form part of our own immune system, fine-tuned to infect disease-causing bacteria and leave the rest of the microbiome unharmed.³

Perhaps one of the most incredible advantages of phages is that they can break down biofilms, one of bacteria's strongest defensive mechanisms.⁵ Biofilms present a large threat to us because they are undetectable by the immune system. Bacteria form biofilms by attaching themselves to internal tissue and altering their behaviour to become unrecognisable. By exhibiting an altered gene expression, which lowers their metabolic rate and frequency of cell division, they can remain undetected. To this end, bacteria can inactivate their antigens, so that antibiotics and human immune cells cannot target them. Furthermore, biofilms sometimes activate the innate immune system, but, unable to target the bacteria, this actually exacerbates inflammation and damages surrounding tissues. Unharmed, the bacteria slowly multiply, and can return as an acute infection. One of the few treatments that have been found to work on biofilms is phage therapy, as bacteriophages have a vast variety of powerful enzymes, which can destroy the biofilm structure.^{7,8}

However, just like antibiotic treatment, phage therapy has some drawbacks of its own, which must be considered. Some of the features that make phages so useful can also cause complications. The fact that phages are so specific means that before administering them, doctors have to identify the species that the patient is infected with in order to find the correct phage. This is not always a simple process, and it can take some bacteria several days to grow. Specificity is also problematic when treating open wounds, which can contain vast amounts of pathogens.⁵



Another barrier to phage therapy is the reluctance of pharmaceutical companies to invest in research on this topic. When antibiotics were first discovered, they were popular with pharmaceuticals because the same ones could be taken for almost all bacterial infections, meaning they were in high demand. Phages, on the other hand, are highly specific so there is no single treatment that could be mass-produced in this way. However, by mixing together phages that infect common disease-causing bacteria, it could be possible to boost our immune systems and prevent infections before symptoms begin. This kind of treatment could be taken regularly and would give pharmaceuticals an incentive to invest in it.⁹

Unfortunately, phages are not a simple solution to the antibiotic resistance crisis. Bacteria can still become resistant to them. However, scientists are coming up with strategies to avoid this, such as ‘phage cocktails’, which are combinations of phages that attack the same bacteria in different ways to reduce likelihood of resistance.²

It is clear that there are drawbacks to both antibiotics and phages. However, treating them as mutually exclusive denies the existence of a third option: the use of both treatments combined. A recent study, in which mice were infected with *S. aureus*, found that the maximum reduction of bacterial volume was obtained when both phages and antibiotics were used simultaneously to treat the infection.¹⁰ This is due to phage-antibiotic synergy. It has been found that administering sub-lethal doses of antibiotics in phage-infected bacteria significantly increases the size of phage plaques. Equally, the use of phages to eliminate bacteria seems to prolong or even restore the activity of antibiotics against specific bacteria. Perhaps this is not a case of choosing between one treatment or the other, but of exploring the ways in which they can co-exist and improve each other’s functioning.¹¹

There is no doubt that the world of phage therapy is one full of opportunity and potential. There are countless ways for phages to be used to our advantage, some of which we have not even entertained yet. The field of genetics is one that has also made huge advancements in recent years, and it will certainly have some impact on the way in which we use phages.



It could be possible to boost our immune systems and prevent infections.”

One exciting possibility is for phages to deliver CRISPR-Cas technology to bacterial hosts to irrevocably destroy their DNA. Another is to genetically modify phages, so that we can manipulate them further to benefit us.²

Although the threat of antibiotic resistance is worsening and it may seem that our options are limited, it is crucial to remember that in many ways, we are not alone in this crisis. Constantly, we are carrying around a whole ecosystem of microorganisms that live in symbiosis with us. Just as it is essential to fend off infections that threaten our health, it is essential that we keep our symbionts healthy too. As we now know, phages have been protecting us against harmful bacteria since the beginning of our species and will continue to do so. Perhaps by neglecting the essential role they play in our immune systems we have damaged their reputation.³ However, the link between humans and our microbes is vital, and should neither be denigrated nor idealised. The precept that Dr Strathdee once used to describe phages might better illustrate this relationship: ‘the enemy of my enemy can be my friend.’¹²

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Amanda Whybro,
Assistant Head – Wellbeing

WELLNESS WITHIN

Whilst the concept of wellbeing dates back to the time of ancient Greece, when philosophers sought to acquire ‘the good life’, more recently, it has become an explicit part of every school’s provision and part of our social awareness, particularly post-covid.

A great deal of research has been carried out into what constitutes a feeling of wellness, and while there is some variation, overall, its meaning has evolved to become something much more holistic and quite subjective. So, what does it mean to us, and how do we deliver a wellbeing programme that reaches all our pupils at Guildford High School.

The happiness and health of the pupils in our care is our highest priority as we know this will allow them to thrive socially, emotionally, and academically. We work hard to offer outstanding pastoral care, which is reflected in our academic success. Wellbeing is, therefore, intrinsically part of everything we do. The Department for Education carried out research on the impact of pupil behaviour and wellbeing on educational outcomes, and reported: *“Children with higher levels of emotional, behavioural, social and school wellbeing, on average, have higher levels of academic achievement.”* Put simply, academic success stems from supportive pastoral care and an effective wellbeing programme.

For our pupils, a fun and enriching wellbeing programme is fundamental to their school experience, and we recognise the part it plays in their development, helping them to become happy, confident and resilient adults who can positively contribute to society. We promote activities that nourish pupils’ Mind, Body and Soul, which are the three pillars of our programme.

“It is about prioritising your mental health so you can go back to your studies when you need to, but also having a break and having some rather ridiculous fun!”

Natasha L. Year 13

Activities range from ‘Wellbeing Wednesdays’ in the Junior School, through to ‘Community Week’ in the Sixth Form. Wellbeing activities across all years encourage mindful moments such as Lego, colouring, reading for pleasure, developing a sense of gratitude, promoting kindness to ourselves and each other, encouraging self-care and doing activities where we work with our local community, for example, reading schemes and gardening workshops. Year 7 pupils strive to achieve their Alice Award, which involves completing challenges based on our school values, the ‘GHS 8’. This provides a fun opportunity for pupils to tangibly learn these values, which are the embodiment of our school ethos and woven into every interaction within the school day. We have bespoke intranets for both Junior and Senior Schools which provide a safe space to explore questions on friendships and physical and emotional health, with useful links to trustworthy sources that will aid understanding and individual wellbeing.

In 2015, we had our first wellbeing themed week and, since then, our programme has evolved and become embedded in every aspect of school life: curriculum lessons, our academic enrichment programme, our vast extra-curricular provision, our drive for sustainability, careers education, sport, performing arts, and wide-ranging community work.



Wellbeing Week remains on the school calendar and is a highlight for many of our pupils, with traditions such as nature walks, hot chocolates and silent discos. The week comes purposely at a busy time of term and serves as an opportunity to remind pupils of the importance of looking after their wellbeing and ensuring they have balance in all they do. It is also an excuse to have a great deal of fun!

A particular focus of this academic year has been empowering pupils to take agency for their own wellbeing. In Senior School our year started with talks from TJ Powers, a neuroscientist. He discussed the small changes we can take in our day to boost brain chemicals that promote our feeling of wellbeing. Pupils now have a greater understanding of why they feel how they do, and throughout the year we have provided them with opportunities to boost their 'DOSE' (Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin and Endorphins). To empower our pupils in this way, means they will step out into the world as confident and healthy individuals, with a tool kit of strategies and self-knowledge.

GHS is a vibrant and inspiring school and we can be confident that the ancient Greeks would have deemed any time spent as a pupil here, to be 'the good life' indeed!

“Our school community is truly special, through our knowledge of wellbeing each pupil is able to look after themselves and each other. We are empowered to optimise our abilities and seize every opportunity, feeling confident to step outside of our comfort zones to become the best version of ourselves.”

Danya G. Head Girl

“Wellbeing Week reminds us about the importance of mental health.”

Isla O. Year 7

School Matters

Allistair Williamson, Head of the Junior School



The power of 4–18 and the benefits of a through school

In recent years, the educational landscape in the United Kingdom has seen a growing interest in the through school model, catering for pupils aged 4–18. We are proud to be a through school at Guildford High School, welcoming our youngest learners as they take their first tentative steps into formal education and supporting them through their educational journey until they leave us as confident, well rounded and responsible citizens, stepping into the world as young adults. We believe that this model of education presents a balanced approach to learning, providing continuity and coherence throughout a pupil's academic and holistic development. The power of this model is evident across a number of areas.

Consistent values and ethos

From the Early Years to the Sixth Form, pupils are immersed in a culture of respect, integrity and collaboration, shaping not only their academic achievements but also their character and worldview. Our set of core values, the GHS 8, dictates the personal qualities and attitudes we believe to be important for all pupils across our school. These provide the framework for school-wide decision-making and what

fosters a strong sense of community and identity, rooted in shared values and ethos that permeates every aspect of school life. The consistent emphasis on core values helps our pupils develop a strong moral compass and a sense of belonging, preparing them to transition into the next stage of their lives. Additionally, these values ensure pupils' experiences are enjoyable.

Seamless transition

One of the key advantages of a through school education is the seamless transition from primary into secondary phases of education. The continuity in curriculum, teaching styles and school culture facilitates a smoother progression for our pupils as they move through the different stages of schooling. From the beginning of their time at GHS, the Junior School pupils become familiar with the teachers and the facilities in the Senior School. Our Reception children enjoy being read to by the Head, Karen Laurie, in her office at Christmas time. Our Year 2 pupils perform an assembly in the Senior School hall to our Lower Sixth pupils. Teachers and facilities are shared frequently and are familiar. We have a well-oiled transition programme. Our Head of Lower School and Head of Year 7 spend time with Year 6, touring them around the Senior School. Additionally, the pupils benefit from a bespoke transition curriculum, taught by senior teaching staff in senior classrooms. Behind the scenes, leadership and pastoral teams ensure that a rigorous and thorough handover takes place, allowing our pupils to make the best progress possible.

