

THE CATALYST





EDITOR'S COMMENT

Dear School Community,

Welcome to the first issue of The Catalyst!

From the playing fields of Harrow London to the palm-lined avenues of Hengqin, the Harrow story has travelled far. Harrow isn't just a school. It is a living tradition. And just as The Harrovian newspaper first chronicled life on the Hill back in 1828, we're now giving it a twenty-first-century reboot: welcome to The Catalyst—our dynamic and proudly local take on a great Harrovian tradition.

I am Margaret, founder and Editor-in-Chief of The Catalyst, the place where we share our world with the world. From sports fixtures and concerts to charity drives, classroom projects, and daily life on our island campus, this is your front-row seat to everything happening at Harrow Hengqin. We write to show what life here really looks like, how our students and teachers learn, lead, laugh, and make a difference. You'll find stories about how our community tackles global challenges like climate change and gender equality, alongside snapshots of the moments that make Harrow life so special.

I have always had a deep passion for media and editorial, from writing for my previous school's Student Editorial to starting my own podcast to spreading the voices and stories of students around the world feels like a mission. Every source of media tells stories, sparks conversations, and influences culture. Awareness will be spread, opinions will be exchanged, and action will be taken.

This project started with a team of four, but as we approached more people for articles and stories, I gradually felt like there are more voices and people were supporting us.

From all the House Captains who gave their time to answer the interview questions, to all the teachers who have written extensive and heartfelt answers, thank you, for your trust and support.

On behalf of the editorial team, we hope you would enjoy the magazine as much as we do, and please do not hesitate to provide any feedback and suggestions you may have. We want to make the magazine as much of a "catalyst" as possible!

With love,

Margaret

P.S. We may be starting a video channel as well. This will be purely student-produced, along with our Editorial. Let us know what you want to see on the channel or if you want to join us to make this happen!



FRIENDS AND FUN AT FELLOWSHIP WEEK

BY ARINA DENISOVA

From the friendships that shape our days to the supportive community that defines our school, fellowship is all around us in ways that strengthen and sustain.

At Harrow Hengqin, our recent Fellowship Week focused on the powerful theme of Anti-Bullying and creating a much-needed space for students to connect, celebrate individuality, learn how to stand up for one another, and realise the best way to combat bullying.

Led by our dedicated team of wellbeing ambassadors, the week was focused on creating a more inclusive school environment.

The goal of this week was not about discussing problems and to actively build skills and empathy to prevent bullying before it starts. The wellbeing ambassadors hoped students would leave the week with a “deeper understanding of the part they play in creating a positive community” and how it makes a difference.

A highlight during the fellowship week was “Odd Socks Day,” which was a celebration of individuality that promotes inclusivity and showcases how we are all different.

This event served as a powerful reminder that “our differences are what make us and our community stronger”.

A core event was a special assembly guided towards anti-bullying and managing stress, led by the school’s wellbeing ambassadors Gigi and Vivian.

They provided students with insights on how to navigate challenges, seek support, and maintain happiness during the academic pressures of school.

Organising a week with such an important and broad theme also caused a set of challenges.

Wellbeing ambassador Gigi (G11) explained the complexity of planning this week.

“The greatest challenge lies in designing an activity that can engage and interest students from Grade One to Grade Twelve. Students of different ages have a range of very different interests, abilities and needs.

“We need to strike a balance between offering creativity and practical feasibility for those involved, ensuring both the diversity and inclusiveness of the activity.” This challenge was met with planning and preparation. Gigi outlined the process that took place: “First, we held a meeting to clarify the overall goals.

“Then, we conduct online research, and after that, we adjust and refine the possible themes and daily plans based on our school’s actual conditions and we develop a preliminary proposal.”

This structured approach that includes thorough research and teamwork, ensuring the important message “reached everyone”.

The impact of the week was felt across year groups, just as the organising team intended.

Wellbeing ambassador Winnie Yang, who gathered student feedback, shared her observations: “From conversations with seniors, I learned that students within the same Grade tend to interact more harmoniously, while also receiving substantial support from other Grade levels. Meanwhile, the juniors revealed that younger students are developing a fresh and evolving understanding of mutual aid,” suggesting that the week successfully influenced our community and provided information that students will carry with them. While Fellowship Week has concluded, the Wellbeing Ambassadors are far from finished. This week we channeled our creativity, empathy, and communication, ensuring that the spirit of fellowship will remain a cornerstone at Harrow Hengqin.



AROUND THE HOUSES

BY ARINA DENISOVA

As the new academic year begins at Harrow Hengqin, six students have been chosen to lead their house members into the future as their House Captains. These leaders are now preparing to guide their houses through a year of competition, community, and school spirit.

The school's house system is an extremely important part of daily student life, establishing teamwork, support, and friendly rivalry.

This year's six captains bring a fantastic mix of personalities, backgrounds, and share their plans for the upcoming year.

Let's take a closer look at each of these leaders and what makes them so suitable for these vital roles.



Leading Sun Yat-Sen House is Candy Nie (pictured right), who describes herself as "friendly."

