

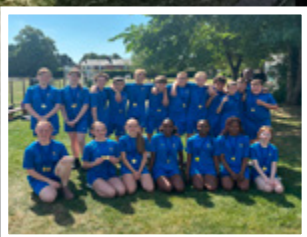
VISION

Issue 43: September 2026



King James I Academy & Sixth Form Centre magazine

Learning to inspire at *King James*



Inside: Exam Results, Primary Liaison, International Trips, The Key+ Challenge, Sports News, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Science Initiatives, Health & Wellbeing, Sixth Form News and more.



Welcome

Welcome to the latest issue of *Vision*, our Academy magazine.

The past academic year has brought challenges for the students of King James, but once again they have proven to be exceptional ambassadors for the Academy, and a credit to their parents. Students continue to support each other when times get tough, and that makes it more enjoyable when we celebrate their frequent and significant successes, both inside and outside of the classroom. We are incredibly proud that these students are a part of our school community.

I would like to congratulate all of our Year 11 and Year 13 students who have performed exceptionally well in their external examinations this summer. We are pleased that the majority of our Year 11's are returning to study in our Sixth Form, and that all Sixth Form students who applied for university have successfully secured their place.

This magazine will give you a snapshot of what students have enjoyed outside of the curriculum at King James, but this is only a flavour of what students get up to; there really is too much to include within these pages. From international travel and work experience, to taking part in The Key+ Challenge, Duke of Edinburgh Awards and numerous competitions, students have many opportunities for personal development.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention the excellent outcome of our latest Ofsted Inspection from March 2026, and would encourage you to take the time to read their positive comments through the link to the full report on our website homepage. Thank you all for your ongoing support.

Best wishes,

Simon Whitehead, Headteacher

Creating an easy Transition

At King James we recognise the importance of beginning the transition from primary to secondary school early so that our new starters feel happy and confident from day one.

The transition process starts for us with the extensive Outreach Programme we offer to our local primary schools. Schools can sign pupils up for a wide range of free after school activities designed to introduce secondary school life and allay any fears from an early age.

In our annual Year 5 Curriculum Week 2026, pictured right and below, pupils from local primary schools enjoyed a host of educational activities in all subjects, and as they enter Year 6, these students are then invited to attend our annual Year 6 Open Evening, which takes place on September 16th this year. This is an excellent opportunity for families to join us in school to meet our staff and students and enjoy an evening of guided tours and subject-themed activities to help parents and carers choose the best secondary school for their child.

Children who are already enrolled to start King James in September are invited to attend three Year 6 transition days in July. With Year 12 students as guides, students are able to make lots of new friends, familiarise themselves with the layout of our buildings, take part in timetabled lessons and enjoy break and lunch in our Dining Hall.

We also organise after school events where children and their parents can meet our Academy Leadership Team, their Year 7 Form Tutors and our Student Support Team. These will all play an important role in helping new students to settle in. Parents can also order uniform and organise school transport at these events. All of our transition activities and events are designed to build confidence and independence, and to help children forge firm friendships well in advance of their first day.

Transition and outreach activities are designed to build confidence and independence.

Lucy Mulryan, Primary Outreach Co-ordinator



Primary Outreach and Curriculum Weeks

Join us for Year 6 Open Evening

Throughout the academic year we offer an extensive Primary Outreach programme, where local primary schools can opt in to a variety of free after-school sessions; and in June, all Year 5 pupils in the local area are invited to attend our Curriculum Weeks.

Outreach sessions give local youngsters the opportunity to take part in a wide range of activities that primary schools may not be able to offer such as photography, filmmaking, drama, trampolining, music, textiles and kick boxing.

In Photography sessions, pupils work with professional DSLR cameras and learn different techniques to set up, light and take creative images; and in Media Studies, filmmaking and green screen technology is the focus of the sessions and pupils write a script and become tv presenters to produce their own show. Sport sessions are a great way to have fun at the end of the school day and in Drama, pupils focus on self expression and building confidence. Primary schools can even sign up for one of our popular *Mini Medics* courses, which introduce youngsters to life-saving techniques and first aid.

This year, over 100 pupils from 15 local primary schools attended our Year 5 Curriculum Weeks every day, and pupils joined a variety of lessons to get a taste of secondary school life. In Food & Nutrition, through a fun taste testing activity, pupils learned how the five senses are key to the way we respond to food; in Geography, students enjoyed sessions learning about the host countries of the world cup; and in Drama, pupils used both physical and vocal skills to find out what they could do, rather than what they can't, therefore building confidence and a positive attitude. And, at the French Cafe, pupils were challenged to use the new words they had learned to order a drink and snack!

Pupils also attended fantastic sessions in English, Maths, History, PE, Music, Science, Art, French, RE, ICT, Business Studies and at our Forest School.

Plans are well underway for our annual Year 6 Open Evening, which will take place from 5.30pm - 7.30pm on Wednesday 16th September.



The event, which is open to all local primary school pupils in Year 6 and their families, is designed to support parents and carers in making an informed decision about which secondary school will be best for their child.

There will be two Headteacher talks at 5.30pm and 6.00pm, then visitors will be able to meet school leaders, teachers, support staff and students. They will also be able to take a tour of our facilities, get involved in a wide variety of activities in all subjects and sample some of the dishes on our lunch menu. Student work will be on display throughout the Academy, and you can find out about the many extra-curricular opportunities and educational visits we offer to help young people develop outside of lessons.



International Adventures



France

35 students in Year 9 have returned from a trip to Normandy in France with Academy Librarian, Mr Wheatley, our Director of Learning for Languages, Miss Stephenson and History Teacher, Miss Best. The trip combined opportunities for students to develop their language skills with learning about French culture and World War II history.

Students began the trip with a visit to the *Normandy American Cemetery and Visitor Centre*, which covers 170 acres and contains the graves of over 9,300 military personnel, most of whom lost their lives in the D-Day landings and ensuing operations. Although seen often on TV, the rows of white headstones have a much more dramatic impact when seen in person.

The group then travelled to the nearby *Overlord Museum* to discover the unique collection of more than 10,000 pieces, including personal effects of soldiers, tanks, vehicles and guns, and the life-size reconstructions which trace the history of the Battle of Normandy until the liberation of Paris. They then went to Omaha Beach and visited the *Memorial Museum of Omaha* before heading to Bayeux for some free time.

To learn more about WWII, the group visited *Ranville War Cemetery*, located in the very first village liberated in France. This cemetery contains 2,236 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War, 90 of which are unidentified. They then enjoyed their packed lunch and free time at Arromanches-les-Bains, the historic seaside resort famous as a pivotal sector of the D-Day landings, before visiting the *Museum du Debarquement*, also known as The D-Day Museum. This fantastic museum houses an impressive collection of original items from the D-Day landings, from weapons, military equipment and vehicles, to uniforms and a host of personal effects. Students enjoyed the immersive nature of the exhibits with thoughtfully-designed exhibits and audio tour.

Mr Wheatley, our Academy Librarian who organised the trip said, "As expected, the trip gave students the opportunity to see and experience some fantastic WWII exhibits and memorials whilst practising their French language skills, but it was also invaluable in terms of building self confidence and independence alongside a desire to embrace global travel."

Holland

This academic year, students in Years 8 and 9 will have the chance to visit Holland for a football-themed trip with our PE Department.

Students will enjoy pro-football training sessions at the renowned *KNVB Campus*, and play a number of friendly fixtures against youngsters in local teams. The experience will also include a programme of sightseeing in Amsterdam and a host of organised activities such as ten-pin bowling and trips to *Rijksmuseum Art Gallery* and *Duinrell Theme Park and Tiki Pool*, plus opportunities for shopping.



Global citizens ✈️

We believe that international travel provides our students with an invaluable opportunity for personal development and growth.

Our young people have visited a host of countries, with each trip building confidence and independence, and expanding their cultural awareness and sense of belonging as a global citizen.

Last year, Sixth Form students visited Majorca where they explored the architecture, cuisine and culture in Palma; and Year 11s spent a week in Malta, a trip which included a visit to a Maltese secondary school and a host of organised sightseeing activities. This trip was funded for students by a successful application to the *Turing Scheme*, as was a five-day trip to Normandy for Year 9s who developed their language skills and learned about French culture and cuisine. Students in Years 7 and 8 also visited Amsterdam. In the past, King James students have also travelled to Barcelona, Venice, Madrid, Poland and the USA.



Canary Islands

Year 13 students in Media and Geography have enjoyed a five-night trip to Lanzarote in the Canary Islands this month, where they explored Spanish history and culture, the influence of César Manrique upon the island's architecture and landscapes, and the geothermal activity of the *Timanfaya National Park*.

