



## Headteacher's Update

7<sup>th</sup> June 2024

I would like to begin this week's update by thanking our Subject Leader for History, Mr Beale, for his excellent work in sharing D-Day resources with the school community this week as we commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the D-Day landings that occurred on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944. A number of resources can be found in this update.

Many Historians often refer to D-Day as the beginning of the end of WWII as troops from the UK, Canada and the United States were able to land on the beaches in Normandy and begin an invasion that led to the liberation of northern France by August 1944 and the defeat of Nazi Germany by the spring of 1945.

Despite the success of the D-Day landings, there were significant allied casualties and it is this sacrifice and the sacrifice of the D-Day veterans that should be remembered. As King Charles stated in his speech at the British war memorial in France yesterday:

"Our obligation to remember them, what they stood for, and what they achieved for us all, can never diminish".

### Police Presence at Vyners

From time to time, there will be occasions when we either request police presence at the school or the police feel that it would be beneficial to attend the school site. In the overwhelming majority of instances, a police presence is purely precautionary. This was the case in the week leading up to the end of the half term when the police maintained a presence at the end of the school day from Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May through to the end of the half term. On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May, there were a handful of young people who do not attend Vyners near the school around 3pm. The individuals were spoken to by myself and the police and they left without incident.

Today, we received information that there may have been other young people who had the intention of coming into the area at a similar time. Fortunately, this did not happen. However, in collaboration with the police, we have decided to take a cautious approach and maintain a presence at various times until the end of the academic year so it is likely that parents and carers will see officers outside the school from time to

time. I can also report that I have spoken to other local Headteachers who have experienced similar incidents recently and taken a similar approach.

As has been the case for some time, the police always advise that students are cautious between the end of the school day and 4.30 - 5.00pm as this is the time of the day when there is most concern about youth anti-social behaviour. The police also continue to advise students to travel to and from school with friends and avoid hot spots after school such as Uxbridge High Street.

### Oak Processionary Moths (OPM)

Despite an extensive professional tree spraying programme earlier this year it appears that OPM caterpillar nests are again emerging on our oak trees on the school site. As a reminder, the OPM is an invasive species that has become established in London. The primary issue related to OPM is the hairs on the caterpillars that can cause significant irritation if in contact with skin or eyes as well as a sore throat or difficulty breathing if ingested. We are currently at the stage when there is the highest risk to the hairs (May and June).

The proximity of the school to the A40 appears to make our oak trees rather susceptible to OPM infestations (we had approximately removed 400 nests last year). Unfortunately, we are not in a position to remove all of the nests this year due to the significant costs associated. Furthermore, and quite understandably, the constant removal of nests on the Vyners site has little long term impact due to the fact that the local authority can no longer continue to pay for tree spraying and nest removal outside of our boundary fence as well as across numerous sites across Hillingdon.

As advised, we will ensure that the nests at ground level are removed and prevent staff and student access to the worst infested areas. However, it is clear that educating the students about the moths and their caterpillars will be the most significant action that we can take going forward. I would very much appreciate parents and carers reiterating messages about not interfering with these nests, whether on the school site

or out in the local community. More information about the OPM can be found here ([click here](#)).

### **New School Website**

I am delighted to be able to inform parents and carers that our new school website has gone live today. A link to the website can be found here ([click here](#)). We hope that the new site gives a strong reflection of the school and the community as a whole and that visitors to the site find it both accessible, user friendly and informative.

**Gary Mullings, Headteacher**

### **D-Day 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

As dawn broke, on the 6<sup>th</sup> June, 80 years ago, thousands of British, Canadian and American soldiers landed on five beaches along the Normandy coast. They had been preceded by Parachute and glider landings and were supported by an enormous aerial and naval bombardment. Their objective was to invade Nazi occupied France and bring an end to the Second World War. This feat of planning, logistics and heroic sacrifice is being remembered in many ways over the weekend. Below is a list of activities that you could engage with to learn more about D-Day.