Originally from Hunan but a long-time resident of Zhuhai, Candy enjoys a wide range of Chinese food with one exception. "I like pretty much everything except chicken," she explained.

Her favourite artists range from Jay Chou to Taylor Swift.

Lyon House Captain is Yoyo Xu (pictured left), who is from Hangzhou. She describes herself as "amicable" or "kind," and her favourite things are the music of Sun Yan Zi (孙燕姿) and a "nice scoop of ice cream" on a hot day.

Wendy, the captain of Anderson House, comes from Dandong, Liaoning. She used the phrase "willing to share" to describe herself, a quality that goes quite well with her favourite food being hotpot. Her playlist is filled with music of YNW Melly. Representing Bing Xin House is Sissi Yu, an "active" student from Macau. Her energy is fueled by cake, which is her absolute favourite food and sweet treat.

Sabrina Carpenter is number one on her playlist and always brings a smile on her face.

The captain of Churchill House, Sharon Wang, describes herself as "adventurous". Hailing from Taiyuan, Shanxi, her favourite food is bananas and she enjoys the music of Marian Hill.

Completing the leadership team, Abby Du is the captain of Tu YouYou House, who describes herself as "friendly." Coming to Zhuhai from Anshan, her favourite food is seafood and her favourite music is from Wowaka.

When asked about their goals, the captains presented clear visions for the future of their houses.

Candy is challenging herself: "I'm actually an introvert. Running for House Captain of Sun Yat-Sen is my way of challenging myself and proving that leadership isn't a quality reserved only for extroverts." She plans to use her creative strengths to lead her House. "Drawing on my strengths in art and also learn A-Level Drama, I organised this year's House Song and House Movie and am committed to ensuring their success."

Sissy is drawing on past experience and wants to focus on well-being within Bing Xin: "I just hope the members of my House have a happy year and achieve the results they desire, and I will be there to support them at all times."

Yoyo, serving her second term for Lyon, wants to strengthen bonds through sports competitions within Lyon house to enhance a "sense of belonging and unity."





Churchill captain Sharon (pictured right) is driven by personal and school pride: "I am here because I want to make greater contributions to the school and also for my own honor."

Abby, as Tu YouYou captain, is focused on a specific artistic goal: "I wish we could be, for once, house song winner with our house members." When defining leadership, a reoccurring theme was one of listening, unity and courage. Candy (Sun Yat Sen) believes: "To me, good leadership means listening to my team members first, while also pushing myself to grow in the process."



Sissy (Bing Xin) thinks a leader should "effectively leverage each person's strengths, and let them feel at home."

Yoyo Xu (Lyon House) defined it as "uniting each person so that we become a true team."

The Churchill Captain values resilience: "I think a good leader must have leadership and courage, can stand up in difficult situations and lead everyone."

The TuYouYou Captain also emphasised strength in difficult times: "I think a good leader must have leadership and courage, can stand up in difficult situations and lead everyone." The captains also demonstrated an understanding that leadership involves overcoming certain obstacles. Candy (Sun Yat-Sen) identifies her strength as: "My strength is listening to others and striving for the best, even if I'm not as outwardly lively as some."



She faces the challenge of "juggling my academic responsibilities with maintaining the quality of all house activities, like the current House Song. Effective time management is the key to overcoming this."

Sissy (Bing Xin) reminds students that "winning isn't the goal—as long as everyone enjoys themselves, that's what matters."

Yoyo Xu (Lyon House) recalled losing the House Singing competition previously.

When that happened, she focused on "comforting and reassuring my classmates" to build resilience and ensuring that there is no harm in losing. The Churchill Captain relies on personal qualities: "I think I have a lot of patience and kindness, and I also have certain leadership skills that will help me."

The TuYouYou Captain believes: "I may not have faced such challenges before, but I think when encountering difficulties, one should remain calm and approach them rationally."

We've already hosted our first annual house competition, where all six houses challenge themselves to a competitive dodgeball competition.

After fierce competition, the winners were Lyon and Anderson, with a close tie, followed by Sun Yat Sen, Bingxin, and Churchill.



During this event, the House Captains guided their teams and ensured everyone was included and having fun.

This however, is only the start of our House rivalry. With a year of events ahead, these six captains are surely to lead their houses with passion, purpose, and a shared commitment to helping and supporting the student body.

Over the rest of the academic year, there will be a number of further events where the Houses have the opportunity to gain more house points towards the final goal of securing victory and lifting the House Cup.

Every house point claimed by students through the academic year will also count, with opportunities available across subjects, CCAs, and inside and outside the classroom.

The school awaits to see which house will ultimately claim the House Cup at the end of the year.



SPOTLIGHT IS READY AS TALENT SHOW RETURNS

BY ARINA DENISOVA

Harrow's Got Talent is officially returning this winter, bringing a week of courage, fellowship, creativity, and community to our Harrow stage with a brand-new format for the popular competition.

Previously, entrants would pre-record submissions before auditioning, but for 2026 HGT is going completely live from the very first round.