Personalised learning

As a through school, we have the flexibility to tailor our educational experiences according to the needs and abilities of individuals. We get to know our pupils exceptionally well. With a deep understanding of their strengths, challenges and learning styles, developed over years of interaction, we provide a truly personalised journey for every pupil. Pupils engage with the same content across their cohort, which features differentiated instruction in smaller groups for core subjects. This enables us to provide the right level of support and to stretch and challenge as we prioritise the holistic development of each of our pupils, nurturing their academic, social, and emotional growth.

Broad and balanced curriculum

Through schools have the advantage of offering a broad and balanced curriculum that spans the entire spectrum of education, from primary to secondary and beyond.

“
Through schools have the advantage of offering a broad and balanced curriculum.”

Alongside our specialist Junior teachers, we benefit from the expertise of Senior School teaching staff to deliver lessons across the curriculum. We are a learning community where staff branch across the two schools and have considerable knowledge in their subjects, traversing the traditional divide between Year 6 and Year 7. This model creates a staff that intrinsically know how to prepare pupils. Knowledge and skills are being built as soon as pupils enter our doors. In languages, for example, Junior pupils are exposed to three languages over their seven-year journey, developing confidence and moving into the Senior School having developed a platform for success. Our comprehensive approach enables pupils to explore a wide range of subjects and disciplines, discover their interests and passions, and develop a well-rounded skill set that prepares them for higher education and the workforce.

Enhanced collaboration

Sharing the same site, our Junior School benefits from our proximity to Senior buildings. The Sixth Form centre backs onto our Reception outdoor learning area, linking our youngest and oldest pupils together. We are a whole school community that takes the time to celebrate and mark important points in a school year together, whether it is Wellbeing or Kindness Week, the festive season or the love of books on World Book Day. We believe these form part of a holistic school experience. Senior School pupils regularly return to the Junior School to say hello to their past teachers, present at Junior School assemblies or read with our Pre-Prep pupils. This is reciprocated with our youngest learners sharing their class assemblies. All pupils benefit from this.

There is no equal alternative to providing the continuity and stability of a through school education. Our pupils enjoy the comfort of a place where they can grow to be themselves, challenge themselves and make lifelong connections, which empower them to thrive academically, socially and holistically from the early years to adulthood. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, through schools stand out as a beacon of innovation and excellence, and we believe that what we do at Guildford High School is testament to this.

Natural History

Sharon Howitt, Senior Teacher, Sustainability Lead



A pioneering course: embedding Natural History in the curriculum

Nature Deficit Disorder. This term was first used in 2005 to highlight the damage being done to both the mental and physical health of children by increasing alienation from the outdoors. But since the 1980s, the Japanese have been encouraging shinrin-yoku, a national pastime of spending more time in nature to enhance health and happiness.

There are now over 1000 impressive scientific studies, underlining the physiological and psychological benefits of connection with nature. Walking amongst trees reduces levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, while improving mood, lowering anxiety and delivering a boost to the immune system from breathing in phytoncides, which trees emit to protect themselves from germs and insects. These essential oils made up of antimicrobial properties, means blood pressure is reduced and we have an increase of levels of adiponectin, a hormone that regulates the metabolism of lipids and glucose, thereby protecting against heart attack and even diabetes.

“

In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand and we will understand only what we are taught.”

Baba Dioum

But perhaps all this science is a little unnecessary. We all know the magic of a walk through a sea of bluebells, listening to the songs of birds in the trees, feeling sunlight streaming through leaves. Even thinking about it calms the mind.

This year we are the first school to introduce the subject to our whole Year 9 cohort (a new Natural History GCSE is planned in 2025). The aim is to continue to inspire a fascination about the rich and diverse natural world, engendering a lifelong curiosity and a commitment to safeguard it.

We are delighted that pupils are developing a deeper understanding of flora and fauna and are enjoying exploring how the natural world has been shaped and has evolved, alongside ways in which humans influence, conserve and protect it.

The year starts with the topic 'Flora and Fauna', highlighting the diversity, complexities, and interconnectedness, of life on earth in contrasting habitats. 'Life in the Early World' explores the fossil record, dinosaurs and the rise of mammals.

The topic 'Human Impact on the World' explores farming and land management, conservation methods, marine and nature reserves and invasive species. The course helps to build a culture of knowledge and awareness of other groups of people, plus tolerance and respect with exploration of differing views towards conservation around the world, how different indigenous groups interact with biodiversity and how different people respond to the natural world e.g. in music, art and other creative expression.

Pupils are being equipped with skills to support and extend their learning in both arts and sciences: practical skills such as observation, sampling and recording and wider skills such as collaboration, oracy, research, analysis, written communication, digital and creative skills. We see learners who are more confident, resilient, informed and independent in Natural History lessons and beyond.

Pupils can experience the health and wellbeing benefits from engaging with the natural world, not just while they are at school, but in the future. We see an increasing number of alumni in careers where an understanding of Natural History is vital; so many roles today require an understanding of concepts of sustainability, critical thinking, and solutions-focused action planning.

“

To a person uninstructed in natural history, his country or sea-side stroll is a walk through a gallery filled with wonderful works of art, nine-tenths of which have their faces turned to the wall.”

Thomas Huxley



Science

William Hack, Head of Science

Closing the ‘Dream Gap’

A recent campaign by Mattel, the makers of Barbie, has highlighted a persistent societal issue that has been characterised as the ‘Dream Gap’. Based on research carried out at New York University, this is the idea that, from a young age, expectations on girls in terms of ability and future careers are capped in a way that doesn’t occur for boys.



Some telling statistics have been uncovered; for example, parents are three times less likely to give their daughters a science-related toy, and twice as likely to Google “is my son gifted?” than “is my daughter gifted?”. Subconsciously or not, girls all over the world are being told that academic disciplines in general, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in particular, are not for them.

And this gender gap in the STEM field persists into adulthood. Research by the United Nations has shown that women scientists are given on average smaller research grants than their male colleagues; that only around one in five professionals in cutting-edge fields such as artificial intelligence (AI) is a woman; that the work of female researchers is underrepresented in high-profile journals; and that they tend to be less well-paid and are often passed over for promotion throughout their careers. In spite of the fact that many employers and research institutions are seeing a shortage of technical skills in the workforce, women are still significantly in the minority in fields such as engineering and computer science.

“

Research by the United Nations has shown that women scientists are given smaller research grants than their male colleagues on average.”





Pupils exploring particle physics at CERN, Geneva.

These problems are well-documented and deep-seated, but also worrying. The biggest challenges of the 21st century, from ethical implementation of AI to climate change, will require diverse thinking, and the technical know-how and problem-solving skills of scientists, engineers and technologists, irrespective of gender. Despite worldwide improvements in gender equality, there is clearly a huge amount of untapped potential in those talented women and girls who, either through their own choice or someone else's, are not ending up in STEM.

The causes of this imbalance are, of course, complex, but one explanation often put forward, at least in the UK, is one of 'pipeline': put simply, there are fewer female STEM graduates because fewer girls choose to study STEM A Levels. In 2023, the Royal Society published the results of their 'Science Education Tracker', and this assumption was borne out by the statistics. For example, only 5% of female pupils chose Physics A Level, compared to 18% of males, and 22% of female pupils chose Maths compared to 37% of males. Encouragingly, the opposite trend is observed in both Biology and Chemistry, but even so, it seems that subjects historically seen as the preserve of men often remain that way, even in our much more equitable age. The 'Dream Gap' might be narrowing, but it is not being closed.

So, overall, the picture is challenging. And yet, every year, GHS pupils are bucking these trends, and ensuring that confident, well-trained female scientists are joining the ranks of STEM undergraduates. To take the class of 2024 as an example, 21% of the cohort have chosen physics A Level and a remarkable 57% have chosen Maths, with most of those combining this with Further Maths and/or at least one other STEM subject. While, at the time of writing, their results are not known, they can certainly take encouragement from the performance of their predecessors. In 2023, 39% of both Chemistry and Physics A level grades were A*, compared to national figures of 8.5% and 10.9% respectively, while an astonishing 55% of biology grades were A*, compared to 8.4% nationally. As well as being extremely successful in these subjects, the pupils clearly enjoy them too, as shown by the course choices of the 2023 leavers: thirty are now studying what might be termed 'pure' STEM courses such as Physics, Chemistry, Biochemistry, Engineering, Chemical Engineering and Mathematics, and this does not even include the huge successes in Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine. In terms of both quantity and quality, GHS pupils are doing their bit to shift the dial and move the numbers in a more positive direction.

What are the reasons for this success, and how does the Science Faculty at GHS provide an environment in which girls feel empowered to pursue science subjects at university and beyond? There is, of course, no single answer to this, but discussions with both staff and pupils reveal some key themes, all of which combine to ensure that STEM provision is of the highest quality and GHS leavers are well placed to join the next generation of world-class scientists and engineers.

Firstly, successes in all disciplines are recognised and celebrated at GHS, ensuring that each pupil is encouraged to find their own passions and pursue their own interests, with no limits placed on their potential. This is certainly the case in science. Older pupils frequently achieve outstanding results in both national and international STEM competitions, acting as role models for the younger ones who naturally believe that they can do the same.

Examples include the multitude of gold certificates in both Senior and Intermediate Olympiads across Biology, Chemistry and Physics, teams reaching the national finals of the prestigious CanSat competition, and huge participation in robotics and computer science competitions. As well as competitions, there is also great emphasis on enjoyment, perhaps no more so than during Science Week every March, when pupils of all ages and abilities get involved in exciting activities that illustrate that, as well as its importance, STEM is incredibly fun! Science is a prominent subject in the school and all pupils are encouraged to believe not only that it holds a place for them, but that they can achieve great things in the STEM field.

Another major source of inspiration for our pupils is the huge range of trips that take place, bringing science to life and demonstrating the transformative effect it can have in the real world. Trips can be relatively local, like the Innovation Academy at Brooklands Museum, or the chemistry practical sessions at Southampton University, that showcase to our pupils what a future in STEM might look like. They can also take pupils all over the country, and indeed the world, to some of the most important sites in the history of science: from Bletchley Park, to NASA's Johnson Space Center in Texas, to CERN in Geneva, to the Florida Everglades, our pupils seize every opportunity to enjoy hands-on STEM experiences, getting a feel for the big picture of what science has achieved and where it is heading in future. Such experiences can be hugely important in shaping young people's perceptions of where science might take them, staying with them for the rest of their lives.