The trip began with a visit to the Sunday market in the historic village of Teguise, the former capital of Lanzarote. Here, students were able to buy goods from local artisans selling everything from pottery and jewellery to local cheeses and aloe vera products. There was also traditional live music and entertainment in the quaint village streets. This was followed by a visit to the *César Manrique Foundation*, a museum dedicated to the work of the Lanzarote-born artist, sculptor and architect, which is located in the unique house he created for himself.

A guided tour of the *Timanfaya National Park*, with geothermal demonstrations at *Islote de Hilario*, was the highlight of the trip for Geography students. This volcanic landscape is entirely made up of volcanic soil, craters and solidified lava, producing formations that are often compared to the surfaces of Mars or the Moon.

In the capital of Arrecife, students observed the contrasting style of architecture between the city and the outlying towns and villages, where buildings must be low-rise, painted white and have window frames in green or blue by law. The group saw the controversial *Gran Hotel*, the island's only skyscraper, which was built in the 1970s before the regulations were introduced, and visited *Castillo de San Gabriel History Museum*, *San Ginés Church*, *Charco de San Ginés lagoon*, *Castillo de San Jose Art Gallery*, *Arrecife Street Market* and *Calle Real* main street.

The group enjoyed eating out each evening at a different restaurant in Costa Teguise, including those in the well known *Plaza Pueblo Marinero* square. There was also a fun excursion to the Country and Western night at *Rancho Texas Park*, with themed entertainment including cowboy lasso and whip demonstrations, fire eating, line dancing, cabaret show and live music with *The Texas Bandits*, plus an all-you-can-eat barbeque.

Director of Learning for Media, Ms Davies said, "I organise an international trip each year for two reasons; of course students return with outstanding film footage and photos for their coursework, but they also develop a passion for learning about global culture and the wider world, and gain confidence in their ability to live independently when they leave us for university or work. This is so important for a successful future."





Emilia Watkins, Poppy Fraser, Miles Brown and Zakk Hunter pictured here with Miss Gowland and Andy Willoughby.

Steph's Poetry Corner brings



Slam Poetry

Slam poetry is a, exciting, high-energy form of performance poetry, designed to be spoken aloud rather than read from a page. It combines writing, theatrical delivery and audience interaction.

In June, a group of Key Stage 3 students took part in a series of workshops with *Steph's Poetry Space* and the *Poetry Foundation*, which culminated with them performing their poems at the end. The project is named after British poet, Steph Lampl who passed away in 2022 at the age of just 21.

The series of three workshops were designed to build confidence and promote a sense of wellbeing in students taking part through self-expression and creativity. Workshops were delivered by Andy Willoughby, a well-established poet, dramatist, publisher and producer who has collaborated extensively with writers and musicians in Finland and Estonia since the early 2000s. He has written a number of books and had work published in numerous anthologies.

English Teacher, Miss Gowland who organised the workshops said, *"Many young people have a pre-conceived notion that poetry is boring, but these workshops were so much fun that pupils were inspired to explore it outside of school. That was the main aim so I'm delighted that it worked as planned. Participants even received three poetry books to keep."*

Opportunities at the Catering Academy



This year, students in Years 10 and 11 with a passion for food and cooking will have free access to an exciting new extra-curricular opportunity delivered by King James in partnership with *The Auckland Project* and *Bishop Auckland College*.

The *Catering Academy* is an exciting new initiative that brings education and industry together to create a truly unique learning experience. This innovative collaboration combines the strengths of all partners to provide high-quality training, meaningful real-world experience, and clear progression

routes into apprenticeships and careers within the hospitality sector. By working together, we can help students develop the skills, confidence, and professionalism needed to succeed; this will support them as they take their first steps towards a rewarding future in catering. As part of the initiative, students

will be able to get authentic, hands on hospitality training in realistic settings including the *McIntyre Centre* and *El Castillo* tapas bar.



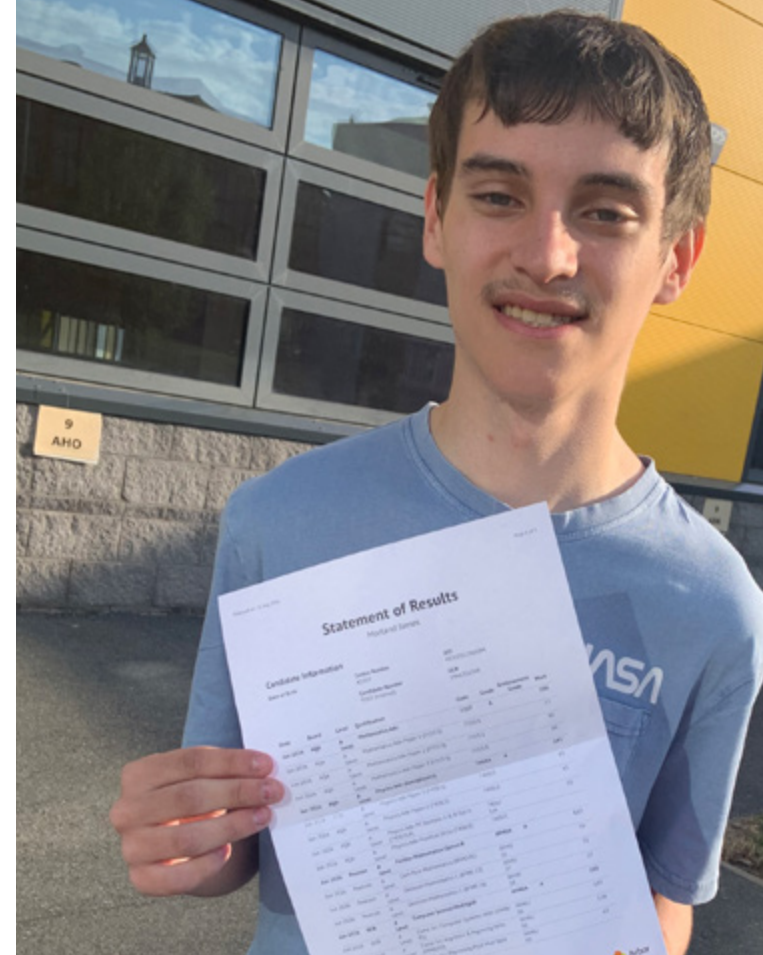
Religious Studies visit to Bible Times

In July, Year 7 pupils attended the *Bible Times Exhibition* at the *Wear Valley Christian Centre*. This is an annual event hosted by Reverend Bob Woods, regularly attended by both primary and secondary schools from the surrounding area.

The exhibition showcases a variety of Christian and Jewish artifacts, including Torah scrolls, Bibles translated into different languages, as well as a detailed history of the development of both the Jewish and Christian religion within the UK and the wider world.

Over the course of the last academic year, Year 7 pupils have been studying the impact of religious belief upon communities, and the items on display enabled pupils to see first hand how these have contributed to human understanding of both faith and religion within the modern era.

During their time at the exhibition, pupils participated in a carousel of different workshops led by volunteers from the *Wear Valley Christian Centre* and were able to touch some of the items on display, as well as ask questions about their origins and design.



Celebrating outstanding Exam Results!

Students at King James are celebrating another year of success, following A-Level, Vocational and GCSE results. Many students in Year 13 are now starting degree courses at universities across the country.

Whilst results in all A-Level subjects were positive, outcomes were particularly strong in STEM subjects where 81% of students secured grades A*-C. In Maths, 50% of students achieved an A grade, and more than 80% of students achieved at least a C grade. In Further Maths, two thirds of all students achieved an A* or A grade. In A-Level Computing, almost 70% of students achieved A* or A grades, and all students achieved at least a C grade. Elsewhere, in both Art and Photography, 100% of students achieved A* - C grades.

In vocational subjects, we again saw a 100% pass rate which is a fantastic achievement. 66% of students achieved the highest possible grades (Distinction* or Distinction), compared with 55% last year, and 24% achieved a Distinction*. In Human Biology, 71% of students achieved a Distinction or Distinction* grade, and 72% achieved a Distinction or Distinction* grade in Business. In Health & Social Care, 73% of students achieved a

Distinction or Distinction* grade, which is an exceptional achievement.

Whilst we are immensely proud of all of our students, special congratulations go to Freddie Wilkinson, who achieved an A* grade in Biology, and A grades in Maths and Further Maths. James Morland also achieved A grades in Maths and Further Maths, and two further A grades in Physics and Computer Science. James will now continue on to university to study Astrophysics! Jay McPhee achieved an A* grade in Computer Science, an A grade in Maths, a Distinction* grade in IT, as well as a Merit in Food Science, and will now study Cyber Security at university. Holly Metcalfe was awarded Distinction* grades in Sport and Health & Social Care, and Distinction grades in Food Science and Human Biology. Lastly, a special mention for Emily Bell, who achieved Distinction grades in Health & Social Care, Human Biology and Psychology, and is now going to study Mental Health Nursing at Leeds Beckett University.