Performers will showcase their talents in real-time, and only then the judges will decide whether or not they go through to the next round.

This new format raises the stakes and doubles the excitement for viewers and participants.

The journey begins with separate first-round showcases for lower and Upper School taking their first steps onto the live stage in front of an audience. From these preliminary rounds, the top talent will be selected to advance.

The event will start with Lower School First Round on Tuesday January 28 at 2:30pm – 4:00pm.

The Upper School First Round will be on Wednesday, 29th January from 2:30pm until 4:00pm.

The Grand Finale is planned for Thursday February 5 from 2:45pm until 4:15pm.

There will be six finalists from lower school and six finalists from Upper School selected for the Grand Final to ultimately compete for the top honour.

The finale promises to feature not only the final competitive acts but also surprise special guest displays.

The purpose behind this beloved event is to celebrate the wide and varied talents of every student in a way that builds confidence and aspiration.

As the event's lead organizer, Mr. Ferdi stated: "The inspiration behind Harrow's Got Talent has always been simple: it is designed to create a space where every student — whether confident or quietly creative — can step forward and shine.

We wanted an event that celebrates individuality, courage, and the sheer joy of performing, while strengthening our sense of unity as a school."

This year, a panel of five judges will select the winners. While the thrill of competition is part of the fun, the true reward lies in the experience itself and Mr. Ferdi emphasised the impact lasts after the final act has ended.

He said: "Students learn to take risks, support one another, and recognise that talent comes in many forms. For the wider Harrow Hengqin community, HGT becomes a shared moment of pride — a reminder of how vibrant, brave, and diverse our young people are."



"Some of my favourite moments are the ones behind the scenes: nervous students encouraging each other, older pupils helping younger ones with rehearsals, and that electric moment just before the curtain opens." That electricity will be more palpable than ever. For performers, the gain is great. "More than anything, I hope they walk away with pride," said Mr. Ferdi. "They should have pride for stepping onto a stage. Pride for practising, failing, trying again. Pride for showing their authentic selves. Winning is wonderful, but courage, creativity, and community stay with them far longer." So, whether you are a performer preparing to share your gift in this new format, or a member of Harrow ready to offer your live support, be sure to mark your calendars!

LONG DUCKER RETURNS WITH AMBITIOUS PLANS

BY MR. LUKE BARTLETT

The Long Ducker is a run for charity at Harrow, which is named because it is longer (much longer) than the Short Ducker, a cross-country run around the sports pitches and nearby fields of Harrow School.

‘Ducker’ was the old school swimming pool, one of the largest in the UK, initially established in the 19th century and falling into disrepair in the late 20th century when the new indoor pool was built. The Long Ducker at Harrow in recent years has sometimes involved a run from the iconic Marble Arch in central London to Harrow-on-the-Hill – taking in an outward leg of 10 miles (16km) along roads and footpaths, with the return journey of 20miles (32km) for the serious runners.

In Hengqin we are very fortunate to have the beautiful and expansive Rowing Park on our doorstep, with many kilometres of running track up and down the Tin Muk River. Distances run for this event have been 2.2km, 4.1km and 8.2km in a double loop along the river and across the bridges. The challenge is in marshalling the route to ensure safety.

The joyful shared experience of running together and cheering each other on – students, staff and parents – is the same whether you are participating in London or Hengqin. While some train hard to set a record, for many it’s the longest run of the year, and not to be taken too seriously. It’s impressive that even the Little Lions run with a parent.

So, while steeped in history and legacy the Long Ducker is a strange Harrow name for what is a fun run in aid of charity, and a milestone in our school calendar. We hope in a future year to evolve the event to make it a 10km race and open up places to outside runners, but in 2026 it is an event for the school community.

January here is the best time of year for an event such as this: similar to the temperature you would have in November in the UK – it should be an ideal temperature for running outside along the river. What I hope everyone gains from participating is a sense of achievement for pushing themselves out of their comfort zone, whether aged two or 62. In addition some valuable money is also raised for an effective and dedicated charity working to save the endangered dolphins in the Pearl River Estuary.



STUDENTS AIMING HIGH WITH UNIVERSITY FAIR

BY MARGARET YANG

This semester, Harrow Hengqin welcomed admissions officers from the University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, Hong Kong University, and King's College London to the school to provide information and tips for prospective applicants from the Class of 2026.

Students from Grades nine to 12 were able to gain insights into the reality of college applications and answers to burning questions, such as, “should we take as many IGCSEs and A-Levels as possible to show our academic capabilities?” and “as international students, does the admissions committee have separate standards for us?”

Harrow Hengqin's University guidance counselor, Ms. Tashi, who hosted the 4 events, said: “universities are committed to helping potential applicants understand each step of the application process, the admissions officers emphasized that this information is highly transparent and accessible—there's no need to panic or treat the process as a ‘black box’ that requires some form of outside intervention.