While competitions and trips offer incredible opportunities, they must always be complementary to what happens day-in, day-out in the classroom, and the teachers and technicians in the Science Faculty engender an incredible atmosphere of shared purpose; namely, the pupils' success. The expertise of the teachers, both in subject knowledge and teaching pedagogy, ensures a supportive yet rigorous environment, in which mistakes are encouraged and pupils know that each lesson will stretch and challenge them.

“

The ‘Dream Gap’ is real, but if GHS pupils have any say in the matter, it will not be for much longer.”

The strong emphasis on practical work ensures that pupils develop the experimental skills that underpin all scientific progress, as well as providing the moments of ‘awe and wonder’ that make lessons enjoyable and memorable.

And, of course, there are the teachers themselves! Research has shown that having role models of the same gender can play an important part in subject choice for both boys and girls, as well as pupils' belief in their own ability to succeed in that subject. In the physics, chemistry and biology departments at GHS, there are inspirational female teachers who are role models for their pupils; PhDs and MScs abound, and many of the teachers have had varied careers that took them into a wide range of jobs before they entered the classroom. These teachers are hugely knowledgeable and technically skilled, and they combine teaching expertise with a passion for their subject that is nothing short of inspirational.

And the list goes on! In a myriad of ways, both large and small, the science department mirrors the outstanding successes of GHS as a whole, with each pupil supported to reach their potential and given an incredible grounding that will underpin their future success. The ‘Dream Gap’ is real, but if GHS pupils have any say in the matter, it will not be for much longer.



Hands-on learning of statistical ecology, A Level Biology field trip.

Drama

Notes on a show from cast and crew...



Following five months of fun, foot-tapping rehearsals a stellar cast, crew and band came together to perform a Lower School production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.



“

Musical theatre has the ability to connect with mass numbers, from the actors to the live band, tech crew and creative directors, establishing an unwavering sense of community and a chance to influence audiences of all ages and backgrounds. The sheer euphoria that comes with performing is built on hours upon hours of hard work and dedication, which finally paid off when the cast left the audience with a vibrant and ‘technicoloured’ finale. An unforgettable moment of unity, exhilaration and joy.”

Izzy B. Sound Operator – Upper Sixth



“

The brothers were probably the most versatile characters. We went through major emotional shifts from irritated, blood thirsty, guilt-ridden, desperate and finally joyous. It was so rewarding to see the choreography and harmonies come together!”

Hanhan Q. ‘Napthali’ – Year 9





“

One of the most rewarding parts was the opportunity to develop my vocal skills. I am a confident actor but a less confident singer, so being able to improve vocally with each rehearsal and performance was really gratifying. The most fun part was being at the heart of the energy and excitement of the show, from big production numbers to lively dance routines, I got to do it all. Plus wear a very sparkly dress!”

Theodora H. Ensemble – Year 9



“

The backstage and tech crew for large school productions are always huge – in this play we had 18 people working backstage and on technical operation in various jobs. Having a big tech crew for productions is always fun.”

Karma M. Assistant Stage Manager – Lower Sixth

School Matters

Duncan Peel, Deputy Head – Academic

Don't fear the test! (at least, not too much)

“In next week's lesson you're going to do a task in silence on the material we've covered in the last few weeks, and I'm going to take it in and mark it.”

“You mean a test, Mr Peel.”

“Absolutely not, no. This is something completely different.”

“It's a test. Why do we have to have a test? You haven't actually taught us anything. Except the German word for cockroaches. And how to bowl an outswinger.”

“Well do the best you can. Spend a bit of time this week looking at the vocab list, I know it is all up there somewhere.”

For the avoidance of doubt, this is not quite what we're aiming for at GHS, vaguely familiar though this may appear to my Year 8s. Nevertheless, tests and assessments clearly loom large in the lives of pupils and, no doubt, parents, and it's a subject to which we teachers devote a good deal of time thinking and talking about. Assessment format is a big topic in education circles, as we seek to ensure that we assess not just knowledge but also the skills and qualities that young people will need in their lives beyond school and university, and that employers value most highly.

But why do we assess? A better question is perhaps: for whom do we assess? Firstly, assessment tells teachers what knowledge and skills each pupil has acquired and where their gaps are, thus informing what to teach next. This is by no means restricted to formal, end-of-unit or end-of-year tests. Teachers informally “assess” pupils all the time, in virtually every lesson: questioning to check for understanding, using the iPads as mini whiteboards with all pupils holding up their answers, little starter exercises re-capping knowledge from a previous lesson; all of this informs teachers how well each pupil has grasped the material and determines next steps. Pupils don't see this as “assessment” because they are not tests in the traditional sense and the stakes are zero. Pupils can and should draw benefit from traditional tests, if they approach them with the appropriate growth-mindset: assessments provide them with an opportunity firstly to revise the material and consolidate their knowledge, and then to see where their own gaps are and how effective their revision has been.



Over time, assessments help pupils to understand their own strengths and preferences, which will help them to make informed decisions about their own futures, like GCSE and A level options choices. We aim, through our reporting, to inform parents of the level at which their daughters are working, as well as their strengths and areas for improvement, and this information is often derived from assessment. School leadership and governors use assessment data to monitor performance and standards and to ensure that all pupils are making good progress.

So, plenty of reasons to assess. All GHS pupils want to do well, and they are surrounded by other high achievers, so it's human nature that tests tend to bring with them, for many pupils at least, some fear of failure. Some fear of failure is good – it indicates high standards and can push us into productive activity. But taken too far, can damage self-esteem and impede learning. We create a culture where it is good to ask questions, to take risks, to make mistakes and to see tests as opportunities for progress. Every day we lower the stakes and reduce the fear of failure. As teachers, we vary the format of assessment: pupils might be assessed on presentations or other oral work, group work, via quizzes or short written assignments. This is a good practice anyway as it requires pupils to apply their knowledge in different ways and mirrors the way that universities increasingly assess pupils, giving them the skills they will need in the workplace.

“

We applaud intellectual risk-taking – having a go and being OK with getting it wrong.”



Encouraging pupils and supportive language is key, and parents need to reiterate these messages, so that parents and teachers are singing from the same hymn sheet. We encourage pupils to see tests as just part of the journey, and an opportunity to learn. No one will remember their mark in an in-class test in five years, or even in six months. We promote the idea that pupils might not get to the right answer straightaway and that a bit of struggle leads to deep learning. We applaud intellectual risk-taking – having a go and accepting we sometimes get it wrong. We encourage them to pay regard to what teachers are telling them about their level and then set realistic, achievable goals. Above all, we praise the pupils often, and tell them that as long as they do their best, we will be proud of them, regardless of the mark.

High psychological safety in its broadest sense is analogous to overall wellbeing. If pupils with high standards, such as those at GHS, feel safe, supported, and free from excessive fear of failure, and have regular boosts to their self-esteem through other activities, there's a good chance that they will take those tests in their stride and maximise their potential. We have great faith in our pupils here at GHS. Not only do we teach them subject matter, we teach them not to fear the test.



Modern Languages

Tom M’Clelland, Head of Modern Languages

Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the

Carnation Revolution

The 25th of April 2024 marked 50 years since the peaceful revolution that started Portugal’s journey from dictatorship to democracy.



Photo by Herve GLOAGUEN/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images.

The Portuguese dictator António Salazar (1889–1970) rose to power during the tumult of the 1920s and provided much-needed stability, but went on to lead a state which held onto power through autocracy, censorship and political violence. After he was incapacitated in 1968, his regime would last another six years. The enduring image of the revolution is the carnations placed into the soldiers' gun barrels. It was an uprising led by lower-ranking members of the Portuguese armed forces, and fifty years on, surviving members of this group are still quoted in the news as highly esteemed 'Captains of April'.

In the 50 years since the revolution, Portugal has joined the European Union (1986), hosted the World's Fair (1998) to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Vasco da Gama discovering the sea route to India, seen its men's football team crowned European champions (2016), seen former prime minister António Guterres reach the position of UN Secretary General (2017), won its first Eurovision Song Contest (2017), and turbocharged a tourism industry which now makes up 15% of the economy and provides 9% of jobs.

That's not to say everything has been plain sailing in the last 50 years. The revolution brought huge instability, with rival militant groups carrying out bombings, attacks, and even an attempted coup, while up to a million Portuguese citizens arrived from the former colonies as refugees, causing the population to jump by nearly 8% in just two years; this meant it took until 1991 for Portugal's economy to recover to its 1974 level. Later, the eurozone crisis saw Portugal take a €78 billion bailout in 2010, and the tourism-centred recovery has led to rents becoming unaffordable for many Portuguese citizens. Most recently, investigations into allegations of corruption in November 2023 brought down the left-wing government, and in the resulting election a far-right party had its first major success in the 50 years since the fall of the dictatorship.

“

My own visits to Portugal have coincided with this period of volatility and recovery.”

My own visits to Portugal have coincided with this period of volatility and recovery. Last summer I saw the posters calling for rent controls so people on the average wage could afford to live where they worked; on Madeira, a local explained the frustration that Madeiran bananas cannot be exported to other countries because they do not fit EU standards; and in Coimbra a guide explained why he gave up his career in law and turned to tourism. I was able to have these conversations, and many others like them, because I took a Portuguese course in Lisbon at the age of 18 and fell in love with both the language and the country, eventually going on to teach Portuguese at Guildford High School.

This year is also a landmark in the history of Portuguese at GHS: it is now 10 years since a GCSE in the language became an enrichment option for Sixth Formers. Alongside GCSE Astronomy, an English Schools' Debating qualification, AS Level Thinking Skills and the extended project qualification, Portuguese forms a unique combination of subjects offered alongside A Levels in the GHS Sixth Form. It is always inspiring to see how pupils use the skills gained in their earlier studies to make rapid progress in Portuguese. It takes less than a term of Lower Sixth for pupils to write essays that normally take three or four years in French, German and Spanish, and by the end of Lower Sixth we can read and analyse literary texts. GHS pupils have gone on to read Portuguese at Oxford and Cambridge, and others have used the language as a springboard to show they are ready to pick up another one *ab initio* at university, or applied their global outlook when going into careers such as international development.