### **Year 8 National Archives Live**

Year 8 students participated in a live lesson with the National Archives and Dan Snow on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June. A recording of the session is available to view [here](#)

### **BBC Newsround special**

Newsround presenter Emma-Louise Amanshia, children William and Lyra, who both have important D-Day connections, explore the momentous events of June 1944. William, along with 99-year-old D-Day veteran Mervyn, and Lyra, who meets 97-year-old Marie and 100-year-old veteran Arthur, journey to Normandy and retrace the history of one of World War Two's most poignant events which led to the liberation of Europe. Here is the [link](#)

### **Battle of Britain Bunker**

The Battle of Britain Bunker in Uxbridge played a crucial role during D-Day and during the whole of the Second World War. There are a range of activities happening this weekend that would appeal to students and parents. There are talks, concerts, parachute training sessions and special tours. To find out more and to book follow the link to the [Battle of Britain Bunker website](#).

### **Special Programmes**

The BBC has produced a range of programmes that have been broadcast this week. The D-Day Unheard Tapes three part series is particularly poignant as it features the voices of soldiers and civilians that were involved and saw D-Day unfold. A full list of programmes can be found [here](#). Head to BBC Iplayer to catch up.

### **Podcasts**

A range of podcasts have produced anniversary episodes to coincide with D-Day. Here are a few that I recommend.

- Dan Snow's History Hit: Good overview of the events around the day.
- BBC History Extra: split into episodes on air, land and sea.
- We Have Ways of Making You Talk: Very detailed multi episode narrative of the planning, events and aftermath of D-Day.

### **Visiting the Beaches**

If you would like to plan a family holiday to visit the Normandy Beaches then please contact Mr Beale. He recently took his family and has lots of recommendations!

**Mr Beale, Subject Leader, History**

### **Art and Photography Exhibition**

We would like to invite parents, students and friends of the school to our annual Art and Photography Exhibition which will take place on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June, 3.30pm to 6.30pm in the main school hall.



## STARS Programme

One of our ongoing initiatives in school is the STARS programme, where students work with the TfL to improve our communities' active and sustainable travel to school. This year there has been a lot of work behind the scenes to focus on gaining funding for a small podcast to help promote the students' voice around road safety and active travel. This year the STARS students have been commended by the TfL for their continued dedication and hard work. I would personally like to congratulate them, as without their dedicated support this programme would not be possible to run.



Mr Heath, STARS Co-ordinator

## Sports Update

### London Youth Games

Aaryan Thakrar has been selected to represent Hillingdon in the London Youth Games for Tennis - a great achievement. The first round is on Sunday so we wish him luck for the competition.

## Junior Borough Athletics

Junior Borough Athletics was a lovely day with some great success for Year 7 and 8 and a lot of potential for future athletics competitions as well as sports day which is soon approaching.

Our medal winners are below:

### 1st Place

Elsie Fitzgerald - Year 7G 1500m  
Anastasia Muizneiks - Year 7G Shot put  
Fleur Wright - Year 8G Hurdles  
Leo Da Costa - Year 8B 1500m

### 2nd Place

Celina Bandera-Villaescusa - Year 8G Javelin

### 3rd Place

Amelia Harrison - Year 8G 300m  
Rayaan Choudhry - Year 8B Hurdles  
Year 7G Relay (Elsie Fitzgerald, Lily Gibbons, Libby Scarisbrick and Amber Woolfrey).

We are awaiting results but it is likely these students will represent Hillingdon in the Middlesex Competition for Juniors.

I would also like to wish Dylan Lewis, Nathan Griffiths, Taylor Kerswill, Kena Domike and Annamarie Baker-Lopes good luck on Saturday where they will be competing for Hillingdon at the Senior Middlesex Athletics at Lee Valley.



Miss Hawes, Teacher of PE

## Safeguarding Snapshot

Please click [\[here\]](#) to read this week's safeguarding snapshot which outlines what is meant by the term 'County Lines'.