

Social media

Spring Round-up

Dear Parents

What leaps out at me from the pages that follow – and which I hope you will have seen at the time on one or other of our social media platforms – is a selection of photos which we could not have taken over the past 2 years: field trips, theatre trips, dramatic performances, students without masks...all signs of the longed-for return to more normal times at school. It's a bitter-sweet record – both because it points to so many things we have missed, and also because we still labour under significant burdens of staff absence, lingering restrictions and ongoing illnesses.

As Pesach approaches we yearn for freedom but we also know the need to live with uncertainty – what the poet Keats called 'negative capability': Keats denied that logic or reason were the best measures of reality, or that we would reach truth or happiness by pursuing certainty. Instead, he thought, living as a human means living with and embracing uncertainty, wonder and curiosity.

As a community and as a society we have had a bucket load of uncertainty over the last two years – not knowing from one week to the next what social gatherings will be allowed, what isolation or masking rules will apply, whether public exams are going ahead...even whether there will be flour in the shops. With Brexit, US elections, the climate emergency and more on top, the past years – a large proportion of the lives of young people – have been lived in the context of huge uncertainty. The war in Ukraine is the most recent and devastating addition to the list – with the effects of course unthinkable worse on those directly involved. It has sometimes felt draining, heavy, even paralysing.

In that context, the idea that living with uncertainty could be a good thing may sound odd – perhaps a chutzpah for me to even say this having just introduced another strand of uncertainty into the life of JCoSS by announcing my departure. Guilty as charged, but as I voluntarily add to my own uncertainty I hope I can model getting comfortable with not knowing.

First, because uncertainty is here to stay, it's part of life, and fighting against it is exhausting and disfiguring. As you will know if you've ever tried to keep your balance on a tube train without holding on, it's best to bend your knees and stand diagonally to the direction of travel, so you can absorb all the unexpected lurches and not fall over. Wishing the ride was smooth and standing straight is the quickest way to fall flat...and so too in life.

Second, because managing uncertainty is one of the most important skills of leadership. Despite what some students may imagine, leaders (including Headteachers) do not live in a world of certainty where they control all the decisions. Decisions are rarely pure and never simple; most options are a mixture of good and bad. My experience has been that the more senior a leader, the more "negative capability" is needed, because the decisions affect more people. Since people (including headteachers) are complicated and contradictory the decisions are full of uncertainty too.

Thirdly, getting comfortable seems to me a Jewish virtue. Pesach recalls a moment of liberation from slavery in Egypt into...well, a wilderness of uncertainty: hardship, wandering, doubt, blame and argument. Yes, in the end a promised land, but even that has not exactly been plain sailing. I love Judaism for its refusal to take anything quietly. Everything is up for negotiation, even with God. The tradition thrives on argument for the sake of heaven, on uncertainty. Hence our school motto: elu v'elu elochim chaim – these and these are the words of the living God. If we've pinned God down to a single fixed answer, we've probably fallen for an idol.

So as we take time for Paschal celebrations (Easter or Passover), I hope there may be scope to reflect that freedom is always about uncertainty. Though sometimes tough, it's also a ride we can enjoy. I will try to bend those metaphorical knees, stand at a diagonal to the direction of travel, and be ready to lose some dignity, and maybe discern a promised land.

Chag Sameach.

Patrick Moriarty
Headteacher

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7th April 2022



We were very fortunate to receive a workshop from Cambridge University yesterday for Year 9, 10 and 12 students, to explore the link between the choice of subjects taken at GCSE, A level and university, as well as develop their critical thinking skills.

Thank you to Gwyneth Hamand from Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge for giving up her time to visit us.

6th April 2022

This week, Year 10 geography students were out in Epping Forest collecting data in Debden Brook to investigate changes in a river's characteristics as it progresses downstream. Students were also exploring flood risk along the river and why flood risk was higher or lower across the three sites we visited.



5th April 2022



Last week, JCoSS students went to see Neil Gaiman's 'The Ocean at the End of the Lane' as part of a playwriting competition in conjunction with the National Theatre. Throughout the school year, participating students attended a series of workshops focusing on developing playwriting skills. They have each written a thirty minute play and have attended a feedback session with playwright Ashlee Elizabeth-Lolo. They will submit final drafts this month. The competition winner will have their play performed at the National. The trip allowed students to reflect on use of space and setting to bring character and ideas to life.

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1st April 2022

We can finally announce the winners of the Science Week Competition, The Great Broad Bean Grow-Off, where 60 budding gardeners competed to grow the longest broad bean from root to leaf tip, between the 11th March and the 25th. Our Runner Up, was Raphael in 7W, with a respectable 14.2cm. However, our Grand Champions, and winner of the Green Finger Award trophy (to be completed) was a team effort by Zac and Itamar from 7F, with a whopping 19.0cm. This competition was devised and supervised by our Technicians Ms Hancock and Dr Dawsmith, and thanks to the help of the DT department we have a trophy to present to our winners! #mazelto #scienceweek ##greenfingers



29th March 2022



Mazel tov to Isaac Reuben in Year 12 who has been elected into the Youth Parliament! This is where 11-18 years old students meet at conferences and the House of Commons to represent issues relevant for young people and campaign. Thank you so much to everyone who voted for him. If there are any topics you wish for him to bring up for discussion at the Youth Parliament please let him know.