Feature

Susan Kew, Head of Art, Design and Technology

Embracing resilience

The Art & Design pupils at Guildford High School study many different artists to inform and inspire their creative journeys during A Levels and GCSEs. Choosing which artist to turn to for inspiration is an important part of their design process, but with such a wealth of historical and contemporary artists available, it can be a challenging task for pupils.

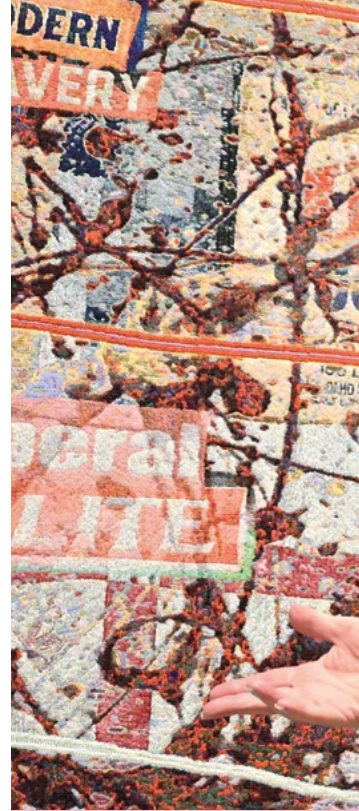
I am often asked who is my favourite artist which is a little like being asked who your favourite child is! However, if I consider my all-time favourites, Grayson Perry is high on my list. Famous for his ceramic pots, the deceptively domestic form of his classical vessels is at odds with the highly personal and dark content of the surface decoration. This powerful juxtaposition in his work is hugely captivating and a transformative experience for the viewer.

Grayson Perry's personal story introduces pupils to the importance of resilience in the pursuit of creative endeavours. Perry's story starts with a challenging upbringing which saw him turn to his childhood teddy bear Alan Measles, to escape reality. This became a beacon in his adult life and the motif of his bear is often repeated throughout his adult work.

At school Perry excelled academically and gained entry to a prestigious grammar school where he discovered his passion for art. He went on to study at Portsmouth School of Art, initially exploring film and performance art at degree level, before rediscovering his love for ceramics later in life.

In the early 1990s, Perry faced the daunting task of establishing himself as a potter in a fine art world dominated by conceptual art. The art scene, epitomised by the Young British Artists, favoured experimental and highbrow concepts, leaving little room for traditional crafts like pottery. Perry's dedication to ceramics, despite its low status in the art world, reflects his determination to pursue his artistic vision. He had become fascinated with the craft and technical skill of making ceramics and the endless possibilities to decorate the surface. He was drawn to the imperfections of the firing process; he never quite knew what was going to come out of the kiln. He had found his medium and the perfect way to channel his thoughts and feelings as an artist.

Despite facing numerous rejections and setbacks, his breakthrough came in 2003 when he was nominated for the Turner Prize, eventually winning the prestigious award. Perry's victory not only celebrated his talent as a potter but also challenged the art world's perceptions of what constitutes fine art.





In addition to his ceramic work, Perry expanded his artistic repertoire to include tapestry, printmaking, and even architecture. His projects, such as 'A House for Essex,' challenges traditional notions of art and architecture, inviting viewers to contemplate the intersection of art and life. One of the most intriguing aspects of the house is the role of the fictional character, Julie Cope. Perry created Julie to embody the experiences of an 'Essex everywoman.' As you move through the house, you encounter Julie's life story through various media, giving us a glimpse into the challenges and triumphs of an ordinary person. Perry himself explains, *"I want people to engage with her as if she was a real person, to empathise with her life and then think about their own lives."*

In the living room, a large tapestry entitled 'A Perfect Match' continues the story of Julie's life in a captivating visual narrative. It's a tapestry filled with symbolism, reflecting on themes of love, loss, and the passage of time. As Perry articulates, *"I see the tapestries as a sort of autobiography through craft. I don't like the division between craft and art; I've always seen them as equal."*

“

Perry's resilience extends beyond his artistic pursuits to his personal life.”

Perry's resilience extends beyond his artistic pursuits to his personal life. His exploration of his alter ego, 'Claire', reflects his courage to challenge societal norms and express his authentic self. He has remained true to his identity, paving the way for greater acceptance, and understanding.

When our pupils study the work of artists such as Grayson Perry, it introduces them to the power of art to challenge preconceptions and spark important conversations. They begin to understand the importance of finding and exploring their own narrative. With an entirely visual subject however, it can require a generous dose of bravery from pupils to successfully challenge personal issues with confidence or push societal boundaries in a public arena. This takes time, fostering a relationship of trust between teacher and pupil is vital and must be carefully nurtured and built on year after year as pupils progress through our school.

This relationship is at the heart of our success in the creative subjects at Guildford High School, where pupils consistently produce thought provoking artwork that offers us a new perspective into their understanding of the world. Their voices ring loud and clear, they celebrate diversity, embrace vulnerability, express personal opinions and navigate their artistic journeys with courage and conviction. In looking to other artists such as Grayson Perry, it reminds our pupils that resilience is not just about bouncing back from setbacks but evolving and thriving in the face of challenges.

School Matters

Ewan Laurie, Assistant Head – Academic Enrichment

Cultivating curiosity through academic enrichment

Academic enrichment has been part of the lifeblood of Guildford High School since our foundation in 1888. Lessons are fast-paced and inherently enriching, developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and approaches that extend far beyond the core curriculum. Our approach allows pupils to maximise their potential, giving them the confidence to thrive both at GHS and beyond.



“

We want our pupils to remain curious throughout their lives and we cultivate that curiosity through inspiring and thought-provoking talks on a wide array of topics.”

Organisations such as the World Economic Forum regularly provide updated predictions of the skills and attributes needed to succeed in the workplaces of the future. Their latest report identifies a wide range of different skills and attributes that employers prize. However, it is difficult for a centralised national curriculum to respond with the dynamism needed to explore and develop these skills, especially against the backdrop of increases in the content of qualifications such as GCSEs and A Levels in recent years.

Whilst our goal is to help our pupils become people who will shape the world, not simply fit into it, our dynamic academic enrichment program allows us to be responsive to emerging trends such as the need for AI literacy, whilst honing key skills, including critical and creative thinking, collaboration and teamwork, oracy, problem-solving, and research skills.

Years 7–9 follow longstanding extracurricular initiatives to develop additional skills and knowledge including annual individual research projects and presentations as well as lessons in subjects such as oracy and economics. In order to continue this skills development through the GCSE years and beyond we have redesigned our timetable, carving out a weekly slot for additional academic enrichment, ensuring this is a priority for all pupils across every year group. These sessions dovetail with the academic enrichment already taking place in lessons and with the wider development of key skills and attributes developed through the co-curricular and pastoral strands of the school.



The Academic Enrichment program is about much more than skill-development. It allows us to develop knowledge and understanding in unconventional subject areas, often blending subjects and deploying the knowledge and experience of our staff and guest speakers to cultivate curiosity, identified as an important “skill,” and encourage pupils to follow their own academic instincts. It helps us maintain breadth in senior years, when pupils take fewer subjects to a higher level, and ensures our pupils remain engaged and interested in a wide range of academic disciplines.

We want our pupils to remain curious throughout their lives and we cultivate that curiosity through inspiring and thought-provoking talks on a wide array of topics. Titles such as ‘Modern Art is (not) Pointless’, ‘Religion & Power in the Crusades’ and ‘The Odyssey’ give prominence to the wider arts and humanities, providing challenge and pause for thought, whereas ‘Underwater Acoustics’, ‘Biomimicry in Design’ and ‘Rewilding’ explore emerging areas of scientific and technological development. Staff showcase their passions and experiences, imparting knowledge and wisdom on topics as diverse as growing up during the ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland to the impact of an ageing population on the NHS.

The program will never stand still and through this unique additional strand in our provision, we ensure that our pupils enjoy a varied, stimulating and enriching education.



Sport

PE and Sport Department

From grassroots to greatness: a holistic approach to sport

We are proud to have been named Top Girls' School For Sport 2023/24, by School Sports Magazine, having held this title for nine out of the last 10 years. In achieving awards such as this, any one of our sports teachers will attest to the importance of participation and sound foundational movement.

The Sport and PE program lessons are inclusive. There is a focus on developing a positive relationship with movement in the younger years, whilst also developing and pushing those with sporting aspirations. For those who are truly on a journey to the top of their sport, the support we provide pupils can either help or hinder their capacity to continue to climb the ladder. There are currently more than 25 Guildford High School pupils progressing along an international pathway in sports, ranging from judo to swimming and lacrosse to diving.

The health, fitness and psychological advantages of youth sports participation are well recognised. However, it can be challenging to sustain enjoyable participation at an expected standard of sporting performance.

Balancing academic work with a high level of training, whilst managing the requirements of competition, coaches, administrators and sports governing bodies, for example, is demanding for young athletes. Furthermore, the transition from youth to senior level competition can be a difficult one without adequate preparation to deal with this change.

Our Aspiring Athlete program aims to develop a specific toolbox of skills to equip our talented pupils to navigate this elite sport landscape. We aim to achieve these objectives through an evidence-informed approach to youth athletic development through four key support pillars.

“

The aspiring athletes' programme has been invaluable. Alongside strength and conditioning and rehab and recovery coaching, gym access, and nutritional talks, I have benefited from advice on sports and life balance, as well as guidance on refining my sports choices as I have progressed to higher levels. It has been a full package.”

Arrabella W. Year 12, U20 England Athletics

Aspiring Athlete four key support pillars

01

Education

Information to develop well informed young athletes who are knowledgeable about sports performance and looking after their body and wellbeing.

02

Pastoral

Providing tailored and individual support to help balance academic workload alongside high level training.

03

Coach

Technical and tactical support aligned with the goals of the athlete and other key stakeholders in their youth sport participation.

04

Strength and Conditioning/ Physiotherapy

Plugging any gaps in the existing provision of each student-athlete's physical preparation. This could include strength and conditioning support, physical profiling, physiotherapy, and/or rehabilitation.