Farewell to Mrs Stead

After 26 years at King James, Mrs Stead has left us, and the teaching profession, to pursue a new career path.



Mrs Stead came to King James in 2000 as the new Head of English, following five years at *Walker School* in Newcastle where she taught Cheryl Tweedy! During her time with us, she has had a range of job roles including English Teacher, Assistant Head of Sixth Form, MAT Coordinator, Head of Key Stage 4 and Assistant Headteacher. She has taught English Language and Literature to thousands of young people at King James and still has the same passion for the job as she did on day one however, it is time for her to focus on her other passion, running.

In the past, Mrs Stead trained with *Team GB Athletics*, and throughout the years, she continued to astound us all with her dedication to daily running; in fact, she is proud to call herself 'one of the fastest old women in the country!' She will now be focusing her time and efforts on athletics coaching and helping her husband run their family business. We wish her the very best of luck.



Gurus go Glamping!

A team of Sixth Form students calling themselves *Gourmet Gurus Go Glamping*, used their *Key+ Challenge* funding to organise an overnight glamping experience.

As *Gourmet Gurus* in Stage 1, the team had already enjoyed an Italian meal; however, their Stage 2 bid was much more complex. The team received £500 to plan an overnight activity for themselves and two members of staff, thus challenging them to plan food and transport, stay within a strict budget, make positive decisions for others and assess risks; this offered an insight into independent living. As part of the experience, students went grocery shopping and prepared breakfast, lunch and an evening meal for five people. They also organised a programme of activities, which included a visit to *Witton Park* and *Castle*, board games back at the glamping pods, and a movie night complete with popcorn. They also gathered footage which was edited into a short film back at King James.

Team member, Codey Austin said, "When I started *The Key+ Challenge* I had very little confidence in myself and my ability to make decisions, solve problems, negotiate and deal with disagreements. However, taking part in *The Key* has helped me to believe in myself and now I've successfully completed Stages 1 and 2, I can't wait to get started on Stage 3. Winning a Key Award was an even better confidence boost!"

The team are now working towards a bid for funding a Stage 3 community project which will benefit a large number of people in our school community, and they have a number of excellent ideas. "Stage 3 funding is worth £1,000," Codey explained, "so we want to make sure that we can use it wisely and do something that will really make a difference, preferably via a legacy project that will continue after we leave."

Escape Room Challenge

A team of four Year 12 students called *The Escape Artists* organised a trip to *Cluedini* escape rooms in Darlington for their Stage 1 project.



The team used their £250 to plan and deliver a trip not only for themselves, but also for their 11 classmates, making it the perfect opportunity to bond, problem-solve and build communication skills. In teams of five, students competed against each other in three rooms; however, only one team escaped within the 60-minute time limit!

Gourmet Gurus go Italian

The *Gourmet Gurus* used their Stage 1 funding to take their entire class of 15 students for a two course meal at *Uno Momento*.



Planning the trip allowed the team to develop useful skills in budgeting, negotiation, logistics, decision making and communication, and of course, the trip itself gave the group the chance to get to know each other much better.

Tapas for Year 10s

A group of Year 10s visited *El Castillo* restaurant to sample traditional Spanish dishes.



Students had never tried tapas before and so this trip allowed students to sample some of the most popular dishes from Spain including *Tortilla Española*, *Stuffed Olives* and *Patatas Bravas*.

Hoppers and Nando's!

A group calling themselves *The Aqua Girls* used their Stage 1 funding for a trip to the cinema and a meal at *Nando's*.



At *Vue Cinema*, the girls had lots of fun spending some of their budget on pick'n'mix, limited edition drink cups and other treats before going to see 'Hoppers', the latest *Disney* release. After the film, they went to *Nando's* in Darlington where they enjoyed chicken, chips and unlimited ice cream!

Gabriel's Angels visit Kynren

Four Year 10 students called *Gabriel's Angels* used their Stage 1 funding to pay for tickets to *Kynren: The Storied Lands*.



The team enjoyed a day out in August with four friends, exploring the brand new day-park extension to *Kynren*, which includes shows themed around Vikings, Victorians, Medieval Knights and the *Lambton Worm*. They also saw the live-action show, *The Lost Feather*, featuring birds in free flight in a nest-inspired arena.

Last year, we extended our personal development programme by signing up to *The Key*, a North East charity which provides funding for young people to plan and deliver projects of their choice.

As a result, King James students in Years 7-12 have embraced the opportunity to work in teams to plan a range of activities, developing a host of life skills in the process, and we are just getting started! This year, we will be encouraging even more students to get involved.

There are three stages in *The KEY+ Challenge*, with Stage 1 designed to introduce the programme, and build confidence and teamworking. Supported by their teachers and tutors, students can apply for £250 to fund any activity by delivering a pitch to a panel of judges. In Stage 2, students can pitch for £500 to allow them to deliver more complex projects; and in Stage 3, £1,000 is available to teams who can demonstrate an excellent idea for a community based project.



the

KEY+

Challenge

new

The Milkccident eat out at FIIK

The *Milkccident*, a group of seven Year 12 students, used their Stage 1 funding to experience fine dining at *FIIK* in Durham.

FIIK offers a unique dining experience where every visit focuses on culinary creativity. Students were able to enjoy seven spectacular courses in a tasting menu featuring ingredients they had never tried before.



The Key Awards Winners!

The *Gourmet Gurus* have won 'The KEY+ Pitch Innovators of the Year' award at *The Key Awards 2026*, which was held at *Newcastle Crowne Plaza*. The *Escape Artists* also celebrated runner-up in the same category.

It was The *Gourmet Gurus* creative video pitch for Stage 2 which impressed the judging panel the most and earned them the winning title. With access to green screen technology, filmmaking equipment and editing software, the team decided to present their pitch for funding, documentary style, complete with unique script, team branding, footage and background music.

King James I Academy also claimed runner-up in 'The Key Outstanding Partner of the Year' category, and Mrs Mulryan and Mr Blood were recognised in the category for 'Exceptional Key+ Facilitator of the Year'.

Elliot Metcalfe from *The Escape Artists* said, "The *Key* has really helped me to develop skills in public speaking and leadership, which I'm sure I will use in later life. I have enjoyed working in a team on a real project with a budget, transport and risk assessment to consider."



Personal career Guidance

At King James, students attend one-to-one interviews with Miss Goddard, our Careers Officer to make sure they know how to achieve their goals.

For those who are interested in careers such as beauty therapy, carpentry, plumbing, construction and vehicle maintenance, Miss Goddard arranges taster sessions at *Bishop Auckland College* so that they can find out more about the opportunities available for training and try out the role for themselves. This makes sure that all of our students are fully supported and confident in making decisions about the next step in their education after they leave Year 11. Miss Goddard also provides information about university courses, entry requirements and apprenticeship opportunities in different sectors, and helps students put together a CV and applications for part time work.

Annual Careers Fair

Each year in November, we hold a Careers Fair with representatives from a host of local businesses, national organisations and UK universities.

The event is attended by students in Years 7-13, and each year group is allocated an hour to browse stalls and speak to visitors. This year, alongside a range of universities, we welcomed representatives from *GSK, Gestamp Tallent, Mears, MPCT, Optimum Skills, Hathaway Roofing, SW Durham Training, Metlen Group, Livin and MGL Group*. Visitors from the *NHS, Durham Constabulary, Darlington Borough Council, Amazon, The Army and RAF* spoke to students about the many different roles that are available within their organisations, plus the entry routes including apprenticeships. They also heard about opportunities at *Kleek Hairdressing, Newcastle Building Society and Amazon*.



Students achieve

DofE Awards



This year, 50 students in Years 9 and 10 have earned one of the prestigious *Duke of Edinburgh Awards* following completion of tasks in four main sections of the programme: Volunteering, Physical, Skills, and Expedition.

Our DofE scheme is offered as part of our personal development programme and managed by Geography Teacher, Mrs Fegan. Students work with her throughout the year to log the required number of volunteering hours, alongside those spent taking part in physical activities or developing a new skill. The programme culminates with an expedition involving orienteering, hiking and camping.

To achieve the Bronze Award, students must complete three months of volunteering in school or in the wider community. This year, students have been involved in sports coaching at local clubs, assisting Year 7s with one-to-one support as part of the reading initiative at King James, and helping to organise events as part of our commitment to fundraising or our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiative. They must also participate in a physical activity for at least three months and students have been involved in everything from football, boxing, martial arts and gymnastics to dancing.

In terms of developing a new or existing skill, some participants have focused

on progression in a sporting activity or developing their fitness levels and stamina, whilst others have been learning a language and developing their cooking skills. To achieve the Silver Award, students must complete a six-month period in each category.