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28th March 2022

The year 10s have had the opportunity to take part once again this year in the Jack Petchey Speak out challenge.

A wonderful workshop for students to build and learn on skills to support them in their 'Oracy Journey'.

The programme for the day supports the students to really challenge themselves to think outside the box, build their confidence, inspire them to have opinions, understand their abilities, celebrate their own unique-ism and be proud of their ideas and beliefs.

The discussion and debate have been articulate and thought provoking for all of the students involved and they have discussed topics from the Zoo all the way through to prison.

They have been able to learn new skills and build on others to enhance their own abilities further these include being able to organising their thoughts, memory skills, being able to confidently speak from the heart, why practise is essential, what it's like to perform under pressure and keep to time.



We could not be more proud of the students who volunteered to embrace this new challenge and took part in the day. It was a real privilege to see them grow in confidence and achieve throughout the day.

24th March 2022



Year 12 students had an informative day of workshops today to help prepare them for Higher Education and life after JCoSS. They attended sessions on interview and CV skills, student finance, apprenticeships, choosing your University, personal statements and the application process, as well as optional sessions for Oxbridge and Art portfolios. There was also a Gap Year fair at breaktime in the beautiful sunshine! Thank you to Resource for running some of the sessions.

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16th March 2022

Chag Purim Sameach! Norwood have been getting ready for Purim with our students, making masks for their upcoming Purim themed activities at their homes. #purim #smiles #chairty



14th March 2022



Head students Lucy Brent and Jacob Hirshler have helped launch this year's fantastic JCoSS Book Award for all KS3 students. Everyone in Year 7, 8 and 9 will choose one book from the shortlist to read and produce their own creative response to, competing for a chance to win an exciting prize. Books range from the harrowing journey of a Syrian refugee, to a lonely ghost in a graphic novel. #JCoSSBookAward #Readingisfun

11th March 2022

Mazal Tov to our Y7 students who completed their 5 week volunteering programme with @norwoodcharity They have been making special Shabbat bags filled with Shabbat candles, a Kiddish cup, Havdallah spices and cards, which will be distributed to Norwood homes.

Norwood is the largest Jewish charity in the UK supporting vulnerable children and their families, children with special educational needs and people with learning disabilities and autism. #volunteering #positivedifference #charity



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10th March 2022



Congratulations to the amazing cast and crew for putting on an incredible performance of 'The Hunt' last night. 🍊🍊🍊

It was wonderful to have a live audience back in school – thanks to everyone who came along to support. [#Theatreisback!](#) [#liveperformance](#)

8th March 2022

To mark International Women's Day, these inspiring students from Year 9 along with Head Student Lucy Brent and Ms Blitz, have got together to encourage the wider school community to donate female sanitary products to women in need, to help combat period poverty. This is a powerful message about women and girls supporting each other. Thank you to everyone who has donated.

[#internationalwomensday](#) [#supportingeachother](#)
[#womensupportingwomen](#)



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7th March 2022



Peer mentoring is a lovely initiative across the school involving around 150 students. Younger students are paired with Year 12 trained mentors to give them the space and opportunity to talk about school life, work stresses or anything else that is important to them. Our Year 12 mentors are wonderful role models and we are very proud of them all for giving up their time. [#rolemodels](#) [#leadership](#) [#peermentoring](#)

4th March 2022

Happy Rosh Chodesh Adar Bet! Today we have been celebrating Rosh Chodesh with our usual 'drop down day' style programme, welcoming youth movements and organisations from the whole Jewish community to deliver thought provoking and exciting programming. We are also delighted to welcome Rabbi Jeff Berger who spoke to our Year 10 and Year 11 students for their Rosh Chodesh assembly [#newmonth](#) [#jcooss](#)



3rd March 2022



Students celebrated World Book Day today with fun Harry Potter themed activities in the LRC, a 'Guess the Book character' quiz and author Candy Gourlay, spoke about her book, Bone Tall [#WorldBookDay](#) [#MakingReadingFun](#) [#ImportanceOfReading](#)

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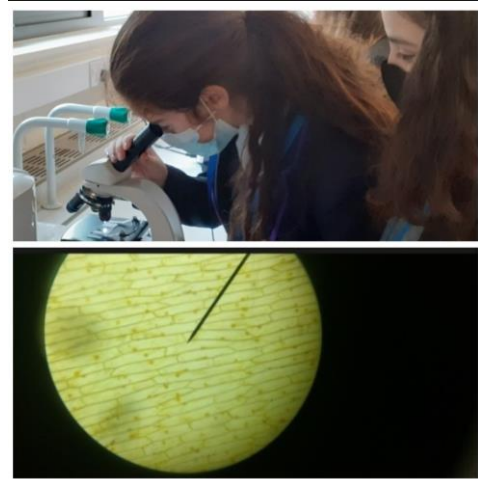
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24th February 2022

This week in Science, Year 7s have been making microscope slides with onion cells, a practical that no doubt parents may remember from their own schooldays - it's a real classic!
[#scienceisfun](#) [#onionexperiment](#)



22nd February 2022



Jewish Women's Aid are in school this week running workshops for all of Year 9 about healthy relationships #phsce

21st February 2022

Welcome back to our Staff and Students! It is so nice to see so many smiling faces!



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