“Second, good fit goes both ways. Even top-tier universities are eager to show what makes their campus and student support unique. Beyond meeting academic requirements, they look for applicants who can “BE YOU”—students with a sense of what they want and why they are applying. They should take 100% ownership of their educational well-being. This idea is worth reflecting on deeply during the upcoming application process.



“Throughout your educational journey, you will receive guidance, advice, and influence from many sources—but these are like voices from the passenger seat. You are the one who must drive yourself. Take control of your steering wheel.”

Transitioning from high school to college life may seem daunting, but there is no “ultimate” way to adjust.

This is an open-ended question that may not seem directly related to applying, but it reflects a strong sense of self-awareness and genuine care for the peer group.

The speaker's confidence and familiarity in answering—along with the resources they highlighted—also revealed how much the university values students.

While we may aim for a university's reputation or a prestigious diploma, these years are also about shaping yourself for the world beyond the campus.

“Questions like these are absolutely worth asking when you begin this process for yourselves.”

Getting into prestigious universities is a priority task for all high school students, but it can feel intimidating after listening to the admissions officers talk about the high standards that students would need to achieve to be admitted.

“My message is simple”, Ms. Tashi says: “Overseas universities highly value Chinese international students, and everyone is worth respecting because the current situation reflects the real needs of a potential applicant.”





“There is no such thing as a ‘silly question’. Feeling unsure or overwhelmed is normal, but remember that —you belong in these conversations.” International students like us are not inferior, we are what makes the universities.

When application season arrives, it may feel daunting when completing the application, but there are immediate steps that we can take towards getting into your dream university.

Ms. Tashi’s advice being “research, research, research on the university’s official website. Look into the course details, programmes structures, and specific application requirements.”

If you’re planning to apply in the future, explore whether there are online lectures or pre-college programmes you can join now. We encourage this not only to meet application standards but to find the best fit. Remember, in this journey, you are not just being chosen —you are also building your own preference list.”

When preparing for your college applications, taking online courses or pre-college programmes like Summer schools, will not only help you have that one more activity on your CommonApp list, but also help you find your true interest, passion, and best college fit. Moving onto college life isn’t just about others choosing you, it is also about having your own preferences and knowing your worth.

If you are interested in receiving more information, opportunities on university events, announcements will sent via email, so check your inboxes to not miss out on the next opportunity!



ENJOYMENT FOR ALL AT INCLUSIVE SPORTS DAY



BY MARGARET YANG

In November, 20 students from Grades nine to 12, along with 12 teachers, welcomed 100 families from Macau and Zhuhai for an Inclusive Fun Day event, featuring a variety of games and activities for individuals between ages eight to 20 with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families.

The event, hosted by the Harrow Hengqin Medical and Public Health Society, allowed more students and teachers to know more about neurodiversity, and ways of communicating to individuals with such symptoms.

Activities included football, sprint events, and a range of field events, such as sit ups and football.

Gloria Lo, the President of the Medical and Public Health Society, said that the society “recognised a gap in opportunities for neurodiverse children to participate in activities in a way that felt safe and empowering.

“With Ms Yang’s proposal of organising this Inclusive Fun Day with the France Macau Chamber of Commerce and Zhuhai Autism Society, we gladly accepted it, where we could promote and implement our public health values through this event.”

Unlike traditional sports events, the games were ranked with one gold award, three silver awards, and all the other participants would receive bronze awards as recognition of their efforts and sporting and social contributions throughout the day’s range of exciting and challenging activities.

“We wanted social engagement in a low pressure, safe environment, motor skill development, confidence-building, where neurodiverse children could feel successful and celebrated, and anxiety reduction, for neurodiverse children by being sensory friendly and supportive as much as possible.”

This event is part of the Society’s ultimate overarching mission objective that “public health is community-centred and includes everyone for the benefit of all.”

Through Inclusive Fun Day, we aim to raise awareness about neurodivergence and actively contribute to solutions that are meaningful and tangible.

“For neurodivergent children, I realised that minimising sensory distractions is crucial to creating an environment to reduce anxiety,” the senior stated.

“By task simplification and offering clear routines, we could make a supportive and safe environment for the children to have fun and play in this event.

“This the first event integrating neurodivergent children from across the Macau and Zhuhai area.

“Following this success, we hope to continue this long-term, annual initiative with Harrow Hengqin.

“My vision for the MPHS is to become a consistent pillar for the support of neurodivergent community.

“We want to continue to advocate for and to create a range of events that help to promote physical and emotional wellbeing.”



STUDENTS ON SONG FOR SPECIAL GUEST VISITOR

BY MR LUKE BARTLETT

Mr David Woodcock, Director of Music at Harrow School since 2005, visited Harrow Hengqin in September for what was his second visit to the school, having also visited Zhuhai before our school was built, to help and support with the publicity for the official opening.

On this welcome return visit, he played in a concert in the Atrium, gave a masterclass in organ to Brian G10, and taught the school new verses of a traditional, iconic Harrow song in a Whole School Assembly.