For the expedition element, which involves team navigation, a countryside hike and overnight camping with cooking, students planned and completed an expedition in an unfamiliar environment. For the Bronze award, the expedition covered two days and one night, and for the Silver, students completed three days and two nights. To effectively prepare for this, students took part in basic first aid training; they also took part in practice sessions to ensure they were able to put up their tent without supervision and hike with their back packs.

Students who completed the programme can now add the prestigious awards to their CV. The Duke of Edinburgh scheme, which was launched in 1956, is well respected by both universities and employers who recognise the high level of commitment and resilience required to succeed.

Coming soon... new Outward Bound

In October, a group of 12 Sixth Form students in Year 13 will be travelling to *The Outward Bound Trust Ullswater Centre in Watermillock* for a four-night residential.

The trip will involve three nights in bunk rooms at the centre, and a further night wild camping, where students will climb the mountain, camp overnight and cook their own meals. During the day, students will take part in a host of challenging activities including Canoeing, Gorge walking, Climbing, Jog and dip, Jacobs ladder, Raft building, Tunnelling and Orienteering, plus many more. A number of the group have expressed an interest in joining the forces and this trip will give them the opportunity to experience outdoor adventure and test their resilience.

The trip was subsidised for participants thanks to a number of fundraising activities including a sponsored walk and popular 'Soak a Teacher' events on Sports Days!

Personal Development

Work Experience for Year 10 students

Each year in May, Year 10 students take part in Work Experience Week, supported by a host of local organisations and businesses.

Students who requested work with children were placed at *Yellow Wellies, Aclet Close, Springmoor Grange, Etherley Lane, Sunnybrow, York House, St Anne's, Cockton Hill, Thornhill, Evergreen, Barley Road, Oakley Cross, St Francis C of E, TASIS England and Woodhouse*. Others who were interested in developing practical skills were welcomed by local businesses, *McClurg's Scaffolding, Manners, Hathaway Roofing, Livin, Thirslington Quarry, Merrington Plumbing, Teesdale Renewables, Lee Brown Building, Properties Unique, Thorn Lighting and Bloochip Ltd*. Aspiring mechanics spent the week at *Weardale Motor Services, International Tyres, M. Howes and SRS Recovery*; and for those interested in hospitality there were many opportunities in local cafes and restaurants including *BA College, Redworth Hall, The Well, Picnicks Café, Next Door Café, The 68 Café and Breaking Bread*. Students also worked within the fitness sector, with placements at *ROF 59, Athena Sports and Woodhouse Leisure Centre*. The beauty and wellbeing industry was also a popular choice, with placements at *The Studio, Evie Bushby Fashion, Serenity Rose, Manor House Spa, Saks, The Brow Lounge, Nume Hair & Beauty and Els Beauty*.

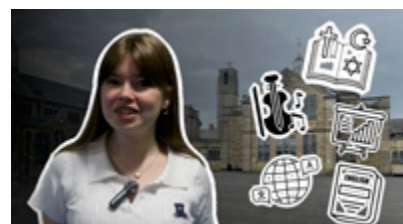
There were also some fantastic opportunities for those with specialist interests; students went to *Smith Roddam Solicitors, Redditch Medical, Durham University, Tees River Trust, Trimdon Farm, Morrison's Data Centre, Beamish Museum, Wilson's Vets, Bishop Museum Shop, BA Town Hall, Eden Grange Glamping, RAF Spadeadam and Pets at Home*. Students also worked in healthcare, community and charitable organisations such as *Blue Mile Care, Age UK, Jubilee Fields, Shildon Alive and One Stop Shop*. Of course, because of our partnership with *The Auckland Project*, students were also able to spend a week trying various roles within *Auckland Palace, the Education Centre and the museum spaces*.



KJTV Productions on Youtube

Our Media Department's Youtube channel, which is called **KJTV Productions**, showcases film products which are created by both King James students and local primary pupils.

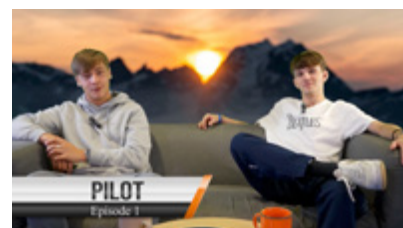
The channel currently includes news shows, storytelling programmes, video podcasts and documentaries featuring King James students and primary pupils from a number of local schools who have worked with the department as part of our Academy Outreach programme. This year will see the addition of music videos, short fiction and poetry.



The Two Sugars Podcast new

This year, Sixth Form students will be able to take part in a new King James video podcast.

The Two Sugars Podcast was created by Media students, Codey Austin and Elliot Metcalfe, pictured below, as a work experience project within the Media department. Each episode will have a different theme and as hosts, producers and editors, the duo will debate a variety of topics and edit each episode before uploading to **KJTV Productions**. Codey and Elliot will lead the project and release a new episode every 2-3 weeks, some of which will feature specially invited guests. They will also train a team of students to continue the podcast as a legacy project when they leave for university.



Realistic production skills in Media Studies

The Media industry in the UK is booming and there are hundreds of career options in the sector for talented people. Our media courses are designed to build specialist knowledge and a wide range of practical skills, and the department boasts 100% pass rate at both Level 2 and 3.

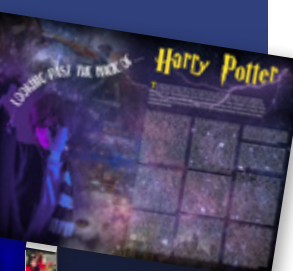
In Media Studies, students get a broad overview of the industry and build specialist skills including script writing, film making, editing, photography, graphic design and journalism. They also enjoy visits to the cinema, *Beamish Museum*, *Whitby Goth Weekend*, *Auckland Castle* and even an international trip. Media students are also well supported in applying for funding from *The Key* and as a result, they have celebrated great success.

In Media lessons, Year 10 students analyse a range of products from computer games and magazines to films and TV shows; they also learn about the techniques that professional producers use to create them. Year 11s develop practical skills in photography, journalism and graphic design as they create a magazine product. Students learn how to use *Adobe Creative Suite* software; this allows them to create outstanding products, whilst developing skills in the use of this industry standard design software.

Sixth Form students also get to produce a magazine as part of their course, working on

creative photoshoots and page layouts such as the examples here. Students choose their own topic, with everything from anime, movies, music and fashion to sport and politics.

Following the print production unit, Sixth Formers learn about filmmaking and editing, before creating either a short fictional film or a documentary on a subject of their choice. These are uploaded to *Youtube* for public viewing.



Performing Arts

In June, students in Years 7 and 8 had the chance to participate in a practical workshop featuring games and drama activities with the award-winning performance artist, Victoria Melody. Victoria is the artist in residence for the Shildon-based project called **PLACE Lab**.

Along with her producer Faith, Victoria met with students from Shildon to talk to them about a free summer performance activity, co-created with young people and using heritage as a theme to inspire futures. All students were given the opportunity to sign up.

The mission of **PLACE Labs** is to promote change at a local level in towns and communities across County Durham, with each **PLACE Lab** taking a community-centred approach to culture and regeneration. By directly engaging with the community, residents become empowered to get involved in decision-making, therefore shaping the future of their places. To achieve this, five **PLACE Labs** have been established across the County, and one of these is in Shildon, hence the workshop with Victoria at King James.



African Art

In Art, Year 8 students have completed a study of African culture, tribal art and masks, resulting in a selection of outstanding pages in their portfolio.

Students produced artwork inspired by African textiles, traditional colours and textures. African art encompasses a diverse range of visual culture, often created for spiritual, social, or functional purposes rather than purely aesthetics. Historically, many pieces were created for rituals, ceremonies, or to connect with ancestors and spiritual realms. This was a fantastic opportunity for students to develop a range of new skills and to work with mixed media.

EXPRESS YOURSELF!

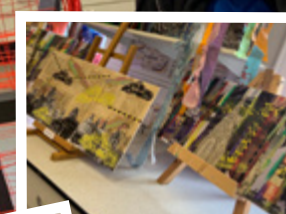
Art & Photography

Our Art & Photography Department offers students a host of opportunities to develop their creativity and to build technical skills. Alongside timetabled classroom lessons, students also enjoy many learning experiences outside of the Academy and get involved in special projects.

In the last academic year, Art students celebrated *Black History Month* by studying the work of American contemporary artists, Alma Woodsey Thomas, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Deborah E Roberts, before being inspired by their techniques to create their own pieces. *Black History Month* was also celebrated in other subjects, with students learning about talented directors, actors, musicians, scientists, entrepreneurs, inventors, engineers, athletes, historians and activists.

