

Top 5% Nationally for Progress 8 Scores

In league tables published by the Department for Education, Ormiston Rivers Academy is in the top 5% nationally for pupil progress.

Progress 8 captures the progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school across 8 qualifications. The Academy was also ranked in the top 10 schools in Essex for the same measure.

This is a wonderful achievement and we are extremely proud of our staff and students. Well done!



Message from Ms J Costello, Principal

In this newsletter, we are celebrating our achievement in the Department for Education's Progress 8 scores. As you will read, the Academy scored among the top 5 percent of schools nationally for pupil progress since leaving primary school. I am incredibly proud of the efforts and hard work by students and staff at this time.

As we move through the academic year and closer towards the all-important examination season, I am sure you will join with me in wishing all of our students every success in their studies.

In addition to academic progress, students at the Academy are offered a variety of extra-curricular clubs, workshops, and charitable fundraising events which broaden their views, deepen their aspirations for the future and encourage them to become caring and considerate young people.

I hope you enjoy reading about the wonderful accomplishments and activities across the Academy, and look forward in anticipation to the next half term.

First Give Action Day

The Academy has been encouraging charitable giving across the school. With the introduction of Interact, a Rotary Sponsored Action Club for Sixth Form, we have seen students of all ages actively participate in raising awareness and funds for many charities.

First Give is an educational charity which aims to help young people identify social issues in their local area and engage with charities by giving their time and talent to improve their community.

Miss Marable, Teacher of Religious Studies, Citizenship & Sociology, said: "When we heard about First Give's funding of £1000 to a local charity that the students must promote in their lessons, it seemed an ideal opportunity to engage our Year 8s with this programme."

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Students try on RNLI equipment

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Garden Project Update

During this half term, Garden Project Year 8 students have been busy cultivating an area of the wildlife meadow to create a new wild flower area.



- How many wild flower seeds will we need?
- What size should the plots be?
- How many plots will fit in the area?

These are some of the questions our students had to answer before creating the wild flower area.

Students used their numeracy skills to calculate the plot size and mark out an area into a grid of individual digging plots which can be cultivated in preparation for a spring sowing of wild flower seeds.

The purpose is to attract more pollinating insects to the environment; a project that Wings have been studying. It has encouraged these young people to take a pro-active and responsible role in improving the academy's natural environment and the biodiversity of the school site.

Year 7 students, meanwhile, have been busy planting native trees along the school boundary railings as part of an on-going project to create a more sheltered sports field and, when established, a wildlife corridor. The trees were received from the Woodland Trust as part of their WW1 commemoration project, and have been tended by the students for several months.



The Garden Project has been established for several years and incorporates practical horticultural work with mathematics, English language, and science.

Volunteer Garden Project Co-ordinator, Mrs Milton, works alongside students and Academy staff to offer this innovative approach to learning. It incorporates a kitchen garden, wildflower meadow, compost area, greenhouse and workshop.

The Academy has achieved the Royal Horticultural Society's Five Star School Gardening Award in recognition of sharing the garden with the local community, passing on skills to others and using the garden to teach curriculum subjects.

This year, the Academy has been asked by Burnham Town Council to cultivate 75 red geraniums to form a major part of the town's War Memorial floral display in summer and through to the Remembrance Day commemorations. Mrs Milton said: "It is a privilege that Rivers Academy students have been entrusted with this project. It is a wonderful example of young people connecting with their local community and is a testament to their commitment and hard work."

SUMMER 2017

Examination Session :

5th May to 30th June 2017

TIMETABLES

All students will receive their **FINAL** summer 2017 timetable during week commencing 18th April, which will be printed on pink paper.

If you have any queries regarding exams, please contact Mrs Clark on 01621 787861.

Students are responsible for bringing all the equipment they need to every exam they take; the school is not obliged to provide equipment and will not have pens, pencils, calculators etc. to loan.

Summer 2017 exam results may be collected as follows:

- GCE - Thursday 17th August 2017
- GCSE - Thursday 24th August 2017

First Give

On Monday 11th January, six charities were invited to deliver a presentation about their work and set up a 'market stall' for students to find out more about the charity, its impact on the community, the staff and volunteers, and how people benefit from funding and donations.

