

## THE DRAYTON CONNECTION

## ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



### Message from the Head

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this edition of our Alumni Newsletter. As we continue our journey through the school's 95th year, we are reminded daily of the strength of our community and the remarkable legacy built by generations of Draytonians. This milestone year will culminate in a celebration towards the end of the year, and we look forward to marking it with the people who have shaped our story.

In this issue, you will find highlights from recent alumni visits, school trips, curriculum events and a wonderful array of musical and sporting achievements. These moments reflect the vibrancy of school life today and the enduring values that connect past students with those walking our corridors now.

One of the greatest privileges for our students is hearing directly from former pupils. When alumni return to share their experiences, skills and insights, it provides our young people with inspiration that cannot be replicated in any other way. Your stories help them see what is possible.

As we look ahead to our 95th celebrations, I warmly encourage all former students to stay connected, sign up to our alumni network, and consider visiting us. Whether you can give a little time or a lot, your involvement makes a genuine difference to the next generation of Draytonians.

Mrs L Mills  
Head Teacher

### ALUMNUS VISIT – MIA LEPPER



Alumnus Mia Lepper returned to Drayton Manor to speak with Drama and Music students about pathways into the creative arts. Since leaving the school, Mia has progressed to The BRIT School, completed a Foundation course at one of the UK's leading drama schools, and is now in the first year of her degree programme.

### ALUMNUS VISIT – FAIZ GUL



We were delighted to welcome back former student Faiz Gul, who is currently studying Law at the University of Warwick. Faiz returned to speak with students about his journey into higher education and the world of competitive legal opportunities.

Faiz has recently been awarded a prestigious scholarship from A&O Shearman, a global law firm that partners with Warwick to offer high-value, funded opportunities for aspiring law students,

including support through Law School LLM scholarships. He spoke candidly about the hard work and resilience required to reach this stage, sharing how he overcame disappointing mock exam results by refocusing, staying motivated, and seeking support.

#### ALUMNUS VISIT – MAKSYM BELKO



Maksym returned to run a small group session. He spoke about joining Drayton Manor as a newcomer and the challenges he overcame with language, confidence and motivation. His story gave students reassurance and inspiration, showing what can be achieved with support and perseverance. The discussion was engaging and helped strengthen the sense of belonging and ambition among the students who attended.

#### ALUMNUS VISIT – PEDRO DA CONCEICAO



Pedro delivered an assembly to Year 9 students about his journey from Drayton Manor to studying Law with Business at the University of Exeter. He spoke about the importance of good habits, taking responsibility and making positive choices early on. After the assembly, he met with Year 10 Gifted and Talented students to discuss studying Law and Business. He highlighted how school activities such as debating helped him succeed at university. Students asked thoughtful questions about subject choices, university life and pathways into legal careers.

#### SOVEREIGN MINDS SPEAR ORATORY COMPETITION – RUN BY OUR DRAYTON ALUMNI!

On Saturday 31 January, the school hosted the Sovereign Minds SPEAR Oratory Competition organised by three of our Alumni, Esher, Simrit and Harnoor Chagger, their family and

a large number of volunteers. This continued a long standing relationship with the school as Esher, Simrit and Harnoor's father attended the school and their Grandfather gave over 30 years of service as part of the Science Faculty.

The Sovereign Minds SPEAR Oratory Prize is a prestigious speech making competition that gives 16 - 18 years olds which provides a platform and a voice to allow young people to set their sights on global issues whilst showcasing their own passion, intelligence and ability to find answers to the difficult challenges that young people face today. Students are invited to deliver a speech on one of the ten SPEAR target subjects. By choosing a topic they care deeply about, every entrant can deepen their understanding of global issues and develop a sense of responsibility as global citizens.

The topics students spoke on were, ending poverty, improving health, education for all, eliminating hunger, the future of work, protecting our planet, peace and justice, equality everywhere, global cooperation and responsible consumption.

The competition was launched by Sovereign Minds, a UK-based educational initiative that works with young people to nurture their skills, mindfulness, curiosity, critical thinking and independence helping participants to succeed in both their careers and also their roles as responsible global citizens. Sovereign Minds are supported by over 120 volunteers ranging from teachers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, doctors, finance professionals and more with some volunteers coming from as far as Scotland to help run things at the school on the day.