Young artists also enjoyed a trip to the *100 Portraits of Bishop Auckland* exhibition in the *Artists' Hub* in the Market Place. This community arts project featured mixed media artwork submitted by local people, which gave students lots of ideas for their own work back in school. Students also took on a special project to celebrate the rare and auspicious Chinese Year of the Fire Horse, an event that occurs only once every 60 years. They created decorations, which were displayed around school, including lanterns for our Dining Hall on the day of our Chinese lunch feast.

In June, GCSE and A-Level students held exhibitions to showcase their creative work, pictured here, including their final exam pieces. King James staff, and students' family members visited to see the work in situ and hear students talk about their inspiration and techniques.



Sporting Heroes



15 years of Netball

Bishop Auckland Netball Club is celebrating 15 years of netball in the community.

The club was established in 2011 and currently, there are around 80 players. Originally playing in the *Durham Junior Netball League* since the first ever season in 2011, the club now has teams in all age groups.

Charlie Sawczyn, Darcey Aldridge, Gracie Slater and Jessica Holliday, pictured above, all play in the Under 13s teams, one of which came second in the Durham League and the other won their division overall. Throughout the tournament, the girls showed great resilience in some tough games and are now working hard to progress and develop more advanced skills in netball.

There is also an adult section of the club; *Team Bishop Netball* has four adult teams playing in leagues in the area and one, 'Bishop Blues' came third in division 1, which was an excellent result. King James Community has worked in partnership with the netball club for many years, providing a safe space to train, supported by Community Manager, Jake Pearson. Training for secondary school aged girls takes place every Monday. For more information please contact banetballclub@hotmail.com

Muay Thai champ

Muay Thai fighter, Lilly Metcalfe trains five days a week, runs three times a week and has a private session once a week - it's no wonder she's a champion!

Lilly has a host of titles and wins in both Thai Boxing and Kick Boxing. She is *British ISKA* champion, *Scottish ISKA* champion, twice *Siam Open* champion and twice *Amateur World Open* champion. Most recently, in June she travelled to Bangkok to represent Team England in the *World Muay Thai Festival 2026* and returned with yet another title and Gold medal.

"There is such an adrenaline rush when you get in the ring," Lilly told us, "and winning makes all the hard work worthwhile. Fighting in Thailand was a really amazing experience so I'm determined to keep training hard and developing as a competition fighter so that I can return again."



Competitive cycling



Sixth Form student, Nicole Anderson is a competitive cyclist in not one but two gruelling disciplines.

In the summer months, she competes regionally in the multi-round *North East Cross Country Mountain Bike Racing Series*, and in early June, she celebrated first place. During the winter months, Nicole competes in Cyclocross, an intense off-road cycling discipline that combines elements of road cycling, mountain biking, and steeplechase. Races consist of fast, multi-lap circuits on mixed terrain like mud, sand, grass, and pavement. She competes nationally at Cyclocross and is currently ranked ninth in the UK.

To achieve such high standards and success, Nicole follows a strict training regime, with cycling training 5-6 times per week plus regular sessions in the gym to boost strength and improve endurance.



Sports Days

In the last week of term, an excellent time was had by competitors and spectators alike at our Year Group Sports Day events, which were held over two beautiful sunny days.

Field events took place prior to the track events, with students taking part in Shot Putt, Discus, Javelin, Standing Broad Jump and Standing Triple Jump. Track events including 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m and the 4 x 100m relay then followed, with form groups competing for the trophies.

At the Year 7 Sports Day event, the winner's trophy was claimed by Mrs Fegan's form group with 114 points overall; and Miss Curtis and Miss Culleton's form groups took second and third place with 112 and 100 points respectively.

In Year 8, Mrs Franklin's form group claimed the trophy with 116 points, and Miss

Howard's group took second with 109 points followed by Miss Best's tutees in third place with 85 points.

Miss Armstrong's form group were the Year 9 winners with an amazing 131 points overall at the end of the day, followed by Mr Bryan's group in second place with 105 points and Miss Gowland's group in third place with 82 points.

Finally, in Year 10 the first place trophy was claimed by Miss Dixon's tutor group, with second place won by Mrs Lamb's tutees with 107 points and third by Miss Song's class with 75 points overall. Well done to everyone!

Soak a Teacher!

In the last week of term, we held a special 'Soak a Teacher' event to raise funds to subsidise the forthcoming Outward Bound trip to Watermillock. The event coincided with the Academy sports days.

A number of brave teachers volunteered to put their head in the stocks, including our Headteacher, Mr Whitehead, pictured below. Students in all year groups stood in line to throw wet sponges, with some even choosing to pay £5 to throw the whole bucket!



Pre-loved Book Donations add to our library stock

Alongside regular purchases to ensure our library offers the most up-to-date reading material, our stock increases every day thanks to donations from students, staff and members of the public.

Our library has books from all genres, from Charles Dickens classics to curriculum novels such as *Animal Farm*, *An Inspector Calls*, *Lord of the Flies* and *Blood Brothers*. Thanks to a recent donation, we now have another complete collection of *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* novels, plus *Horrible Histories* and a large number of Japanese manga and graphic novels.

As donations come in, Academy Librarians help Mr Wheatley to categorise and catalogue each book before they are displayed on the shelves and made available for students to borrow. Pictured here is Year 8 student, Anna Mapfumo, who is a regular visitor to our Library.



Mother Tongue, Other Tongue Poetry Competition

Our Library has a well-established Creative Writing Club for students in Key Stage 3. Students write short stories or poetry at lunchtime, or work on projects over a longer period of time such as the *Mother Tongue, Other Tongue* poetry competition.

Mother Tongue, Other Tongue, which was run by the North East Festival of Languages, is a celebration of young people's poetic writing. It reflects different languages they speak either at home, (Mother Tongue) or are learning, (Other Tongue). To enter the competition, students wrote poems in Pashto (Afghanistan), Shona (Zimbabwe, Zambia and Kenya), French, Japanese and Latin, with themes addressing aspirations, bullying, identity, culture, family and friendship. One student chose to write a poem based on her recollection of a traditional Zimbabwean children's rhyme.



Buying the latest books at our Scholastic Book Fair

Our annual *Scholastic Book Fair* gives both students and staff the opportunity to buy a wide range of books from best sellers and classics to exclusive titles. This is just one of the many events organised by Mr Wheatley to promote reading for pleasure.

The event is a celebration of reading that puts the very best books directly into the hands of pupils, all whilst raising rewards to spend on books and resources for our library. This year, we had three mobile bookcases on loan, packed with over 200 of the newest and best books from over 60 publishers, including exclusive titles that aren't available in shops or at any other book fairs.



Revision Club

Last year, we launched a lunchtime revision club in our Library for all Year 11 students.

The *Revision Club* offers a supervised, quiet space, fully stocked with text books and learning resources for all subjects. Students have access to a wide range of materials to enable them to create their own revision resources, such as flash cards, post it notes, exercise books, notepads, drawing paper, highlighter pens, and felt tips and coloured pencils for mind mapping.

World Book Day

On World Book Day 2026, many lessons were delivered by teachers dressed as characters from their favourite books!

Some departments chose to co-ordinate their costumes around a theme including Alice in Wonderland, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Matilda, Wizard of Oz and The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, and students were delighted to see the Cheshire Cat in Art, Red Riding Hood in Computing, Dorothy and Toto in Science, Aslan the Lion in Health & Social Care and Augustus Gloop in Food & Nutrition, alongside a host of other characters from Miss Trunchbull and the Mad Hatter to Willy Wonka.

Each year, Mr Wheatley, our Academy Librarian, organises the event as a way to promote reading for pleasure. This year, themed activities were also organised throughout the day, including 'Blind Date with a Book', 'Find the Golden Ticket', and a student fancy dress competition. Money was also raised for our year group charities from a non-uniform day and bake sale.



The perfect place to
Read, learn and play

Introducing Oliver!

This year, we launched an exciting new facility for students, which allows them to search, browse and reserve thousands of library books from their personal Chromebook.



Oliver is a cloud-based computer system which gives instant access to a vast online library, along with the facility to reserve and collect hard copy books from the King James Library. Books are fully categorised so it is easy to search by interests, genre and even reading age. Students can check on the availability of hard copy books and, if they are currently on loan, they can see when they are due to be returned.

Oliver is a powerful management solution designed to evolve with our school and empower our students, which promotes reading for pleasure.

The Library at King James is a much-loved space for lessons, homework, virtual learning, independent reading and a host of extra-curricular clubs both at lunch time and after school.