Essex Search & Rescue, The J's Hospice, First Responders, Burnham RNLI, Citizen's Advice and Age Concern attended.

Many staff were involved with the programme, including Ms Robyn Nickson, Head of Year 8 and Religious Studies who supported the event and ensured students were focused on their challenge. Business Manager, Mrs Mahoney, was key to organising the logistics of the day; and teaching staff attended to help supervise the event and encourage all 174 students to confidently communicate with the visitors and understand the importance of their work.

Sixth Form students assisted by ensuring the representatives from the charities were supported; Leonie Hunt and Lauren Campbell were particularly helpful on the day.

In the next step of the challenge, students work in teams to research and create their own presentation about their chosen charities. Miss Marable commented: "Our students were incredibly engaged and eager to help. They understood the direct impact the winning funding would have on their chosen charity and are enthusiastic to make a change in their community."

Miss Nickson added: "The opportunity for students to participate in First Give was fantastic. They were thoroughly engaged and committed to using their skills to evaluate all the charities involved and come to their final decision. Year 8 were a credit to ORA, their behaviour was exemplary. Many of the volunteers commented on how proud we should be of our impeccable students."

Students now have until the end of half term to create their presentation to deliver to their classmates and teacher, before choosing which teams will go forward to the Academy competition. One team from each of seven Year 8 classes will progress to the next level. Year 8 student, Sophie Parsons, said: "There were 6 charity stations which we visited and took down notes/facts about them. Our task is to create a presentation about our chosen charity. I am really looking forward to this as I want to help all the charities, choosing one will be difficult."

First Give will be invited back to the Academy to lead a 2-hour workshop with the finalists to ensure they are fully prepared and confident for the Final. This will take place in March and will have an external panel of judges to decide which team has won the competition, and subsequently which charity will receive £1000.



Essex Search & Rescue's puppies and adult dog were very popular with our students!

This programme has offered students the freedom to explore how charities work, whilst supporting one another as a team. Many of them feel passionately about local causes and they have been given the time within their Religious Studies and Citizenship lessons to develop their knowledge and understanding of local and wider issues. Miss Marable is keen to run this exciting and worthwhile project annually with Year 8 students.

Royal Anglian Regiment Benevolent Charity

The Academy has received a thank you letter from the Royal Anglian Regiment for our donation of £329.28 in memory of student Private John Thrumble who was tragically killed whilst on operation in Afghanistan. The funds were collected on a non-uniform day in July 2016.

Major (Retd) R P Grenfell wrote to say: "The Benevolent Charity exists to help those in need, hardship or distress. Sadly we have seen a substantial increase in the numbers of those former and serving members of The Regiment who fall into that category... Would you please pass on to all your students our thanks for their generosity. We are most grateful."

U16 (boys) Futsal

Year 10 boys went to Braintree on Friday 20th January to play in the Essex FA County Futsal Tournament.

Excellent goal keeping from Joe Palmer, solid defence from Rian Mathurin and Harry Organ, and brilliant goals from Tyler Forbes resulted in the boys finishing 3rd in the competition!

PE Teacher and Year 11 Achievement Director, Mr Vince, said: "Regular training and commitment from the Year 10 boys has been fantastic this year and I have no doubt that the effort that they have put in has resulted in this admirable outcome. Well done boys, you played brilliantly and were the only ones to score against the top team!"

Futsal has been a regular fixture at the Academy for the last couple of years and is a great option for students to continue playing competitive matches during the winter months when football has a break.



After this great tournament the team are looking forward to getting back to regular training and playing football against local schools.

Our **Year 9** boys Futsal team competed in the same tournament 2 weeks later. They had a great day and played brilliantly! There were some very close matches and ORA came 4th in the league.

We are now looking forward to the rest of the football season and hope to do well in division 1 of the MESSA league.