Stages of participation at GHS

03

Elite Referenced Excellence/Performance Stage

The 'Performance' stage exists to support the student athlete who is focused on reaching the top of their sport; they are invested and committed year-round and must balance the challenges of this with their academic life.

Pupils competing at this level have access to a greater level of support from a host of GHS staff, who have or continue to play for or coach for teams at a national and international level. Support from experienced staff, those who have trodden their path, is invaluable, often involving regular collaboration with multiple stakeholders including external sporting academies and clubs, strength and conditioning coaches, parents, and physios. This level of communication is highly nuanced and supports elite athletes on many levels. It can bridge gaps in training and help to manage school workloads and training schedules. It is a constant give and take with the fundamental objective of delivering what is best for the individual student in question. These conversations forge the development of an aligned support network surrounding each student, which compliments the weekly check-ins and in-house mentorship provided by our Head of Performance.

02


Personal Referenced Excellence /Development Stage

The 'Development' stage shifts the focus from participating for personal wellbeing towards challenging oneself; it takes on a more individual approach based on a student's own barometer of 'excellence'. Pupils begin to specialise in a sport and push their performance, whilst still being involved in several sports offered at Guildford High School. Our strength and conditioning program helps pupils to develop general physical qualities like strength and speed, that underpin success and robustness in a number of sports. Most pupils at GHS will maintain this level and take this into their future, continuing to mix the sports they participate in for a variety of reasons, including maintaining social connection and for health and wellbeing reasons.

01

Participation for Personal Wellbeing /Participation Stage (Years 7+)

In the first two years at GHS, all pupils start on the 'Participation' pathway, primarily aimed at engaging all pupils into the benefits of movement. This phase aspires to nurture a positive relationship with movement and provides a host of psycho-social benefits. It works to develop a wide array of foundational movement skills that underpin competence and confidence. With a focus on physical literacy, foundational and fundamental movement skills are developed through games, free play and informal, unstructured/semi-structured exploration. This ethos is integrated in the Year 7 and 8 curriculum, games sessions and supplementary specialist athletic development clubs, for anyone who wishes to develop their physical potential. There are 20 different sports available for Year 7 pupils through our extra-curricular program. At this stage, we also monitor biological maturity to ensure training is appropriate to the stage of each student's development.



Our schools' philosophy is built on the ability to cater for all pupils, whilst also developing and pushing those with sporting aspirations. All pupils will access our tiered programme from the beginning of their time at GHS. Every pupil's journey is unique and this programme allows progression to be fluid, to suit the needs of the individual.

Summary

This is a brief overview of our tiered athletic development program at GHS; an insight into developing the next wave of elite sports leaders, pupils capable of taking the reins for their own journey. Our aims will continue to be holistic, pairing sporting aspirations alongside academic pursuits, and containing multiple entry points to account for the complex and varied timing and rates of maturation that our pupils experience. At GHS we continue to try to push the boundaries of all our pupils, fostering an environment where every pupil finds their own path and continues to embrace the joy of sport in their lives.

Religious Education

Julie Shopland, Head of Religious Studies

Is Religious Education (R.E.) relevant in a modern, pluralistic and more secular world?

'R.E. has certainly changed since my day; all we did was learn about the Bible!'

This is something we regularly hear at parents' evenings, and understandably so, as the subject has certainly changed and for the better. Nationally, R.E. today is characterised by a more varied, exciting, and relevant curriculum, even prompting discussions led by the independent Commission on R.E. published in 2018 as to whether its name should be changed possibly to 'Religion and Worldviews,' to reflect the paradigm shift that has occurred.

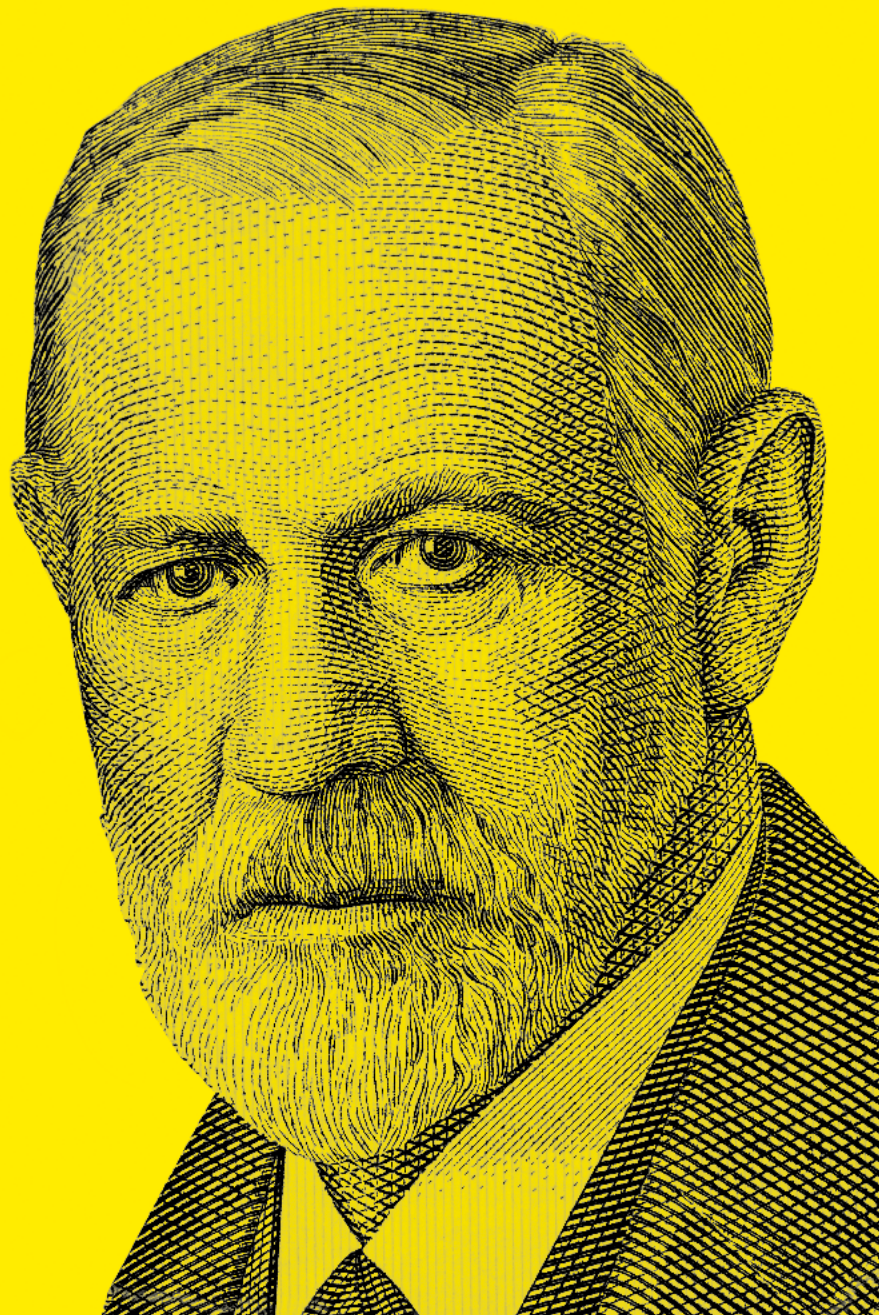
So, is R.E. relevant in a pluralistic world? At Guildford High School, we ensure that we teach the three Abrahamic religions in Years 7–8 and that we also focus on key aspects of Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism in Year 9. Life in modern Britain demands a knowledge of the six major world religions. It has been recognised that one of the greatest achievements of this subject is that it enables children to develop a respect and understanding of people with different belief systems to their own, which provides them with the knowledge they require to be able to interact effectively with those of different faiths in their future workplace. Moreover, it provides valuable understanding when our pupils travel to countries where religion is a key feature of society. I vividly remember a former pupil sending me a postcard in which she excitedly recounted how, whilst visiting a Hindu Temple in India on her gap year, she was able to inform her travelling companions all about Ganesh and Puja as she recalled what she had learnt in her Year 9 lessons. So, in answer to whether R.E. is relevant in a pluralistic world... yes, it is so crucial if our pupils are going to engage effectively with others they meet and work with here in the UK and for a more enriching experience when travelling abroad.

Secondly, the relevance of R.E. in our modern, more secular society is evidenced abundantly by those studying IGCSE and A Level Religious Studies. At both levels, discussion has occurred as to whether the title 'Religious Studies' is actually appropriate and at GHS we have more aptly named the A Level course 'Philosophy, Ethics and Religion' to reflect the equal weighting given to each of these three modules and recognition that the course is not solely 'religious'. The motivation for this change within R.E. came about because so many people in Britain today consider themselves non-religious or humanist. Hence, the government recognised in 2013 that if R.E. is to remain relevant, non-religious views must be studied alongside religious considerations. In the IGCSE course, every topic is studied from a religious and non-religious perspective, and a wide variety of modern issues are discussed from medical ethical topics such as euthanasia and abortion, to legal debate regarding the implementation of human rights and whether capital punishment is ever justified. The A Level course also recognises the more secular nature of the UK and we currently teach topics such as 'The Challenge of Secularism' involving an analysis of the work of Freud, Dawkins and secular humanism.

So, in conclusion, R.E. has changed dramatically since many of us parents studied it at school, and the paradigm shift that has occurred has led it to make a dynamic contribution to our modern, secular and pluralistic world. The philosophical and ethical emphases so apparent in this subject today enable pupils to wrestle with hugely important questions that otherwise would remain unanswered. This subject teaches independence of thought, critical analysis and the ability to grapple with important moral issues, which have helped several of our pupils in their future careers in law, medicine and journalism to name just a few. To leave on a quote, Socrates is believed to have once said, *'An unexamined life is not worth living'*: to examine one's own life and the lives of others from an ethical, philosophical, religious and humanistic perspective is the beating heart of Religious Education today.

“

We currently teach topics such as 'The Challenge of Secularism' involving an analysis of the work of Freud, Dawkins and secular humanism.”





Art – GCSE

The annual A Level and GCSE Art Exhibition is an opportunity for the Art & Design pupils at GHS to celebrate their creativity and hard work. The Private View was full of friends, family and staff as the pupils celebrated their work with pride.