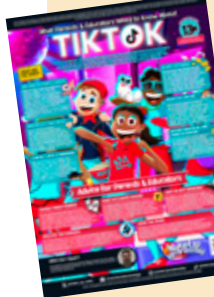
Mr Wheatley, our Academy Librarian leads the popular *Carnegie Book Club*, which gives students the opportunity to get involved in the UK's longest-running and most prestigious children's book awards. This competition, which is run and judged exclusively by children's librarians, celebrates outstanding achievement in two categories: The Carnegie Medal for Writing and The Carnegie Medal for Illustration. Alongside the official librarian judges, thousands of reading groups in schools and libraries across the UK and the world "shadow" the judging process. They read the shortlisted books, debate the merits of each one, and vote for their personal favourites to win the *Shadowers' Choice Awards*. Our current Carnegie Book Club group consists of around 20 students in Years 7-10 who come together at lunch time to read, discuss and review the nominations before voting for their favourite.

The after school Games Club brings students of all ages together to share their love of table top games such as *Warhammer*, *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Pokemon*, *Magic the Gathering* and *Disney Lorcana*. Creative students love the Illustration Club and the Comic Book Club, which allows students to build creative writing skills by developing imaginative characters and storylines and producing their own comic. There is even a bespoke Creative Writing Club for aspiring authors, poets and script writers.

At lunch time, students can enjoy a game of chess or draughts, or spend time browsing the shelves and discussing their favourite books while they eat lunch. There is also a Homework Club for those who need a little extra support or who just prefer to complete homework before going home. Mr Wheatley also organises a programme of events throughout the year such as virtual Q&A sessions with professional writers and university lecturers.



Focus on Online safety



In a world full of technology, online safety is more important than ever. For that reason, our Computer Science & IT department makes sure that students learn about online safety as part of the curriculum.

The department also shares information with parents via direct messaging, our Academy website and social media; this makes sure that parents are armed with the latest developments and can therefore keep their child safe.

Themed assemblies ensure that students are knowledgeable about topics such as fake news, catfishing, cyberstalking, online grooming, sexting and cyberbullying; and as all students at King James work on a *Chromebook* in the majority of lessons, we can offer an enhanced layer of protection as any harmful websites can be blocked by our IT Technicians.

CyberFirst accreditation

We are proud to announce that King James I Academy has achieved *CyberFirst School* status, recognising our commitment to excellence in computing and cyber security education.

This accreditation highlights the opportunities available to students to develop vital digital and cyber skills through an engaging and forward-thinking curriculum. Becoming a CyberFirst School reflects our dedication to preparing young people for the rapidly evolving world of technology and future careers in the cyber industry.

Last year, the department was awarded the *NCCCE Computing Quality Mark*, which recognises excellence in computing education offered by a school; this CyberFirst award further highlights the strength of the department and the commitment of its staff



to provide the best possible computing education for young people.

King James received CyberFirst Silver recognition, and the award was presented to our Director of Learning for Computer Science and IT, Jade Franklin, by Ben McIvor from CyberFirst North East. Both are pictured above.



Chromebooks for all students

All Year 7 students are provided with a *Chromebook* when they join King James to support their learning both at school and at home. In an increasingly digital world, this makes sure that our students are confident in the use of technology and are able to develop excellent computer skills.

Ready, Steady, Cook!

In June, members of our *Sport and Healthy Lifestyles Ambassador Group* took on a *Ready, Steady, Cook* challenge to design and prepare a healthy, balanced meal in just 60 minutes.

As student ambassadors, members of the group, who are all in Years 8 and 9, work closely with Mrs Lamb, Director of Learning for Food, and Mrs O'Connor, Director of Learning for PE, on a range of projects designed to encourage our school community to lead a more active and healthy lifestyle.

For the Ready, Steady, Cook challenge, students were provided with a selection of kitchen staples such as rice, pasta, chicken, minced beef, vegetables, herbs and spices. They were then given complete freedom to prepare a dish of their choice, with finished plates including Vegetable Fusilli, Chicken and Red Pepper Stir Fry and Pasta

Bolognese. Students also organise a range of food events in school, such as a taster session with samples of different smoothies designed to encourage young people to find creative ways to increase their daily intake of fruit.

In terms of getting active, the group have been developing ideas for a programme of new activities to promote engagement and participation in physical activity. This will include more unusual sports such as Dodgeball, which will be launched this year, and a potential trip to the *Ninja Warrior Adventure Park* in Teesside, a physical assault course challenge inspired by ITV's hit tv show. This will give participants the opportunity to build strength, stamina and resilience.

new



Young musician of the year 2026

Music students in Years 7-10 have taken part in the *second Young Musician of the Year* competition at King James.

The competition featured two categories. In the vocal round, students chose to sing live with either instrumental accompaniment or using a backing track; and in the instrumental round, students demonstrated their talent by playing along to their chosen songs.

Prior to the event, Music Teachers Mr Smith and Mr Heddle, held auditions to select the performers who would compete in the final on the night, and this group performed in front of a panel of judges and invited family members. Many had never performed in front of an audience before, so this was an excellent opportunity to develop their live performance skills and to overcome nerves, which they all did extremely well. The judging panel consisted of Charley Armstrong, who is directly involved in bringing the arts and cultural events to Bishop Auckland; David Longstaff, Deputy Headteacher, and Pheobe Hogarth, Director of Learning for Art. The winner in the vocal category was Emily Wilkinson,

and runners up were Lucas Stevens and Rose Richardson; and in the instrumental category, the winner was Noah Quinn and the runner up was James Barker. Well done to everyone who took part.

Mr Smith would like to extend a special thanks to Andrew Loads, Co-owner of *Brotherton's Music*, for loaning us an electric stage piano for the evening. Our Academy keyboards are heavy and difficult to move to our Main Hall for special events such as this, so his support was much appreciated.



Live music with Tom A Smith

Students in Years 7 and 8 were treated to a live music performance and Q & A session with Sunderland-born singer songwriter, Tom A Smith as part of our anti-bullying and mental health awareness programme.



21-year-old Tom has been performing live since the age of eight years old, performing at open mic nights with North East legend, Sam Fender. He has had two sold-out shows at *The Fire Station* and has played UK festivals including *Glastonbury*, *Leeds* and *BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend*. Sam is making waves in the UK's music industry; he was even personally invited to open for Sir Elton John at *Hyde Park*.

Tom has had his own experiences with bullying and mental health issues, so he was happy to share his stories and to give advice to the younger generation about how he worked on his resilience as a youngster. He also spoke about how he got into the music industry and managed to achieve success at a young age.



Afternoon tea for the Womens' Refuge

In July, a group of Year 10 Food and Cookery students produced a selection of baked goods for our local Women's Refuge.

Individual boxes were filled with a variety of tasty sandwiches and sweet treats including fairy cakes, tray bakes and scones. Students also created similar treat boxes at Christmas for those staying at the refuge. Showing support for our local community isn't always about donating money. Gestures such as these promote empathy and give our students the opportunity to show they care.



Day of Welcome

In June, we held a special *Day of Welcome* event where students explored different cultures and experiences through a range of fun activities, including the popular *Shine a Light* cycling challenge.



Students and staff were invited to keep a light illuminated from 9am until 3pm through continuous pedalling of an adapted bike as a symbol of hope and global friendship. We also created a paper chain with strips of paper featuring hand written messages of welcome in different languages.

This event was just one of the many organised activities as we work towards achieving the *Schools of Sanctuary Award* in 2027. This award is given to schools in recognition of their good practice in fostering a safe

and inclusive school environment, building understanding and empathy towards people seeking safety and working collaboratively to strengthen community approaches to welcoming refugee children and families.

Earlier in the year, we were privileged to welcome Iman Malouhi into school to talk about her experience fleeing war in Syria. Iman told Year 7 students the powerful and inspiring story of how she was forced to flee her home, leaving a lasting impression on everyone who listened. We are grateful to Iman for sharing her journey so openly and for giving our students such as meaningful and thought provoking experience.

At King James, we are proud to say that everyone is welcome, regardless of their background. It was wonderful to see our students come together to raise awareness, celebrate diversity and spread kindness.

Student Support

Each year group at King James, including Sixth Form, has a dedicated and experienced Support Worker on hand to help with any issues our young people have at school and at home that affects their ability to learn.

Staff are trained to offer emotional and practical support, and to liaise with families and outside organisations as needed. They work hard to build a positive relationship with students and get to know them well so that they know they can trust them should they need to ask for help. Support Workers are also fully trained in safeguarding and adept at resolving friendship issues. Our team are passionate about promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for young people, and focus on raising awareness and providing tips for good health alongside supporting students who may be struggling with anxiety.

The Glove Project



Last year, *The Glove Project* was the chosen year group charity of our Year 7s. Over the course of the academic year, students raised money for the project through a variety of activities and events.

Last term, David Grimshaw from the charity visited King James to talk to students about the charity's mission and how our fundraising efforts are making a real difference. The Glove Project works in partnership with rural village communities in The Gambia to reduce poverty, promote education, improve health, support enterprise, provide safe drinking water and support child amputees.