Everyone volunteering for Sovereign Minds is passionate about education and oracy and keen to ensure all students across the UK have access to opportunities.

More than 2,200 students signed up for the competition across London, with approximately 800 entrants from West London and 83 students from Drayton Manor High School taking part. There are four events in total, the Qualifiers, Quarter-Final, Semi-Final and Final.

The Qualifiers took place on 31 Jan across four London sites, with Drayton Manor being chosen to host the West London Qualifiers. The Quarter-Final will be take place 14 Feb at The Naval and Military Club in London, with the Final on 14 March at Church House, Westminster, with the overall winner receiving a £10,000 cash prize.

Four students from Drayton Manor progressed onto the Quarter Finals, Alex (12.1), Adam (12.1), Maya (12.1), Elsa (12.3).

The SPEAR Oratory Prize Competition was recently featured on the BBC where alumni Esher Chagger spoke live on-air about how her generation can be underestimated.

#### YEAR 12 AND YEAR 7 SCIENCE SHOW



of drama, humour, and high-energy chemistry that captivated students from start to finish. With each demonstration, he brought complex scientific ideas to life through spectacular experiments and clear, engaging explanations that revealed the excitement behind everyday chemical reactions. One student reflected on the experience, sharing:

“Dr Szydlo’s science show was an excellent experience that enhanced my love for chemistry. His experiment highlighted the wonder and beauty that often go unnoticed every day. It strengthened my resolve to continue science in further education.”



Their words perfectly capture the excitement and curiosity that spread through the students.



## JACK PETCHEY



On 20 January, six Year 10 students who participated in the Jack Petchey Speak Out Challenge delivered their speeches to the entire year group, competing for a place in the finals.

The Jack Petchey Speak Out Challenge, run by the Jack Petchey Foundation, is the largest youth public speaking competition in the UK. It aims to inspire confidence, develop communication skills, and empower young people to use their voices to make a difference.



Our students rose to that challenge brilliantly. The speeches were passionate and thought-provoking, covering topics such as dreams, identity, perfectionism, the power of family, and resilience. Each speaker demonstrated impressive courage and maturity as they shared messages that resonated with their peers.

We are incredibly proud of all the students who took part and confidently presented speeches on topics that were meaningful and personal to them.

## EALING MUSIC SERVICE JAZZ WORKSHOP

On Wednesday 4 February we welcomed renowned jazz composer and bandleader Sam Eastmond, to run a jazz workshop with KS3 musicians as part of an Ealing Music Service project. Across the morning students were introduced to new repertoire, learnt the different approaches of performing in a Big Band and even had a go at improvising! Following the workshop, students were then invited to participate in a performance at Questors theatre, forming a massive Jazz Orchestra along with over 100 students from across the borough!



### TRIP TO POMPEII

From 2 February to 5 February the Classics department led a hugely successful trip to the Bay of Naples. Latin GCSE students from Years 10 and 11 experienced a unique blend of modern and ancient life, bringing their studies of the ancient world to life in front of their eyes.



Students visited the ancient towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum where they were able to walk the streets just as the Romans did before the eruption of Vesuvius in 79CE, and even witnessed current excavations continuing in the site uncovering new buildings and remains. A particular highlight was the arrival at the house of Lucius Caecilius Iucundus (Caecilius), whom the students have studied since Year 7! From ovens in Oplontis to the theatre at Pompeii the ancient sites offered a unique opportunity to experience the real lives of everyday Romans firsthand.



As the sun breached through the clouds students ascended to the summit of Mount Vesuvius, which looms over the bay of Naples and is visible from all around. To stand on the top of the volcano which obliterated, though perfectly preserved, the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum was an awe-inspiring moment.



### DRAYTON MANOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TAKE ON THE CHEMISTRY OLYMPIAD FOR THE FIRST TIME

Twelve talented students from Years 12 and 13 at Drayton Manor High School have proudly taken part in the Chemistry Olympiad, a prestigious international competition organised by the Royal Society of Chemistry. This marks the first time the school has entered the challenge, making the occasion an exciting milestone for both students and staff.

The Olympiad is renowned for stretching participants beyond the A-level curriculum, requiring advanced problem-solving skills, creativity, and deep scientific understanding. Our students embraced the challenge with enthusiasm, dedicating time and effort to prepare for the demanding paper.