The GCSE pupils explored themes such as Power, Folklore, Nostalgia and many more, inspired by trips to galleries and exhibitions. Contextual studies of other artists' work allow them to understand the influences and journeys of different practitioners that are a vital component of the artistic process.



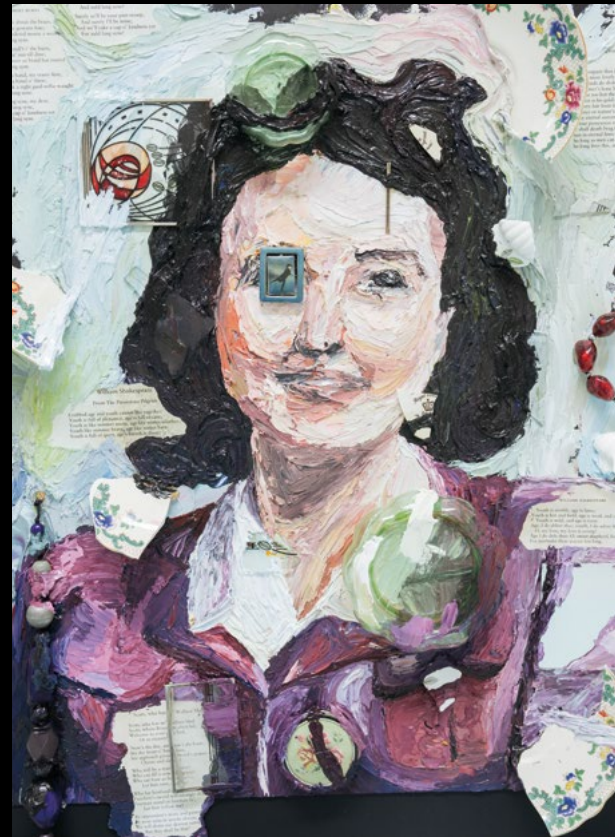


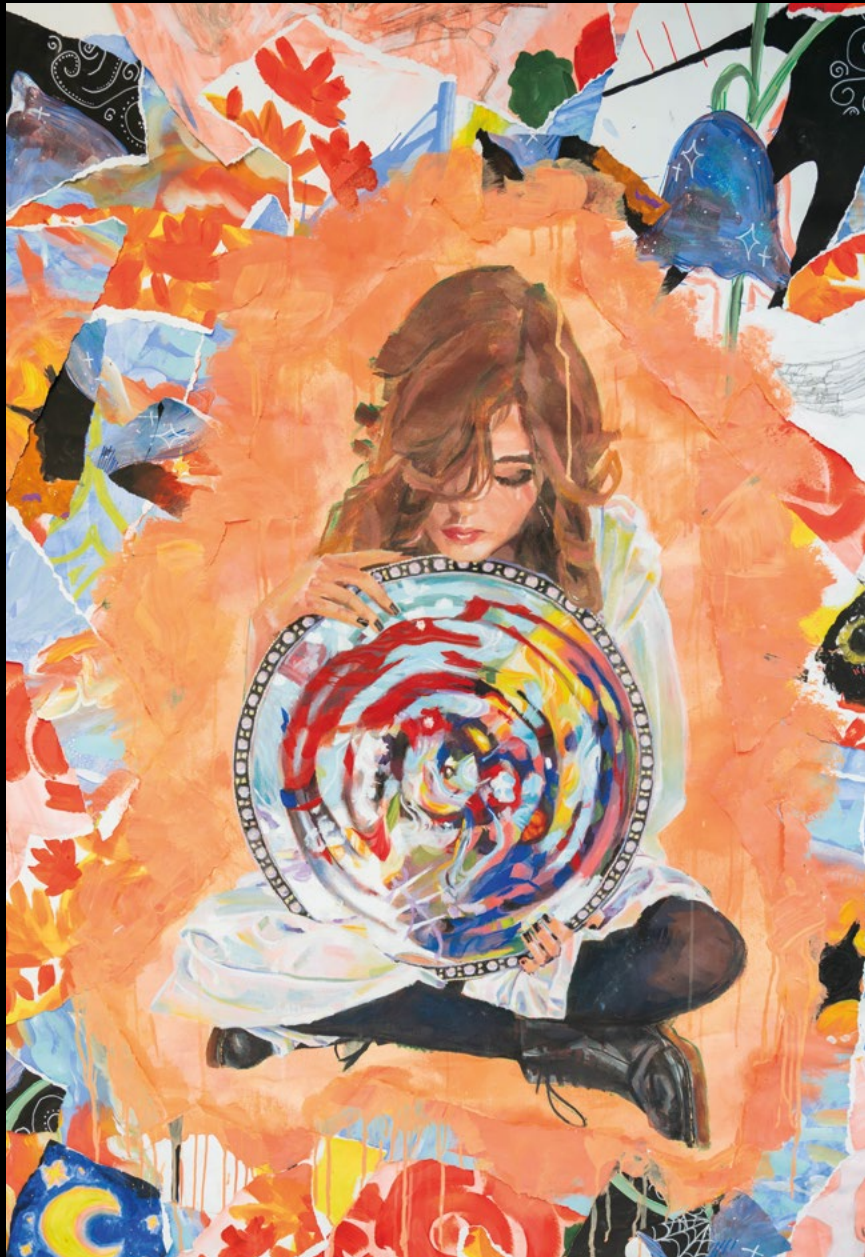
Eva H, Annabella K, Phoebe V B, Maya C, Zara L-D, Laura W, Emilia P, Maya C, Sophia T, Emma W

Art – A Level

A Level pupils pursue their own course of study to direct their artwork as they embark on a personal journey as young artists. They enrich their studies by undertaking weekly life drawing studies and explore a wide variety of media from charcoal, paint to digital animation and installation.

The variety and quality of the work our pupils have produced this year is outstanding, a testament to their creativity and dedication. We have a wonderful sense of community in the Art & Design department with all pupils bringing intellectual challenge and curiosity to their learning each lesson. We hope they continue to record the world around them and question all that they encounter.





Millie G, Hazel T, Emily S, Freya C-F,
Evie R, Hazel T

Music

Emilie Forrest-Biggs, Assistant Director of Music

A day in the life of the Dale Music Room

08:00



Music provides the heartbeat and the rhythm of school life. Over 500 weekly music lessons take place in school and in the next year, our musicians and choristers will take part in more than 35 performances. They will come together to perform in a variety of ensembles, choirs, wind and brass bands, and orchestras. Their musical talents will grace concerts, support school productions, provide pit bands for musicals, and perform at services.

Not only will our musicians take to our school stage and Recital Hall, but they will perform to larger audiences at local venues, G Live and Guildford Cathedral. Further afield, they will sing at St Paul's Cathedral, St George's Chapel, Windsor, and accompany a music tour of Central Spain, taking in Madrid, Castile and León.

These exquisite performances are highlights of our year as pupils reach the highest standards of musicianship and are the result of hours of practice and hard work.

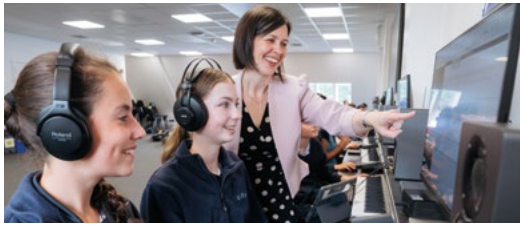
The cultural and educational importance we attach to the learning, playing and enjoyment of music has recently been affirmed by the creation of three new teaching classrooms and eight practice rooms which occupy the upper two floors of a purpose-built Performing Arts Centre, which opened in September 2023.

Every day, these classrooms and practice rooms host a range of activities which exemplify the importance of a music education and how it aligns with the school's mission. Intellectual curiosity is sparked in academic lessons. Resilience is built through intensive practice and rehearsals. Risk taking and creativity is encouraged with composing activities. Positivity about our pupils' gifts and abilities is fostered through the shared experiences of learning and playing together. Responsibility is fostered by commitment to musical ensembles. Ultimately, with a combination of this fabulous new facility, an atmosphere generated by happy pupils and a team of staff fully invested in their success, an extraordinary standard of music is made and the limitless potential of our wonderful pupils is maximised.

We now share with you, how a multitude of moments in the Dale Music Room add up to the magical results so often on show.



12:30



08:00

The day begins with a chamber music ensemble rehearsal practising the second movement of Schumann's Piano Quintet in E flat major. This is a challenging work widely regarded as one of the greatest chamber music pieces from the Romantic period and the pupils learn to work collaboratively and take risks when practising the technically difficult passages. Opportunities are created for players to shine and thrive individually in this selective ensemble, and collectively they clearly enjoy playing this demanding repertoire not typically attempted in many schools.



10:50

A Year 10 GCSE Music class analyses and discusses a section of one of the prescribed set works, the third movement of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto. The study of set works at both GCSE and A Level allows pupils to hone their analytical skills and practise oracy skills by expressing ideas and opinions. It also helps to spark pupils' intellectual curiosity through gaining an awareness of the cultural, social, and historical context of a wide range of compositions.

08:40



A Year 7 class learns about the significance of Samba music in Rio de Janeiro during a practical lesson. Pupils work collaboratively to

perform Carnival Music on authentic Samba instruments and embrace opportunities to build confidence when composing, by breaking off into small groups to compose their own rhythmic patterns.



10:30

An aural class allows pupils to become more confident with the aural requirements of their ABRSM practical examinations. Listening is fundamental to all good music-making, and we place great importance on developing the aural awareness of all pupils at GHS.



12:40

The Lower School choir involves over 60 singers from Years 7 and 8 and they practise and develop their listening and ensemble skills by singing in two- and three-part harmony in a variety of musical styles. The aim of this non-auditioned choir (which is one of the five choirs rehearsed each week) is to foster a love of singing in our younger pupils and to nurture performance skills. It is open to all pupils in both year groups and the care given by staff to ensuring there is a wide breadth of repertoire covered in every rehearsal (which this term alone has ranged from John Rutter's sacred anthem 'The Lord Bless You and Keep You,' to Neil Diamond's 60s Rock classic 'I'm a Believer') ensures that everyone is happy and challenged.

