



King Edward's  
WITLEY

FEBRUARY 2025

# LEARNING JOURNEYS

# WELCOME

## ANTHONY KIRK-BURGESS



Welcome to our latest Learning Journeys newsletter, highlighting a range of academic developments and stories at our school. In last term's edition, I explored the importance of active, as opposed to passive, learning and, in this edition of Learning Journeys, I would like to take this a step further by discussing the concept of learner agency, which we actively encourage at King Edward's. Learner agency is the feeling of ownership and sense of control that pupils have over their learning. Agentic pupils are motivated not only to learn but also to take responsibility for the learning process, whereas pupils with low agency believe that it is someone else's, such as teachers or parents, responsibility to direct their learning. Learner agency is about giving children the tools, confidence and autonomy to make choices about how they learn, set goals and reflect on their progress.

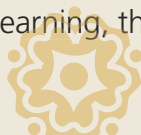
It can be thought about in this way: when a child is given the freedom to explore topics that interest them, pursue projects that excite them and engage in learning in ways that suit their strengths, they develop an intrinsic motivation to learn. They don't just study for a test—they seek knowledge because they are genuinely curious.

Learner agency is more than just a trendy concept; it has real and lasting benefits for children, both academically and personally. It develops independence and responsibility, leads to deeper understanding and better retention of knowledge, and equips children with the essential skills of problem-solving, time-management and the ability to prioritise. By doing so, it prepares pupils for real-world challenges and encourages lifelong learning.

At King Edward's, we foster learner agency as part of our day-to-day teaching. We recognise that teachers play a vital role in nurturing agency by encouraging exploration, autonomy and responsibility. This can be seen in how we challenge our pupils to expect more from themselves, for example by highlighting and celebrating the success of our 'world champion' GCSE pupil, highlighted on page 4; how we promote critical thinking, problem-solving and debating skills through our curriculum and in our Academic Scholars programme featured on page 5, and our encouragement of pupils to lead in their learning, for example through the Spanish pen pals initiative showcased on page 6.

At home, there are practical ways in which parents can support the development of learner agency in their children. This includes asking open-ended questions that prompt children to think critically, letting their child have a say in what and how they learn, being role-models for lifelong learning through pursuing their own studies or by learning new skills, and by helping their child reflect on their progress by celebrating their efforts and encouraging resilience.

Education is not just about memorizing facts. It is about empowering children to think, question and create. By fostering learner agency, we equip our children with the skills and mindset they need to thrive in school and beyond. When children take charge of their learning, they don't just prepare for the future, they shape it!





# THE EDWARDIAN SHOWCASES OUR FINE HISTORIANS



## THE EDWARDIAN

Journal of the King Edward's Witley History Department

Editor: Oliver (Upper 6th)

Issue 2: December 2024

What was the main impact of the Watergate Scandal?

Who is responsible for the Cold War?

How much change was there in the British Empire?

Why did William win the Battle of Hastings?



This year's first edition of our History department's journal 'The Edwardian' included submissions from pupils in every year at King Edward's, and has proved an extremely popular read for our community and beyond. The journal, which may be accessed here ([www.kesw.org/2025/02/13/the-edwardian](http://www.kesw.org/2025/02/13/the-edwardian)) featured twelve articles, covering diverse historical topics ranging from the Battle of Hastings, the history of China, the Watergate scandal and many more.

Head of Department Mrs Francis explained 'the Edwardian's publication provided an excellent opportunity to pause and reflect on some of the pupil work we are most proud of within the History department'. Mr Haywood, department lead on this project noted 'this academic year's first edition features a brilliant breadth and depth of writing, and all of our pupils whose work has been published should be congratulated on their submissions'.

Our senior contributors recently reflected on their contributions to the Edwardian; Kyle, Lower Sixth, commented that 'I really enjoyed being able to reflect on our experiences visiting the Houses of Parliament in the journal'. Paige, also from Lower Sixth, enjoyed her interview within the journal as 'it was great to explain my passion for History and provide some advice for younger, budding Historians'. Editor Ollie F, Upper Sixth, concluded that 'I really enjoyed reading and embracing the exceptional work that members of the school community produced for this edition of the Edwardian. I look forward to editing the next version around Easter!'