We are now eagerly awaiting the results to find out whether any of our entrants have qualified for the next round of the competition. Regardless of the outcome, the school is immensely proud of their commitment, curiosity, and willingness to take on a global scientific challenge.

Congratulations to Sahil (13.6), Andreas (13.5), Safa (13.6), Elizabeth (12.5), Max (12.4), Eliza (13.5), Khadeeja (12.1), Amrita (12.5), Patryk (12.5), Muhanad (12.4), Syeda (12.1), Ali (12.2).

Their participation reflects Drayton Manor's ongoing dedication to fostering academic excellence and encouraging students to push the boundaries of their learning.

### CLASSICAL SOLOIST NIGHT



On Wednesday 28 January, Drayton Manor High School's Classical Soloist Night brought together an evening of extraordinary musical talent. Organised by the school's Music Department, the event provided a platform for solo performers of all skill levels to showcase their dedication and artistry before an engaged and

appreciative audience. The night was a true testament to the school's vibrant musical community, with students across year groups demonstrating passion, technical mastery, and expressive depth.

A memorable highlight of the night came with the attendance of Julian Gallant, a well-known advocate for the arts in the London Borough of Ealing. An accomplished pianist, composer, and music director, Mr Gallant presided over the competition as a distinguished adjudicator. His extensive career in performance, composition, and leadership in classical music made him an ideal judge for this prestigious event.



The competition featured several categories, ensuring musicians at various levels had an opportunity to shine. The repertoire ranged from delicate Baroque compositions to expressive Romantic pieces, with each student bringing their unique interpretation to the music. The carefully structured format allowed both seasoned and emerging musicians to be recognized for their efforts. While these students took home awards, every performer contributed to a night of exceptional musical achievement. Beyond the competition, the event provided a valuable opportunity for young musicians to gain live performance experience and grow in confidence.

The event highlighted the talent, dedication, and passion of its students, leaving both performers and audience members inspired. With such a strong debut, anticipation is already building for the next showcase of musical excellence.

### CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK 2026: 'THIS IS MY PLACE'

Children's Mental Health Week 2026 was celebrated with energy, creativity and a powerful sense of community at Drayton Manor. This year's national theme, 'This Is My Place', focused on helping young people recognise the importance of belonging, whether that is within school, at home, or in the wider community.

Our Student Wellbeing Ambassadors played a central role in shaping the week. Meeting regularly in the lead-up to the event, they brainstormed activities that were not only meaningful but also engaging and fun for their peers. Their ideas, combined with the generosity of staff volunteers, resulted in one of our most successful Mental Health Weeks yet.



### A Week of Enriching Activities

Throughout the week, students had the opportunity to take part in a wide range of activities aimed at promoting wellbeing, connection and creativity. Staff volunteers kindly offered their time and expertise to run sessions including:

- Yoga
- A dodgeball tournament
- Student karaoke
- Daily morning mindfulness led by Inclusion staff

Each lunchtime, the main hall was transformed into a creative wellbeing hub, with drop-in activities such as:

- A scavenger hunt
- Mindful colouring
- Design-your-own keyrings
- Creating Thank You cards

These sessions proved extremely popular, with students sharing overwhelmingly positive feedback about the chance to unwind, be creative and spend time with friends.



### Special Guests and Community Partnerships

On Tuesday, we were delighted to welcome Eleanor from NHS Mental Health Support Team and Evie from The Proper Project. Both visitors delivered interactive wellbeing activities and spoke about the mental health support available to young people in the local community. Their involvement helped students better understand how to seek help and access services beyond school.

### Whole-Week Initiatives

Three initiatives ran across the entire week, giving students ongoing opportunities to reflect on kindness, community and the theme of belonging:

### **An art competition titled 'This Is My Place'**

Kindness Bingo, encouraging daily acts of kindness  
'Proud of You' tickets, which staff handed out to recognise moments of kindness, determination and positive contributions  
These activities helped reinforce everyday wellbeing habits and encouraged students to notice the strengths in themselves and others.

### **Engaging Families**

Supporting families continued to be a vital part of our approach. Two parent events were held during the week:  
Year 7–8 Parents Afternoon Tea (Tuesday): Focused on supporting children's mental health in a digital world.  
Whole-School Parent Workshop, this session provided strategies for early identification of mental health challenges and practical ways parents can support their child at home. Mrs Guitane also shared how we foster belonging and community at Drayton Manor—key foundations for positive mental health.