14:45

Year 8 pupils learn typical chord progressions used in Pop on the new keyboards. A typical key stage three class will contain a wide spectrum of performing abilities and experience, yet through carefully differentiated tasks and teacher support, all players build the resilience and confidence to take part. Taylor Swift's 'Love Story' proves a popular performance choice, and pupils support one another to create a roof-raising whole-class performance of the 2008 hit.



13:20

An A level composition class studies the harmonic language and rules of Bach's chorales from the Baroque period and learns to compose in the style of the great master himself. These are difficult academic exercises which equip our pupils with the requisite confidence and skills should their intellectual curiosity inspire them to continue their study of Music after GHS. Pupils regularly extend their love of learning about music and passion for performance at top institutions, including Oxbridge and international conservatoires.



After school

Our 70-strong String Orchestra rehearses a medley of tunes from Klaus Badelt's 'Pirates of the Caribbean.' Film Music is a common thread in the repertoire of the GHS bands and orchestras and can be heard regularly at our Michaelmas and May concerts. The orchestra is aimed at all string players up to Grade 5 standard and our goal is to inspire and motivate them to fulfil their musical potential through well-planned, fast-paced rehearsals. There are also opportunities within this group for our more advanced younger players to develop leadership skills and demonstrate initiative through leading their section.



This concludes a varied and action-packed day that not only exemplifies the key aims and strengths of the music department – breadth and variety of content, large pupil involvement, academic challenge and excellence in performance – but also embodies the aims and values of our school. As the sound of packing away and contented chatter gradually fades, a silence descends on all of the rooms in our remarkable new Performing Arts building for just the briefest of rests ahead of tomorrow's musical feast.

Further Education

We are exceptionally proud of our GCSE and A Level results and are consistently ranked in academic league table as one of the country's most successful schools.

Exam results†

A Level Results



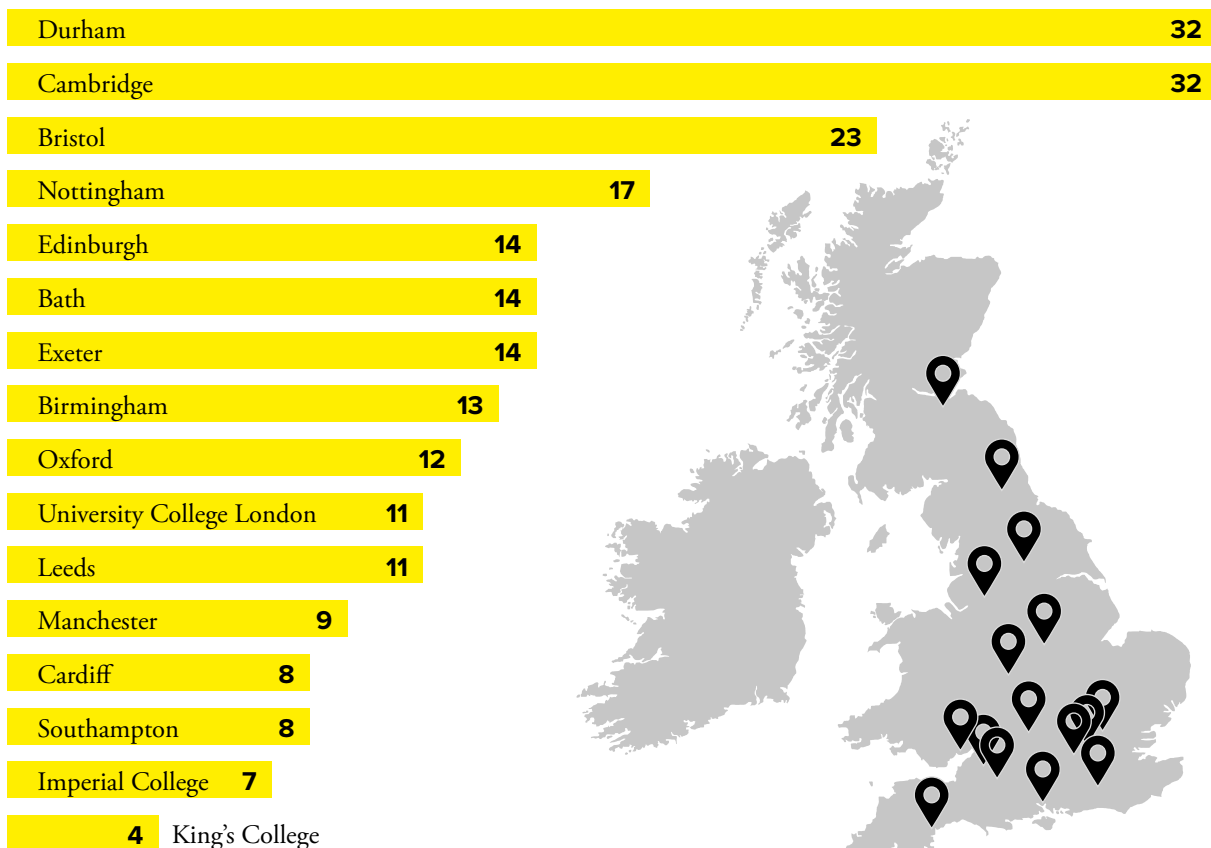
GCSE Results



† 2024 examination results were not available at the time of printing, but can be found on our website.

Destination of leavers


Pupils leave Guildford High School to pursue courses at some of the most prestigious universities in the UK and worldwide. The most popular destinations of leavers between 2021–23 are shown below.



Higher education courses 2023

With more than 30 subjects offered in Sixth Form, pupils leave GHS to study a huge range of disciplines at their chosen college or university. Below is a list of courses taken by the Class of 2023.


<p>Cardiff University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dentistry – Medicine 	<p>London School of Economics and Political Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Economics – History – Philosophy, Politics and Economics x 2 	<p>University of Bath</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Architecture with professional placement – Business with work placement – Economics with professional placement or study abroad – Mechanical Engineering with professional placement 	<p>University of British Columbia, Vancouver</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Biomedical Engineering 	<p>University of Manchester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Zoology with Industrial/ Professional Experience
<p>Durham University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chemistry – Finance – Geography – History x 2 – Modern Languages and Cultures – Theoretical Physics 	<p>Loughborough University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Business Analytics – Product Design Engineering – Sport and Exercise Science 	<p>University of Birmingham</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chemical Engineering – Chemical Engineering with Industrial Study – Medicine x 2 – Politics and Philosophy with year abroad 	<p>University of Cambridge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Classics x 2 – Engineering – English – History and Politics – Mathematics – Medicine x 2 – Modern and Medieval Languages – Theology, Religion, and Philosophy of Religion 	<p>University of Nottingham</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chemistry
<p>Imperial College London</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Biochemistry – Design Engineering x 2 – Earth and Planetary Science with a year abroad – Mathematics and Computer Science 	<p>Royal College of Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Music 	<p>University of Exeter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Geography – History – Law – Liberal Arts – Medicine x 3 – Natural Sciences 	<p>University of Oxford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – German and Beginners' Portuguese 	<p>University of Southampton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Archaeology and Anthropology – Chemistry – Medicine – Software Engineering
<p>King's College London</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Management and Modern Languages with a year abroad 	<p>Royal Holloway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Psychology 	<p>University of Bristol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Biomedical Sciences – Chemistry with study abroad in a Modern Language – Economics and Finance – Geography with study abroad – Mathematics – Psychology 	<p>University of St Andrews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Art History and Classical Studies 	<p>University of Warwick</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Biomedical Science with Placement Year – Hispanic Studies and Theatre Studies – Physics
<p>Lancaster University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Law 	<p>The University of Edinburgh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Theology – Veterinary Medicine 	<p>University of Liverpool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mathematics – Medicine 	<p>University of Warwick</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Art History and Classical Studies 	<p>Williams College, Massachusetts, US</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Liberal Arts



Student Voice
Adya G. Year 13

Moving into Sixth Form

The first term back at Guildford High School after the summer is always, undoubtedly, my favourite. The hustle and bustle in the corridors; the buzz of lively chatter; the excitement of new teachers, new lessons, new classmates. There is always something to look forward to in the Michaelmas term, and the first term of Sixth Form did not disappoint.



The Sixth Form at Guildford High School offers so much. You are guaranteed to have an incredible experience if you grab it with both hands.

Sixth Form is the perfect mix of all the familiarity and comfort of GHS at Lower School level, with an added layer of independence and responsibility. Surprisingly, I don't miss the main school as much as expected, as the joy and chatter of the GHS corridors is easily emulated in our very own space, the newly furnished Common Room. It quickly became the ideal space for everyone to talk, work, and relax together. In many ways, the Common Room has strengthened the sense of community in our year group – there's so much fluidity to see and talk to different people, move from one group to another, and be with everyone at the same time. It has also been great getting to know new friends who have come from other schools and added a new dimension to GHS.

Sixth Form at GHS is very much what you make of it – you are guaranteed to have an incredible experience if you grab it with both hands. The doors and opportunities open to us are endless, whether that's through leadership roles, enrichment sessions, or extracurricular activities. The new focus on enrichment this year has been a highlight – with group discussions on 'Animal Farm', a Sixth Form symposium covering a breadth of topics, and the very-heated interform debating. They have been the perfect mix of engaging – especially necessary on gloomy Thursday mornings – and enlightening, helping us to develop skills and understanding of topics that I likely would not have explored previously. To me, that sums up the nature of GHS Sixth Form – making me think and see things in ways I would not have considered before, and equipping me with skills for eventually stepping into the wider world.

One of the key skills that is honed is leadership. In the Sixth Form, you can adopt one of many leadership roles, taking part in the GHS pantomime, fashion show or GHS newspaper. This year, I have the privilege of being the co-chief editor of the newspaper. It has been an experience second to none – I have absolutely loved the opportunity to rebrand 'The Nightingale', to create and organise something new this year. Alongside my co-editor, I have founded both a 'Journalism Club' for younger years, and 'The Nightingale Podcast' for the whole school to listen and engage with. Although we still have the guidance and support of teachers during this, we largely have the freedom to lead and make the newspaper and our affiliating projects whatever we wish – something that I cherish in the Sixth Form. Having extra responsibility and being trusted and relied upon has developed my confidence, organisation and leadership.