He spoke to lots of pupils and parents, sharing his experience of teaching at Harrow, and the musical life of the school. Harrow is one of those schools that tries to be good at everything – and the music is very strong, alongside the academics, sport and drama too. This holistic approach – allowing each pupil to find their talents and passions – is one that we share.

In assembly we sang to Mr Woodcock, who said the singing of songs was the best (other than his own) he had heard from a Harrow school so far!

The tradition of Harrow Songs is unique – no other school in the world has this repertoire of over 50 songs written over more than 150 years.

Over 30 of these historic songs are still in its current repertoire and there are a selection performed several times each year by the whole school.

At Harrow Hengqin we keep this tradition alive by singing the best-known school song – Forty Years On.

This is so iconic that dozens of other schools across the world, with no connection to Harrow, have gone onto adopt this as their school song!

We have recently learnt a second song – Five Hundred Faces – and this is the one that Mr Woodcock worked on with us.

I think we can all relate to that ‘new student’ feeling in the first assembly – as the song says, ‘Five hundred faces, and all so strange! Life in front of me – home behind. I felt like a waif before the wind, tossed on an ocean of shock and change.’

“The chorus we have made our own – ‘Yet the time will come, as the years go by, when your heart will sing at the thought of Hengqin, and the day that you came so strange and shy.’



The school has a strong and genuine link with Harrow in the UK, deepened by visits this year of Mr Alastair Land, the Headmaster, and Mr Woodcock.

Musical collaboration is more likely in the short term between the Greater Bay Area Harrow schools (who are cooperating on the AISL Musical project in April 2026) but Mr Woodcock has promised to bring some musicians from the UK over as soon as he can – and he is warmly invited back.



SPORTS DAY TRIUMPH FOR ANDERSON HOUSE

BY DERRICK DING

On November 21, Harrow Hengqin held its annual House Sports Day, with the six Houses competing for valuable house points and to take home the trophy.

Competing across both track and field, including standing long jump, catch and throw, and a series of sprint relays, students showed great fellowship and courage in their events. Ultimately, Anderson House claimed the most points across the events to be crowned Sports Day champions for 2025.

Mr Fisher, Head of PE, believes Sports Day remains a cornerstone of the school calendar, and its core value goes beyond winning.

He said: “From an educational standpoint, the cornerstone of Sports Day is getting people to actively participate as a team. As much as everyone likes to win, it's not the be all and end all.”

He emphasises that the event aims to get more students active in their house teams, letting them showcase skills they have and even discover hidden talents.

More importantly, it helps students realise sports can be enjoyable: “Finding ways that you can be active and healthy and enjoy at the same time.

“If you're happy and laughing while doing something, majority of the time, it doesn't feel like you're doing it.”

For students nervous about competing in a difficult and challenging sport for the first time, he advised: “Anxiety is brilliant because it tells people you care.

“Even elite athletes like Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo get butterflies before big games.

“It shows you're normal, so embrace it, accept it, and you'll be able to conquer whatever it is.”

When asked about houses to watch, he said: “Lyon and Tu YouYou have very good upper school and lower school athletes, very good in track.

“They always compete very highly across all of the disciplines on the track.”



His favorite moment of Sports Day is seeing full engagement: “Everybody is active, everybody is engaged.

“Even if a student isn't racing, they're cheering on the sideline for their house.

“Teachers and staff all help support it—everybody comes together for this one specific task.”

Mr Fisher also highlighted the efforts of Tony Gao from Churchill, and said: “Not because of his athletic ability, but he refused to quit. He had determination and bravery.

“He entered the 800 meters, was given a chance to stop, and refused to give up, completing the race.

“It's not always about coming first or second; I'd love a house full of people who won't give up.”

Sports Day shines with teamwork, courage and joy, making it a meaningful part of school life.



ROWING REGATTA SUCCESS AT TIN MUK



BY MARGARET YANG

Harrow Hengqin's annual Rowing Regatta was held at Tin Muk Rowing Park on November 29 with the school welcoming elite rowers from Harvard, Yale, Cambridge and Oxford for a morning of fierce competition, sportsmanship and success on and off the water.

Mr. Asa Fisher, Head of PE and coordinator of the event, said: "Rowing is very niche, although it has individualisation and it also has team, when you look at team in a boat, the most you can have is eight, so it makes you perform, it makes you dedicated. In rowing there's no hiding and it is very difficult to not let somebody not perform to the best because it will have a bigger detrimental impact on the team.

"The other aspect I like about it is everyone's always willing to work together, push to try, get a better result for the team or the individual. It takes years of dedication to master something technically to a high level."

When asked about how rowing contributes to the school's broader mission of student development, Mr. Fisher said: "If we look 2 years ago, rowing wasn't even in the school. Having such access to something being so close, initially it was difficult. It was a sport nobody here really knew, no students were very exposed to it.

"So, initially, it took 6 months of taster sessions, getting people comfortable, because as we said, it is a very elitist

sport, and I know that we're in a highly professional educational establishment, but it also kind of goes a little bit against some Chinese culture, and there's not been that many Chinese representations of it.

So, initially, it was difficult. But since we've interlinked rowing within the CCA structure, it's enabled the school to grow.