### **STUDENT LEADERSHIP BEYOND THE SCHOOL GATES – VISIT TO NORTH EALING PRIMARY SCHOOL**



A highlight of the week was when six of our Wellbeing Ambassadors visited North Ealing Primary School to lead a presentation on wellbeing, bullying, and simple strategies for maintaining good mental health. Their confident delivery and thoughtful guidance were warmly received by pupils and staff, strengthening our partnership with the local primary community and giving our students a valuable leadership experience.  
Children's Mental Health Week 2026 truly embodied our commitment to fostering a supportive, inclusive and connected school environment. A huge thank-you goes to our Wellbeing Ambassadors, all participating staff, visiting professionals and our parent community for helping make the week such a success.

### **EXCEPTIONAL RESULTS IN INTERMEDIATE MATHS CHALLENGE**

Students across Years 9 to 11 have achieved outstanding results showing exceptional mathematical ability in this year's UK Mathematics Trust (UKMT) Intermediate Maths Challenge. 14 students achieved Gold Awards, placing them among the top performers nationally.  
45 students secured Silver Awards,  
48 students earned Bronze Awards, and a further 73 students were recognised with Participation Certificates, reflecting both excellence and broad engagement across the school.  
An outstanding 107 certificates out of 180 students who took part.

These results highlight the depth of mathematical talent at Drayton Manor

The Mathematics Department is immensely proud of all students who participated and looks forward to building on this success in future competitions.

We will get the certificates printed and celebrate our students in assembly and also send a notice to bulletins in due course.

### **BASKETBALL**

Coach Tasharn has been running the KS3 Lunchtime Basketball Club every day during Period 4. This is a very popular club where students can practice their skills in friendly competition.

Girls' Basketball Club has been popular and well attended this year. The club is run by Coach Tasharn and Coach Concielle on Wednesdays after school. We are hoping to enter a team into the KS3 Girls Basketball Tournament in the first week back after February half term.

The Junior team have shown fantastic determination throughout their opening fixtures, securing two well-deserved victories alongside a single narrow defeat. Their teamwork, competitive spirit and willingness to learn have been clear in every performance. Sitting in a strong position in the league table, the Juniors are well on their way to qualifying for the Ealing League semi-finals very soon.

The Senior team has been nothing short of outstanding so far, achieving a perfect record of three wins from three, against Elthorne Park, Ada Lovelace and Ark Soane. With disciplined defending, creative play around the key and a sharp attacking threat, they have set the standard for the competition. They look forward to the Ealing League semi-finals.



Earlier this academic year, our 3x3 basketball team made school history by winning the inaugural Jr. NBA London 3x3 Tournament 2024/25, with the final held in the iconic setting of Trafalgar Square. Their outstanding victory not only crowned them London champions but also led to two unforgettable experiences that celebrated their achievement on the biggest stages basketball in the UK has to offer. As champions, the boys were invited to the exclusive Jr. NBA 3v3 Exhibition Game inside NBA House at Magazine London, the official fan zone for the NBA London Game.



The boys had the incredible opportunity to watch global basketball stars compete live, including Two-time NBA all-star Ja Morant. The atmosphere inside The O2 was electric, with thousands of fans witnessing London's 19th NBA game and the league's 10th regular-season matchup in the UK. For our students, experiencing the speed, physicality, and intensity of an NBA game up close was both inspiring and unforgettable. Alongside the game itself, the event was supported by a wide range of NBA initiatives, from youth clinics and community outreach to interactive fan engagements, creating a full weekend of basketball celebration that the boys were fortunate to be part of.

### NETBALL

Training has resumed for students in Year 7 to 10 during lunch periods and after school with Ms Kear, and Coach Lisa from Evolution Netball. Students can develop their netball skills and have fun, all while demonstrating their ambition to represent the school in League matches and Borough tournaments.

The Year 9 netball team, accompanied by Ms. Kear, took part in the Ealing Borough Tournament on Monday 12 January at Ellen Wilkinson School. They faced a challenging group stage, competing against teams from Twyford and William Perkin, Featherstone, and the host school, Ellen Wilkinson. Despite the tough competition, the team performed confidently, securing three wins and one draw.