We are also depended upon in the classroom setting. Of course, the teaching remains outstanding and largely the same – but relationships with teachers have matured to become more symbiotic. In the Sixth Form, the nature of lessons is more conversational and laid-back, and our contributions, questions and thoughts are heavily relied on to drive the lessons forward. Being very chatty myself, I love this for obvious reasons, but it has additionally given me so much more control and responsibility over my own learning. Given the style of university teaching, this is invaluable, and I know I will appreciate it when I leave.

I absolutely love Sixth Form at GHS. My experience at lower school level was similarly amazing, and I really relish the opportunity, now, to give back and serve and contribute to the school through leadership and prefect opportunities. I am confident and grateful that my time in the Sixth Form will have given me the tools I need to make a positive contribution, wherever I land next.

Andrew Hadfield, Assistant Head –
Examinations & Futures

A gateway to international

STUDY

Every week, I am engaged in one-to-one university guidance meetings with Guildford High School pupils who are interested in studying abroad.



The growth of international university applications

It's exciting helping Year 10 and 11 pupils to explore the vast array of options available at the start of their Higher Education journey, as well as guiding those in the Sixth Form through applications to top universities around the world. Yet a decade ago, the picture was quite different. Most pupils did not even consider international study and even fewer, sometimes none, applied abroad.

In some respects, this should not be a surprise. The UK is home to some of the finest universities in the world, from the ancient collegiate universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the grand London universities of Imperial College, UCL and King's College to other GHS favourites of Bristol, Edinburgh and Exeter, amongst others. However, depending on which league table you look at there are only 10–15 UK universities in the World Top 100. Over half are in the USA, but many lie in other destinations such as Australia, Canada, Hong Kong and all across Europe.

League tables are not the best measure to decide where to apply, but they can get pupils to start thinking about their options. Being a pupil at GHS puts you on course to be one of the best pupils academically in the UK as well as offering you a vast array of extra-curricular opportunities, so why limit yourself to just the best universities in the UK?

Studying internationally is an opportunity to see the world. Many pupils who choose to study abroad are also leaving home for the first time and will experience the richness of new countries, from foods to customs, traditions and social atmospheres. Along the way you can hone language skills, find new interests and hobbies and make lifelong friends. Many talk about university as a time to build independence and nothing helps that personal development quite like discovering yourself while gaining an understanding of a different culture.

In the globalised world of the 21st century, all of these experiences will be seen as positive by employers as you start your career, post-university. Furthermore, some pupils will love their host country so much that they decide to seek work there – with some countries offering easier paths to citizenship after completing their undergraduate degree.

Perhaps the biggest reason to explore international study is the style of education. At GHS, the main focus for the Higher Education and Careers team is to help everyone head in the direction best-suited to them, whether it is picking the right subject or university environment. Each country has its own distinct style of university education, none more different to the UK than studying in the USA.

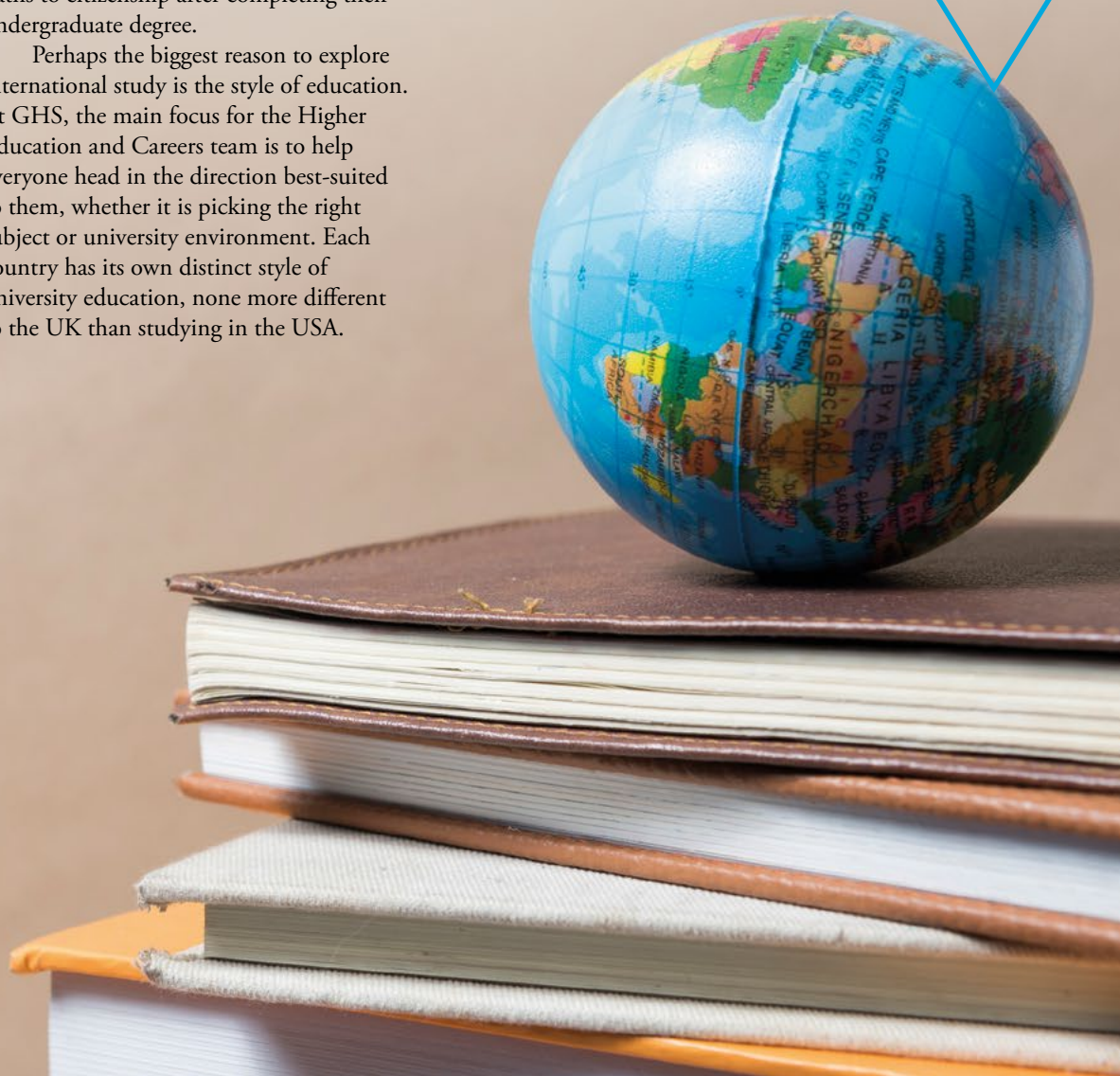


Study abroad is the single most effective way of changing the way we view the world.”

C. Mitchell

50%

Of the World Top 100 universities are in the USA.





A 30% growth in outbound internationally mobile pupils from the UK over the last decade.”

UNESCO

Andrew Hadfield, Assistant Head – Examinations & Futures

In general, the UK has three-year undergraduate courses where you pick a specific subject and only take courses in that subject in great depth, with the exception of a few joint courses. You might have weekly assignments and a set of lectures to attend, but you are often just assessed through end of year exams and larger projects or dissertations.

The numbers of UK pupils studying abroad has been increasingly steadily despite Brexit and the COVID-19, pandemic with just under 40,000 directly applying to overseas institutions. At GHS we have gone from the odd application to over 10% of Upper Sixth Formers applying to universities in the US, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Canada and Ireland. On top of this, 8.4% of UK undergraduate pupils completed some part of their degree abroad. The year abroad option is a good alternative for those wanting international experience, but not wanting to directly enrol abroad – and isn't constrained to only language degrees. Year abroad programmes are available at many top UK universities, and across many different degree subjects.

Part of this growth in interest is due to the wider availability of information through assemblies, ASPIRE sessions, careers bulletins and the Morrisby careers platform. In April 2024, we had our second International University Fair with representatives covering universities from 12 different countries. The international landscape is constantly changing; in 2001 there were just 725 English-taught programmes in mainland Europe; 20 years later there were 27,874. Transnational UK university sites mean you could study Medicine in Malta and obtain a degree from Queen Mary University of London, or a University of London accredited Economics degree studying a year in three different capital cities: Lisbon, Paris and Berlin. There are also joint degree programs such as the one between Trinity College Dublin and Columbia where you spend two years at each university and leave with a degree from both.

Research early!

There are many options out there for international study and the best advice is to research early! It can be a difficult and time-consuming process, but a rewarding one when you head off to your dream university course.

27,874

English taught programmes in mainland Europe, up from 725 20 years ago.

10%

Of GHS' Upper Sixth pupils are applying to overseas universities.



Moving on from GHS, Linnea B.

Deciding to apply to US universities was a big decision and one that took a lot of time, thought and dedication. After my first year at Williams, I am confident this was the right decision for me. Williams is a very rural and small liberal arts college located in the mountains in western Massachusetts. Every day I am so grateful to be surrounded by such beautiful scenery and have access to the ski resort that is only 20 minutes away from campus! Another one of my favourite things about Williams is my ability to take classes in any subject, even ones I am not considering majoring in or have never had the opportunity to learn about before.

The US is a great place for anyone who is not sure what exactly they want to study yet, as you only decide two years into the four-year degree which subject or subjects you want to major in. Williams is a small university which fosters a strong sense of community and has smaller class sizes (most of my classes have around 15 people. I find all my professors to be truly invested in their pupils' education and take the time to get to know each student in their class.

Although it was a big decision, and one that took a lot of courage to make, coming to the US for college has definitely been the right decision for me, and has allowed me to explore all of my interests. There are so many great universities abroad, all with their own unique attributes and draws – it really is worth doing some research to find somewhere that feels right for you!



Contact Us

Contact details

London Road,
Guildford,
GU1 1SJ

01483 561440

admissions@guildfordhigh.co.uk
guildford-office@guildfordhigh.co.uk
guildford-junioroffice@guildfordhigh.co.uk

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