Girls Futsal

Year 8 and 9 girls had a fantastic afternoon at the County Futsal tournament held at Great



Notley High School. Head of PE, Mr Clay, reported:

"After a sluggish start, a masterful tactical challenge by Daisy Mae-Cuthbert, meant the girls went unbeaten over the second half of the competition, drawing 1 and winning their final 2 games against Thurstable and Colne.

Milly Drew netted a hat trick in the penultimate game before Daisy and Kaitlyn Edinburgh scored in the last game. Anntony Harwood with her defensive partners, Maggie Smyth and Megan Perry, played extremely well in their final 3 games."

Health & Fitness



Year 9 NCFE Health and Fitness students attended Club Woodham on 24th January. The trip included:

- a guided tour of the club by personal fitness trainers
- advice on planning a training program, explaining short and long term fitness goals
- a demonstration on how to achieve these goals.

PE Teacher, Miss Williamson said: "Students and staff had a fantastic (and very active) day participating in a variety of muscular strength, cardiovascular fitness and muscular endurance classes including *Body weight HIIT*, *Colour Spin* and *Body Pump*."

Cross Country

ORA girls and boys cross country teams competed in the Essex Schools Year 7 and 8 Championships at Stubbors Activity Centre, Upminster on 1st February. Each race had over 250 participants and despite the rain and very muddy conditions, our students' spirits were high and they all represented the school well.

Special congratulations go to Francesca Turner who finished in 24th position in the Year 7 girls race!

District Football

Year 8 student, Tobias Braney, has made it into the Mid-Essex District football team!

Tobias was successful in his trials at the start of the academic year and has enjoyed a successful season with the district team.

The PE department received an email from Karen Braney, parent of Tobias, to say: "*Tobias played as striker against Newham on 4th February. He was sub for the 1st half and started the second half with Chelmsford and Mid-Essex, winning 2-0, having defended some good Newham attacks. Tobias played outstandingly well. He ran through on goal and was taken down by the goal keeper. A penalty was awarded and Tobias scored. He then went on to score 4 more goals. The final score was 8-0 to Chelmsford and Mid-Essex. 5 goals scored by Tobias in 1 half!*"

Head of PE, Mr Clay, said: "Well done! Tobias has now taken his training a step further and has been staying after school in order to improve his speed. We hope his success can be emulated by many of our students in the coming years."

Rugby News

Year 8 rugby has taken a different format this year with the emergence of Waterfall Festivals. Over the first 2 tournaments ORA went unbeaten and gained promotion to the top division. On their journey, the teams have beaten the likes of Boswells, William de Ferrers, Moulsham, Chelmer, Plume, Shenfield, and Beckett Keys.

If we are successful in the final festival, we could be crowned champions... find out in our next newsletter!



Sixth Form students, Charlie Mecoy, Harry Barclay and Luke Cowell have been selected for the Essex U/20 rugby team. A fantastic achievement - well done boys!

Essex U15s

Two of our Year 10s, who play rugby for Essex U15's, had an unbelievable opportunity to play at the home of the European and Premiership champions, Saracens. Jack Hawkins and Tyler Forbes represented Essex as they competed against neighbouring counties and even a Saracens squad.

Both boys had an incredible experience which was watched by their PE teachers, Mr Becker and Mr Clay. Tyler was even fortunate to cap his evening off with a try on the Aviva pitch.

Ski taster

In preparation for the Academy's annual ski trip, several students experienced a 2-hour beginner's taster session at the Snow Centre, Hemel Hempstead on 12th January.

This event provided an ideal opportunity to gain confidence, learn the basics and become familiar with the equipment in advance of the trip. This year, the destination is Courmayeur, Italy, from 11th to 18th February.



Students travelled by minibus from the Academy to the indoor slopes on a very snowy winter's day - just the right weather for starting ski lessons!

PE Teacher, Mr Vince, commented: "Everyone had a fantastic time and the experience was extremely valuable. Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 all represented the Academy impeccably and are excited about going to the Aosta Valley in February."

Students are also participating in an after-school weekly ski-fitness club to prepare them for the challenge of skiing every day on the coming holiday."