In early February, the Year 9s faced Greenford High School in an impressive display of skill and determination. With both an A team and a B team competing, the students delivered two strong performances. The A team dominated their match with an exceptional 33-1 victory, showcasing confident play and excellent

teamwork. The B team followed with a well-earned 5-1 win, an especially noteworthy achievement considering that, for most of the players, it was their first ever netball match.

### FOOTBALL



The Under 14 Girls Football team are undefeated so far in the Ealing Borough league competition. Their most recent tie was against Greenford High School. A stroke of sunny weather ensured conditions were ideal for the match. Despite having two starters absent, the team kicked off at a high tempo which served them well to lead 4-1 at the break. Although the opposition were able to score early in the second half, Drayton Manor refocused and strung together a couple of sharp passing plays which sealed a 6-2 victory. Congratulations to Amerah Tejan who was named player of the match. The team looks forward to their upcoming matches against Elthorne Park in the Ealing Cup quarter-final, and Dormers' Wells in the Borough League.

The Year 9 and 10 Girls' Futsal Tournament took place on Friday 23 February at Ada Lovelace High School. Teams from Drayton Manor, Ada Lovelace, Cardinal Wiseman, and Twyford competed in a series of fast-paced matches. After a strong effort and some impressive performances throughout the tournament, the combined Year 9 and 10 team secured a well-deserved 3rd place finish.

### MIDDLESEX CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS



On Tuesday 10 February, seven students from Drayton Manor proudly represented Ealing at the Middlesex Schools Cross Country Championships, held this year at Harrow School. They joined a strong borough team made up of runners from a range of local secondary schools, including Twyford, Ada Lovelace, Elthorne Park, and St Benedict's. The selected Drayton Manor students were Brody (7F), Megan (9L), Owen (9I), Sofia Mossi



(10G), Cordelia (10G), Naimah (12.2), and Dante (12.3).

Despite muddy and overcast conditions, temperatures remained comfortable, and the rain held off until later in the afternoon. Many competitors commented that the redesigned course was an improvement on last year's, offering a smoother route and more enjoyable race experience.



The following students delivered an excellent set of performances on the day:

Owen (9I) (Junior Boys 3.5km) – 9th out of 59 - 0:13:04

Sofia (10G) (Inter Girls 4.2km) – 4th out of 46 - 0:17:58

Naimah (12.2) (Senior Girls 4.2km) – 3rd out of 20 - 0:17:50

These results reflect not only impressive athletic ability but also real resilience and ambition from every runner. We are incredibly proud of the way our students represented both Drayton Manor and the borough of Ealing.

We are also delighted to share that both Sofia and Naimah have been selected to represent Middlesex County at the English Schools Cross Country Championships, taking place at Sefton Park, Liverpool, on 7 March. This is a remarkable achievement and a testament to their outstanding performances and dedication to the sport.

## 95-YEAR CELEBRATION: SIGN UP TO JOIN OUR ALUMNI NETWORK!

This year marks a monumental milestone for Drayton Manor High School, 95 years of shaping young minds and fostering lifelong connections! As part of the celebration, we're inviting all alumni to reconnect and join our growing alumni network. Stay updated on special events, share your stories, and be a part of the legacy. Don't miss out! Sign up today by clicking this link and help us commemorate this incredible milestone!

## BECOME AN ALUMNI AMBASSADOR - INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION

We are at a pivotal and exciting stage in our journey as a school community, building meaningful, lasting connections with our alumni. As we grow this network, we are proud to launch our Alumni Ambassador programme. We are seeking passionate former students who want to give back, share their experiences, and make a difference to the life of the school. Whether you left last year or decades ago, your journey matters. As an Alumni Ambassador, you will act as a bridge between the school and its alumni community, helping to support current students through mentoring, events, outreach, and more. This is a rewarding opportunity to contribute to the life of the school, inspire young people, and strengthen the legacy of our alumni family.

Join us. Be part of the next chapter. All prospective Alumni Ambassadors will be subject to relevant recruitment and safeguarding checks, as the safety and wellbeing of our students is central to everything we do. Click here for more information.

Please encourage any alumni who have not signed-up to do so at [draytonians@draytonmanorhighschool.co.uk](mailto:draytonians@draytonmanorhighschool.co.uk).