"In terms of the last 12 months from having realistically one CCA session with about 12 students, to four CCA sessions a week with each session having around 15 to 20 students.

"If you look across the scope of the school, that is a base of around 210-220 students. We are looking at a good 40% of them are probably active in rowing now. In terms of developing it further, personally, I would like to implement it within the PE curriculum, and hopefully that's something we can establish within the future."

Rowing has been at our school for two years by now, creating bonds between students and creating friendships, but when asked to conclude the most rewarding part of watching the team grow over the season, Mr. Fisher said: "It's been difficult to see rowing grow because I only do one day of the CCAs, but rowing is my baby, I started it.

"By giving every student the opportunity to try rowing, it becomes clear that some students take to it and develop a genuine passion for the sport, often surprising others.

"In particular, students who perform well in Core PE and are then given the chance to row can go on to achieve high-level success; students such as Cherry in Grade 8 and Tiger in Grade 11 have, over time, become top district rowers, advocates for the sport, and have encouraged many of their friends to take it up."





DON'T START THE MUSIC

BY BRIAN SO

While a lot of my friends study while listening to music, I'd argue we shouldn't. When listening to music, the brain has to process the music, which competes with the same resources needed to comprehend information.

I used to study having music on, but then I notice I subconsciously start analysing the music and end up not doing anything productive (plus having wasted like an hour).

Even if you don't "react" with music uncontrollably, it still splits your attention and reduces your productivity while studying.

Studying is about absorbing information and encoding it into long-term memory, and this process is best achieved through focused attention on work.

Music (during study) is a strong distraction which leads to weakened memory formation, drawing us back from studying effectively and consistently.

Otherwise, music does benefit the brain according to various studies but that is solely limited to non-studying times, so you might want to save your playlists for breaks after hours of hard work as a reward.

During study, music with words is particularly problematic since they engage the language center of the brain, which directly interfere with the processing of textual material.

"Well, I'll just listen to music without lyrics then," I hear you say. Nah. Even instrumental music can be a significant source of distraction, preventing you from fully engaging with the tasks.

Any form of music occupies a part of your functioning brain, more or less, which divides your attention making you less focused on your work.

Additionally, If you are taking IGCSE or A Level music, you will probably be either tired of listening to music or become psychopathically enthralled in music like how I now am.

Either way, you will not benefit from music while you study so please just don't.

Therefore, I strongly recommend (again) not to study with music because in my opinion it really doesn't help.

Lastly, a quote from Mr Bartlett: "It may make the time pass more pleasantly, but it is not helping your learning."

Focus on studying. Your brain won't be braining with music on.

READ-IT'S GOOD FOR YOU

BY GLORIA LO

Let's be honest: being "someone who reads" has a stereotype. People picture a nerd hiding behind a stack of books and having zero social life. But the truth is... reading isn't boring at all. In fact, I believe it is one of the most exciting things you can ever do.

When you open a book, it's like having a private conversation with the writer. You step into their mind, understand their philosophy, their experiences, their mistakes, their epiphanies. It's rare in life to have someone explain their thoughts to you so honestly. And without even noticing, you become wiser, more thoughtful, and more aware of the world around you.

The famous Chinese proverb: "Read ten thousand books, travel ten thousand miles." I love this because it captures something simple: reading is a journey. Even stuck in school, drowning in homework, or just tired from life, you can still "travel" by flipping a page. Books take you places you've never been, introduce you to people you'll never meet, and teach you lessons you didn't know you ever really needed.

So, pick up a book and let it take you somewhere. You might be surprised how far you go without leaving your seat.

What do I read, you might ask. I am currently reading *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *The Millionaire Fastlane* by MJ DeMarco. I have received these two book recommendations online; the former being a classic and the latter being a good introduction to the concept of finances. Remember, you can read whatever that align to your interest and your ability.

Keep being curious, never stop learning!



WINTER STUDY LEAVE RECOMMENDATIONS

BY ARINA DENISOVA

Inside Out 2

This animated sequel dives deeper into the mind of a teenage girl, Riley, as she navigates the onset of puberty. The once orderly headquarters, run by the original five emotions, is changed when four new emotions arrive, with Anxiety quickly taking charge, convinced that Riley must strive to be a "better" version of herself, Anxiety seizes control, dictating actions and emotions through intricate plans. Her contrasting values begin to obliterate Riley's original belief system, replacing it with a new one built entirely on anxious memories and thoughts. Just as Riley seems completely overwhelmed, the original emotions fight their way back to headquarters, leading to a powerful conclusion about embracing all feelings to achieve a balanced sense of self.

Reason for Recommendation:

The film powerfully shows that our reactions to events, not the events themselves, ultimately shape our reality. It argues that even in negative situations, choosing to view them through a positive lens can change your personal belief system. This is why a positive, forward-looking mindset is so crucial to live a happy and fulfilling life.

Hidden Figures (2016)

This film tells the true story of three exceptionally gifted African-American women who played an extremely important part in NASA's success during the early years of the U.S. space race.