# LATEST GCSE NEWS

## FROM OUR SCHOOL



We are very pleased to announce that King Edward's will be further extending our academic portfolio to include GCSE Business from September 2025.

We invited feedback on the course's inclusion from Third Form parents and pupils during our recent GCSE option choice process. With thanks to the many parents and pupils who indicated they would like to take advantage of this extended offer, we have confirmed that the course will run for the first time at King Edward's from September 2025. Our new GCSE will run in parallel with GCSE Economics, which has also maintained its popularity amongst our community, and we look forward to offering this extension in our provision next academic year.



### Congratulations Xinyan – On Top of The World!



Mrs Wright, our Head, recently congratulated Xinyan (Lower Sixth) on behalf of our School community as we celebrate her gaining the highest mark in the world for Cambridge IGCSE Foreign Language Mandarin Chinese in the June 2024 exams.

This supreme achievement required many hours of study and revision, and everyone at King Edward's is very proud of you, Xinyan – brilliant work!



# THE ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME AT KING EDWARD'S



This half term we've welcomed pupils with many different academic and co-curricular interests to our Scholarship Assessment days, with many aiming to become Academic Scholars at our school. After our most recent talk in our Bridewell Speaker series focussing on plants and medicine, by Jonathan Newell of the Royal Horticultural Society, Bea (5th Form) reflected on her experience on the programme at King Edward's.

## *How long have you been an Academic Scholar?*

I was awarded a scholarship when I started at King Edward's, and have been a Scholar ever since.

## *Which are your favourite academic subjects?*

Currently I really enjoy Maths and Geography but I have a wide range of academic interests.

## *How would you describe the activities within the Scholars' programme?*

We benefit from regular sessions where Academic Scholars come together with teachers to explore different subjects; this half term we've been concentrating on Chemistry. We also have the opportunity to hear from expert speakers in the Bridewell Speakers series, and in the summer, all of the Academic Scholars from across the school and work together on activities, learning from each other's subjects.

## *What's best about being an Academic Scholar?*

I really enjoy working with other Scholars, as we all enjoy being stretched in our academics, discussing our work together and learning advanced topics.

## *Academically, what are your next steps?*

After my GCSEs, I plan on taking Biology, Chemistry and Maths at A level; during our Scholar sessions we've worked on A level topics and I'm looking forward to studying them in more depth.





# SPANISH LEARNING VIA OUR VIRTUAL EXCHANGE INITIATIVE



2nd form pupils are having fun and enhancing their Spanish learning via a virtual exchange initiative with children from l'Escola Quermany in Pals, a town close to Girona. Throughout this academic year, our pupils will write to their counterparts in English, receive responses in Spanish and extend their vocabulary skills by translating these responses in class before replying.

Mrs O'Keefe, Head of Modern Foreign Languages, is leading this initiative and explained 'our project was facilitated by four final year language students from the University of Grenoble who were tasked with creating a programme which improves intercultural understanding. The students encouraged pupils from both schools to contribute via an exciting video where they provided a guide to their city and University, and we were very keen to contribute. With weekly letters exchanged, electronically, between the schools, our pupils are improving their language learning very positively. Our thanks go to our student facilitators for providing this opportunity for our pupils, and we look forward to our penpals meeting each other via video towards the end of our project'.



# NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK CELEBRATED AT SCHOOL



Our pupils and parents have been able to access a comprehensive series of events this February as part of National Apprenticeship Week (NAW25). These included a range of opportunities at King Edward's, commencing with a presentation by Old Witleian Ella Anderson, a Degree Apprentice at Mace Construction, to 4th Form and Lower 6th pupils and a series of group and 1:1 sessions to discover more around apprenticeship opportunities.



Head of Careers and Higher Education, Mrs Moira Davies, organised our school's in-house events and explained 'this important series of presentations and seminars was designed to integrate with national events which our community were also encouraged to access through the NAW25 website. Overall, our programme aimed to further support our pupils in considering alternative career pathways to ensure they make informed decisions about their future, particularly with an increasing interest in apprenticeship opportunities. This programme also formed an important part of our overall Next Steps Careers and HE framework, and it was pleasing to see so many accessing the opportunities provided'.