Students get ready for their ski lesson

Nurture Dogs

This term, the Academy has introduced a new programme led by Nurture Dogs. This is a small company that works in schools and the community to deliver animal assisted therapy to help improve learning, self-esteem, confidence, communication, and social skills.



A small group of Year 7 students have been offered a wonderful opportunity to meet with the Nurture dogs and their handlers at the Academy where they spend one hour a week with the team.

So far, they have been involved in a variety of fun training exercises, agility games, toy making and dog grooming activities. Students involved have had positive experiences at the sessions and made friends with the animals that visit.

The sessions provide a relaxed environment and encourage participation through teamwork and dog related activities. The programme is flexible and can be tailored towards different learning and understanding abilities to support students in achieving their goals and potential.

Ms Mullender, Head of ICT said: "We hope that this six week programme will be of great benefit to our students. The feedback has been very good and those taking part have enjoyed their experiences with Nurture Dogs."



Internet safety for teenagers

On 17th January, Penny Limer from EyePAT, an organisation that provides internet safety training, visited the Academy to discuss the implications of sexting to students in Years 7 to 11.

The event was well received by all students. They completed a quiz that categorised their level of addiction to the internet to make them think about how much they rely on their mobile phones and social media.

Head of ICT, Ms Mullender, commented: "The workshops weren't to scare students away from using social media, but to ensure that they use it safely. Social media is a great way to keep in touch and share content, but many youngsters get it wrong, so we need to ensure they are safe at all times." One student added: "It has made me think about the internet and social media in a different way."

The following websites support parents with keeping youngsters safe online. There is a wealth of information and guidance and useful phone numbers.

<http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/majority-parents-have-not-discussed-sexting-their-children>



Dates for your diary

February 2017

13th 13 - 17 Half Term

March 2017

2nd Primary Schools' Cross Country

2nd Sixth Form Parents evening

6th 6 - 10 National Careers Week

16th BBC News School Report Day

23rd Year 10 Parents evening

24th Red Nose Day - non-uniform

29th Year 8 Options evening

April 2017

3rd 3 - 17 Easter Holidays

DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD – a focus on achievement

In our previous newsletter, we reported that 13 ORA students achieved their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) awards. In this issue, we are focusing on what it takes to attain this award.



The DofE Award scheme encourages young people to

develop useful skills, meet people, take on amazing new experiences, build confidence and resilience, have fun, tackle major challenges, and complete a wide range of activities which could be of benefit for the future.

To achieve the Bronze Award, each student has to participate in a range of activities and complete a minimum of three months' experience in the following categories:

- **Volunteering** and making a difference to other people's lives.
- **Skills** - either developing an existing skill or starting something new.
- **Physical activity** to focus on health and fitness.
- **Expedition:** students trained for a weekend outdoor expedition at Skreens Park, Roxwell.

Year 11 student, Rebecca Mahoney **volunteered** as an assistant librarian at the Academy, conducting a stock review, organising resources and updating systems. For the **skills** section she carried out research into criminology and, with the help of Miss Nickson, Religious Studies and Law Teacher, produced a Powerpoint relating to careers in criminology and a booklet looking at youth crime. Rebecca, being a fitness enthusiast, decided to complete the **physical** activity section by undertaking a personal training programme which focused on improving her cardiovascular performance and gaining muscle. With the help of personal trainer, Luke Jory, from local gym, Trackside, Rebecca followed a sixth month programme to achieve goals set. In addition, she actively participated in the weekend outdoor **expedition** in June.

Students participating in the scheme commented: "I think the most important skill I got from the DofE is communication skills and learning to work as a team... the DofE gave me the confidence and determination to prove that I could do everything my friends could do... and more... the memories and friends I have gained from the Award are my most treasured ones... I would recommend DofE to everyone." Mrs Cowell added: "We are so proud of these guys."

The scheme is run by DofE Coordinators Mrs Elspeth Cowell and Mr Chris Davies; whilst the Academy provides facilities and meeting rooms. If you are interested in the DofE and think you have got what it takes to succeed, ask for more information on how you can participate.



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