It was set in the 1950s and 1960s and it highlights the vast intellectual contributions for the benefit of America of a trio including a mathematician, a computer programmer, and an engineer.

They work in an environment with racial and gender discrimination all while advocating for the recognition they deserve. Their personal triumphs are not just individual victories but brought broader social change in America.

Reason for Recommendation:

I recommend this film for its compelling narrative and its critical focus on perseverance, even when facing huge challenges.

The women's achievements stand as a testament to what passion can achieve, serving as a powerful motivational story for anyone who has ever felt underestimated.

It's both entertaining and deeply educational, focusing on diversity and the overlooked figures in history. It reminds us that no matter the obstacles, we should always pursue our dreams.

Wonder (2017)

This heartwarming family film follows the journey of Auggie, a young boy with facial differences. He meets curiosity, misunderstanding, and bullying as he tries to find his place in this new environment. After betrayal shakes confidence, he withdraws.

With the amazing support of his family, Auggie slowly finds the strength to face the world again. His journey leads not only to restored friendships but to a small, personal miracle that touches everyone around him.

Reason for Recommendation:

The movie spreads warmth and joy, leaving you feeling much better than when you started watching.

While it doesn't shy away from showing the cruelty Auggie faces, it highlights the impact of kindness.

In many ways, we all have our own "Auggie" insecurities. The film delivers the message that these insecurities fade when you are with a supportive community.

It shows how small acts of kindness can truly change a person's day, year, or life in a profound way.



Book Recommendation:Little Women by Louisa May Alcott

This classic novel follows the lives of the four March sisters—Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy—as they grow from childhood into young adulthood. With their father away fighting in the Civil War, the sisters live with their loving and supportive mother, Marmee, and learn to face both hardship and happiness while struggling with poverty. Despite their limited circumstances, the March home is filled with warmth, humour, and family values.

Each sister has a distinct personality and dream. Meg longs for a comfortable family life, Jo is fiercely independent and dreams of becoming a writer, Beth is gentle, shy, and deeply musical, while Amy is artistic and ambitious, hoping for success and recognition. As the novel unfolds, readers follow the sisters through everyday adventures, disagreements, friendships, and their first experiences of love and loss. Through these moments, Alcott highlights the strength of their bond.

Reason for Recommendation:

I recommend this novel because its themes are universal and timeless. *Little Women* explores ambition, personal growth, and the complex but deeply loving relationships between sisters. It also examines the struggle for independence in a society with strict expectations, particularly for women. Although the novel is set in the past, the emotions and challenges the characters face feel modern and relatable. This story encourages readers to reflect on family, love, and the importance of staying true to oneself, making it a meaningful and enduring read.

Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt

This is a children's novel that follows Winnie Foster, a curious and thoughtful young girl who feels trapped by her overprotective family. Her life changes when she wanders into the woods near her home and discovers the Tuck family's extraordinary secret: after drinking from a hidden spring, they have become immortal and can never age or die.

At first, the idea of eternal life seems magical and desirable. Living forever appears to promise endless opportunities, freedom, and happiness. However, as Winnie grows closer to the Tucks, she begins to understand the heavy burden their immortality has placed on them. Unable to grow, change, or move on, the family lives a life of isolation, constantly hiding their secret and watching the world change around them. Their immortality has stripped life of its natural meaning and purpose.

The story becomes more tense when a dangerous stranger, known as the Man in the Yellow Suit, discovers the spring and plans to exploit its power for his own gain. His threat forces Winnie to confront difficult moral questions about life, death, and responsibility. Ultimately, Winnie must make a brave and life-defining choice that will shape her future forever.

Reason for Recommendation:

This novel remains a favourite because of its sensitive and philosophical handling of death and its importance in giving life meaning. Rather than portraying death as something frightening, *Tuck Everlasting* presents it as a natural and necessary part of the human experience. The novel encourages readers to appreciate the beauty of change, growth, and the limited time we have. Its quiet but powerful message stays with readers long after the final page, making it a truly unforgettable and deeply moving story.

Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro

This book is set in a near-future world and is narrated by Klara, an Artificial Friend designed to be a child's companion. Klara is highly intelligent and unusually observant, carefully studying human behaviour in order to understand emotions and relationships. She is chosen by a sickly teenage girl named Josie, and Klara's new purpose becomes protecting and supporting the girl she grows to care deeply about.

As the story develops, readers experience the world entirely through Klara's unique perspective. Her literal and innocent way of thinking highlights the complexities of human love, loyalty, and sacrifice. Klara believes strongly in the power of the Sun, which she sees as a source of life and healing, and this belief drives many of her actions. Through her devotion to Josie, the novel raises important questions about what it means to love.

Gradually, a disturbing truth about why Klara was brought into Josie's life begins to emerge. This revelation forces both Klara and the reader to confront uncomfortable ideas about identity, replacement, and the value of a human life.