David explained that many Glove Project initiatives, such as the Solar Water Systems project, are based on sustainability, so it's not about just giving money, but about helping rural villages to become more self sufficient and giving them the means to be able to do more for themselves. Students have worked hard throughout the year to organise and take part in fundraising events to support the charity, so it was inspiring for them to hear direct from a representative that their efforts are changing lives.

Free personal and feminine care

Our Student Support Workers have a large supply of feminine hygiene and personal care products which students can access for free on request. These are available from the Student Support Office at any time.

Ahead of the Game!

Earlier in the year, we welcomed Jake Leighton from the *Foundation of Light* who delivered an 'Ahead of the Game' mental health workshop.



Working alongside *Premier League Inspires*, the session encouraged students to think openly about mental health, recognise the signs when someone may be struggling, and understand how we can support each other and be good friends. The *November Ahead of the Game* scheme is a mental health initiative delivered in the UK by *Rugby League Cares*, supporting young athletes aged 12-18 through workshops for players, coaches and parents. Our students had a brilliant session, engaging thoughtfully with the important conversations around wellbeing and looking out for one another.

Mental Health Awareness

Throughout the year we organise a variety of special events to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing, including *Mind's 'Time to Talk Day'* and *Mental Health Foundation's Mental Health Week*.

We know that mental health is directly linked to attendance and academic achievement, so it is important for us to ensure our young people feel confident, positive, and well supported at school and able to access help when needed. Our student Mental Health & Wellbeing group work hard with our Student Support Team to provide this support.

Students are encouraged to get involved in all King James events as we know having a sense of belonging has such a positive impact upon our mental health and wellbeing. Last year, students took part in activities such as mindful colouring and creative craft sessions, board games, gardening and fundraising bake sales. Acts of kindness is also a consistent theme across King James with students rewarded for helping others



Financial Support for families

As a result of the cost-of-living crisis, we have teamed up with the Local Authority Financial Inclusion Support Officer (FISO) Programme to offer support and advice to our local community.

Julia Waterhouse, a Financial Inclusion Support Officer, is based in school every week to offer free, confidential advice on a range of issues including benefit appeals, welfare benefits, foodbank referrals, debt and budgeting, fuel grants, educational entitlements such as free school meals and support filling in forms. If you would like to book an appointment, please contact her direct via text or call 07386 659 728; or contact your child's Student Support Worker at King James.



Pre-loved Uniform

We are proud of our uniform at King James but recognise that some families may struggle with the cost of purchasing items. For this reason we have a well-stocked, pre-loved uniform store in Student Support.

The store includes blazers, PE kit, trousers, shirts, jumpers and other essentials, all in good condition and in a variety of sizes; these are available to borrow or for students to keep. Ties are also available to loan until parents can afford to buy one. In addition to this, we have a small discretionary hardship fund to help parents and carers buy uniform. Support can be requested by emailing kirsty.mawdsley@kingjames1academy.com

Donations of the items listed above, plus black school shoes, trainers and school bags in good, clean condition can be left at our Main Reception.

Student Ambassadors

Student Ambassadors are a group of student volunteers from Years 7-11 who have been trained in their role.

They have been taught how to deal with different types of bullying and friendship issues and know how to advise anyone affected by it. They are also adept at talking about feelings and can refer students to their Tutor or to Student Support. Ambassadors also speak at assemblies to make sure students know how to seek help within school for themselves or for others. The Ambassador group was formed because we know it can be easier to open up to someone your own age.

Student Council

The Student Council is made up of representatives from all year groups whose ideas help to shape student life.

The Council meets with the Deputy Headteacher each half term to discuss issues, upcoming events and ideas to improve the student experience and Academy life in general. Students discuss ideas with their peers in their form group before the meeting, and communicate these ideas with a view to making change. As a result of the Student Council, we now have a wide range of lunchtime clubs across the school, morning football and an outdoor basketball hoop.



Young Carer Award

Year 8 student, Casey Foster has received a special award at the Bishop Auckland Town Council Youth Awards 2026. This annual event recognises the outstanding achievements of young people across Bishop Auckland.

From inspiring acts of kindness and community spirit, to sporting success, creativity, leadership and incredible personal resilience, nominees prove that a range of talent and determination exists within our young community.

Casey was nominated for the Young Carer Award 2026, which was sponsored by Kynren, to recognise the kindness, compassion and level of maturity beyond her years she demonstrates as a member of a foster family. Over the past 15 months, Casey has shared her personal space and time without complaint, and worked hard to make children in need of foster care feel welcome and safe in her home.



Life in the Ghetto



Year 12 History students recently had the opportunity to take part in a multi-school outreach session via video conference entitled 'Life in the Ghetto' with Holocaust survivor, Steven Frank.

During the session, students listened to the testimony of Steven and his experiences in the Theresienstadt Ghetto camp in Czechoslovakia. He shared his extraordinary story of survival and the shocking realities which faced him and his family in the camp. Following the interview, students across the country were able to take part in a Q&A session. It was

both an honour and a privilege to be involved in this moving and inspiring session and to hear Steven's story first hand.

Most resilient team!

Each year, as part of our extra-curricular programme, we give Year 8 students the opportunity to take part in Durham County Council's Future Business Magnates Competition, which focuses on developing the young entrepreneurs of the future.

This year, students were challenged to create a business that celebrated their local community. Working with Maths Teacher, Miss Curtis, and partnered with Stiller Warehousing and Distribution, the team developed a concept for 'The Lamp', a unique mining-themed café and information hub inspired by County Durham's rich heritage.

The competition, which spans seven months, culminated in a Gala Event at Hardwick Hall in June, and our team was presented with 'The Most Resilient Team Award'. Judges commented that, the team had demonstrated determination, adaptability and a commitment to overcoming challenges, embodying the resilience needed to succeed in business.

Miss Curtis said, "This was a fantastic achievement and well-deserved recognition for all the hard work and dedication students have shown throughout the year."

Welcoming guest Speakers

Each year in June and July, speakers from various industry sectors visit King James to speak directly to Year 10s. Sessions are designed to help students make informed choices about their future.

With a range of occupational areas to choose from, students are able to sign up to the talks which interest them most. This year, representatives from Durham Constabulary and Northumbrian Water Ltd talked to students about the opportunities within each organisation and the potential entry routes. Smith Roddam & Co solicitors spoke to students about careers in Law, and representatives from Gestamp Tallent enlightened pupils about the many opportunities within the manufacturing and engineering industry. Students also joined a session focusing on social work, and a talk from representatives from The Auckland Project. Speakers also delivered sessions on the different types of apprenticeships and on entrepreneurship.



An afternoon at the Maths Gala

Last term, as part of our Aim Higher programme, four Year 10 mathematicians attended a Maths Gala at Durham Sixth Form Centre with Maths Teacher, Mr Butters.

Students were introduced to a new A' Level concept before putting their skills to the test against students from other schools. Our team embraced the challenge with enthusiasm and showed great determination, thoroughly enjoying the afternoon. This was just one of the many opportunities to learn outside of the classroom.



Focus on Science

In our Science Department, teachers focus on planning creative and fun lessons to inspire students; and our Physics specialist and STEM Co-ordinator, Miss Thompson, organises a calendar of special activities and events to boost interest and engagement.

Year 7s have taken part in a practical, hands-on robotics workshop, delivered by James Claxton from Kielder Observatory. Students used programmable robots called 'Sphero' to complete a series of coding and problem-solving challenges, similar to how real space missions send step-by-step commands to robot explorers. Pupils worked in teams to develop their computational thinking through trial, error and iteration.

Students also took part in a citizen science project with the University of Southampton and the Royal Society of Biology where pupils investigated how soil pH affects bean growth. This provided an excellent opportunity to contribute to real scientific research while developing practical investigation skills in the classroom.

In a visit to Durham University, Year 10s were able to explore skeleton archaeology, and A' Level Physics students were able to carry out a hands-on radioactivity practical experiment. Astronomy fans had a fantastic opportunity to visit Wynyard Planetarium and Observatory where they learned about recent advances in manned missions to the Moon; and there was even an incredible Space Masterclass delivered by the National Space Academy where students built telescopes, infrared cameras and mini hydrogen rockets

Students also explored solar power in a fascinating workshop, learning how solar panels work before examining how much energy is generated by the solar panels on our own roof.

"Our aim is to inspire students to consider a career in the field of STEM subjects by sharing our own passion."

Charlotte Thompson, Teacher of Physics and STEM Co-ordinator



Planetarium experience

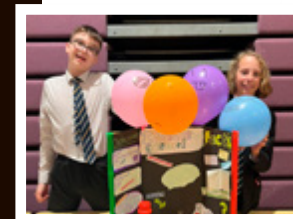
Students in all year groups enjoyed a space themed event with an immersive planetarium and virtual telescope.