Reason for Recommendation:

This novel leaves readers feeling both hopeful and deeply sad. Ishiguro's clear, restrained writing style explores themes of loneliness, connection, and what makes a life meaningful. The story is filled with subtle clues and quiet moments, but its emotional impact is strongest at the end. *Klara and the Sun* is a thoughtful and moving novel that reminds readers of the power of hope and the importance of genuine human connection.

MAGIC IN MATHS WEEK



BY MARGARET YANG

Harrow Hengqin celebrated Maths Week in Upper School as students from Grades six to 12 engaged in a range of activities and events including chess competitions while learning about how maths is useful in our daily lives.

One of the organizers of Maths Week, Mr Max Sun, says that even though math is often seen as a daunting subject, it had great benefits for students.

He said: “Maths Week was designed to show students that mathematics goes far beyond textbooks and formulas.

“Through a wide range of accessible and enjoyable activities, such as the chess competition, Maths Hunt, clinometer-making workshop, Kahoot quizzes, the Game of 24, and Maths Art, students experienced math in ways that were playful, hands-on, and creative.

“By exploring maths through games, puzzles, art, and real-life problem-solving, students could see that maths is not only approachable but also something they can enjoy and feel confident engaging with.”

Students were able to engage in relevant activities inside and outside the classroom.

Mr Sun added: “The chess competition and the clinometer-making workshop drew the most enthusiasm.

“Chess engaged students because of logic, strategy, and competition, skills that appeal to a wide range of learners.

Allowing students to understand the practicality of maths is one of the main goals of math week.

He continued: “A great example was the clinometer-making activity. Students created their own simple measuring tool using simple items, such as protractors, strings and blu-tac, and used it to determine angles of elevation and depression. They can apply it to estimate the height of objects, such as buildings or flagpoles, with trigonometry. This activity helped students understand how mathematical concepts are used practically.”

“Several activities highlighted collaboration, especially the clinometer project, where students worked in teams to build their devices, and collect measurements. Kahoot quizzes also encouraged teamwork and communication. Working together helped students feel more confident, especially those who might be hesitant during individual tasks.”

One piece of advice Mr. Sun would like to give to all students is: “Don’t be afraid of maths, embrace it with curiosity.

“Maths is everywhere, and the more connections you make between what you learn in class and the real world, the more enjoyable it becomes.

“It is really important to maintain a positive attitude, never give up when something feels challenging, and look for small moments of achievement.

“When you approach math with openness and a willingness to explore, over time it is clear it becomes far less intimidating and much more rewarding.”



CHEMISTRY AND CHAOS AT SCIENCE WEEK

BY MARGARET YANG

From daily lessons, to the running water taps in our homes, to the vehicles we use to reach school every day; science is all around us in ways we often can't imagine.

At Harrow Hengqin, 27–31 October was our Science Week, where students were able to engage in numerous practical experiments and gain insights into the subject.

This year's theme was "Change and Adapt" and aimed to show how science continually shapes our world and how living things evolve to survive in different environments.

Mr Rixon, who organised the week, said: "We hoped pupils would leave the week feeling inspired by the joy of scientific discovery and with a deeper understanding of how both science and organisms adapt over time."

During the week, students participated in numerous experiments and were immersed in science-related activities across Little Lions, Lower School, and Upper School, creating memorable and surprising moments.

Mr. Rixon said: "It's hard to choose just one moment, as pupils showed incredible curiosity throughout the week, especially in their experiments and poster work."

However, a standout memory was seeing the excitement in Lower School when pupils watched their peers use the Van de Graaff generator – their amazement and laughter as hair stood on end truly captured the spirit of Science Week."



Organising Science Week was a major task with many challenges to ensure it ran successfully. Mr Rixon added: "The biggest challenge being coordinating a whole-school timetable that allowed every member of the Upper School science team to deliver practical demonstrations.

"This required careful planning of equipment and apparatus, as well as moving resources during breaks and lunchtimes to ensure everything was ready on time.

"We overcame this through communication, teamwork, and a shared commitment to supporting each other.

Some students were able to discover new realms of science in the activities and experiments.

Mr Rixon said: "Students showed real courage and curiosity, trying new activities even when they were unsure.

"I saw pupils eagerly volunteering for the Van de Graaff generator, amazed by the Elephant's Toothpaste demonstrations, and putting exceptional effort into researching a range of organisms for their posters.

"The 'wow' moments during practicals and the Science assembly were clear signs that several pupils were discovering a new excitement and passion for science."

Mr Rixon has ambitious plans for the future. He added: "My dream addition would be a giant bubble activity out on the field, especially for our younger pupils—it would create a magical, hands-on experience that sparks real curiosity.

"I would also love to include the 'screaming jelly babies' demonstration, as it would captivate our pupils and deepen their interest in the science behind dramatic reactions."

Mr Rixon concluded: "I wanted students to connect directly with our theme of Change and Adapt. "While many of our demonstrations focused on reactions in physics, chemistry, and biology, I also wanted pupils to explore how science helps us understand adaptation—both in humans and in animals.

"My aim was to spark curiosity about wildlife, conservation, and the challenges organisms face due to climate change."