The event was made possible thanks to Kielder Observatory's amazing portable planetarium and members of Bishop Auckland Astronomical Society who joined us to share their knowledge and passion as part of our STEM programme. This was just one of the many astronomy events which took place throughout the year.

Science Fair new

This year, we held our first after-school Science Fair and it was a huge success.

Student teams in all year groups were keen to demonstrate their scientific knowledge to all of the families, friends and teachers in attendance. There were some fascinating displays, projects and experiments, focusing on everything from the solar system, volcanoes and sustainability, to crystal making and an experiment to see if a pet brush mimicking a cat's tongue is superior for grooming!



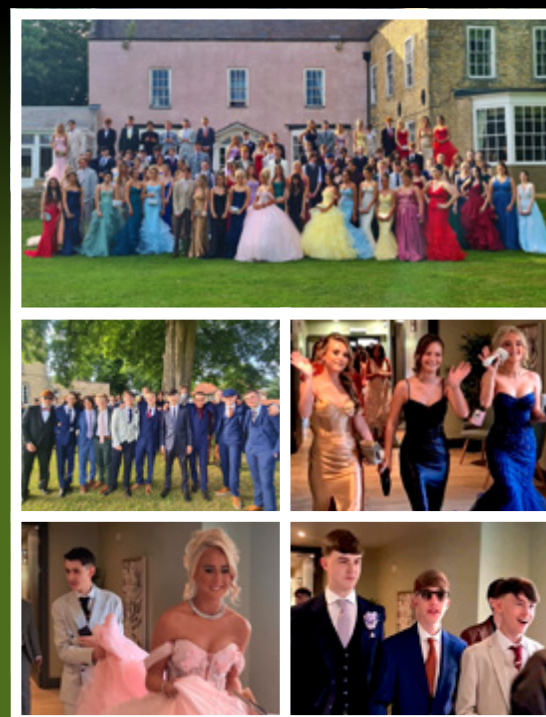


Saying farewell at the Year 11 Leavers' event

At the end of the GCSE exam season in June, students attended the annual Year 11 Leavers' event at King James where they enjoyed hot food, farewell speeches and the traditional leavers' video with photos from their time in Years 7-11.

Hot cajun chicken and BBQ pulled pork was prepared by the staff and students in our Food & Nutrition Department, alongside vegetarian and gluten free options to cater for all; these choices were requested by Year 11 students in a vote. Farewell speeches came from Headteacher, Mr Whitehead, and Key Stage 4 Co-ordinators, Mrs Stead and Mrs Crowther.

As per our Year 11 Leavers' Day tradition, students also collected their 'Class of 2026' Leavers' hoodie, and gathered farewell messages and signatures from their peers and teachers on their school shirts as a personal memento of their time with us.



Walking the red carpet at Prom night

In July, over 160 Year 11 students and King James staff enjoyed a glittering Prom Night at Hallgarth Hotel and Country Club.

Students chose to have a hot buffet meal on the night, and after this came the much-anticipated Prom awards, photo booth and dancing until 11.00pm; it was the perfect way to celebrate achievement and reminisce about happy times at King James with friends, teachers and support staff. Students walked the red carpet looking spectacular in evening dresses, ball gowns and suits in every colour.

Adam Plews and Millie Waites were crowned Prom King and Queen, and other notable accolades went to Kaylem Harbottle, who was awarded *Master of Chaos*; Lennon Burrell, who was declared *Future Rock & Roll Star*, Alex Ferguson, who was voted *Most Likely to be Prime Minister* and Jaycob Baines, who claimed *Most Likely to Make a Million*. Other awards included *TikTok Sensation*, *Biggest Party Animal*, *Most Stylish*, *Biggest Diva* and *Most Likely to be Late for Work*!

Although many of those who attended the Prom are now studying in our Sixth Form, some have left King James for work, apprenticeships or specialist courses at college. It has been a privilege to watch them grow into amazing young adults, and we wish them the best of luck for a bright future.

An Academy of Fundraisers

Showing support for local and national charities is an important part of our Academy life and we organise a programme of activities and events throughout the year to raise funds.

In September, each year group chooses a specific charity to support, and activities are planned to raise money which is donated at the end of the academic year when we have final totals. Last year, Year 7s raised £550.00 for *The Angel Trust*; Year 8s raised £434.00 for *School of Sanctuary*; Year 9s raised £1,252.00 for *The Glove Project*; Year 10s donated £842.90 to *If U Care, Share*, and together, Years 11 and 12 raised £4,263.55 for *The GO! Project* at King James. As an Academy, we also supported a number of other charities including *Make a Wish*, *the Poppy Appeal*, *Teenage Cancer Support*, *Children in Need*, *Feeding Families*, *West Auckland Food Bank*, *MIND* and *Comic Relief*. Despite the financial challenges faced by many of our families, we are so proud to have donated over £11,463.55 to charity in the last academic year!

Macmillan Cancer Support

Our annual *Macmillan Coffee Morning* event in our Dining Hall and Sixth Form Common Room offers both sweet and savoury treats to staff and students. Last year we raised £521.41.



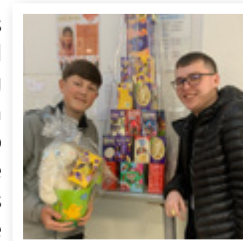
1,000 Can Challenge

Each December, we aim to donate 1,000 items to our local food banks, but last year, we collected an amazing 1,625 items, which were shared between *West Auckland Food Bank* and *The Angel Trust*.



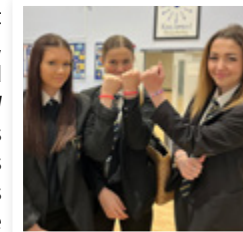
The GO! Project

The *GO! Project* is a new in-school fundraising initiative, which raises money to help subsidise trips for students from low income households. This ensures all students have equal opportunities.



If U Care Share

In the last academic year, we have raised £842.90 for *If U Care Share*. This charity raises awareness about suicide and provides support for those bereaved by suicide.



26 miles for charity

Members of our Site Maintenance Team have raised over £1,000 for charity by completing a 26-mile hike in the Lake District.

In 27-degree heat, the team hiked for eight hours across rough terrain around the perimeter of Ullswater to raise money for *Breast Cancer UK* and *Alzheimer's Society*, with a total of £1,068 donated by friends, family and colleagues at King James.

Jonathan Page said, "These charities are close to our hearts, as we all know someone that has been affected. Both charities provide so much support for families during extremely difficult times, and we wanted to give something back. We are all keen walkers and enjoy the countryside so a sponsored hike was the perfect fundraiser for us."

The team are already planning another fundraiser for 2027, which will involve climbing *Helvellyn* via *Striding Edge* route, which is the most iconic and dangerous option.

Student Rewards & Recognition

We reward our students for hard work, achievement, attendance and positive behaviour in many ways.

Each day, students earn *Class Charts* points in lessons for various reasons including supporting others, showing respect, and producing good work. They can also earn extra points for attending lunchtime or after-school sessions, helping out at events and getting involved in fundraising activities. Points earned can then be exchanged for stationery items and sweet treats from our *Rewards Store*.

Themed rewards events also take place each half term to recognise students who have earned the highest number of *Class Charts* points. Invited students are treated to luxury hot chocolate or milk shake according to the time of year, plus sweet treats themed around Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day or

Easter. For the summer term, students are even rewarded with a visit from the ice cream van!

Our annual Prize Evening recognises achievement and effort, with winners chosen by both Form Tutors and subject teachers. Students are presented with their award at a formal event which is attended by family, King James staff and guest speakers. This is a much-anticipated event, and students are both excited and proud to receive an invitation.

Students with excellent behaviour and attendance are also invited to attend Mr Bishop's Year Group Movie Afternoons, which take place each term in our Main Hall. We also run an extremely popular Big Prize Attendance

Competition; throughout the academic year, students with 100% attendance every week receive a raffle ticket which goes into the prize draw. The more 100% weeks, the more tickets they have and the more chances to win! In the past, prizes have included a PS5 and a bike!



Alex Pattinson

Alex is a Science Manufacturing Tech Apprentice at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK).

"I studied A' Level Biology, Chemistry and Core Maths at King James, knowing that I wanted to pursue a career in Science. I wanted a practical role where I could make a meaningful impact on people's lives, gain working experience and earn a wage from day one. My GSK apprenticeship offers all of this whilst allowing me to achieve a recognised qualification."

"Applying for the apprenticeship was intense but worth it. The process includes the initial application, assessments, interviews and aptitude tests. I prepared thoroughly by researching the company, the industry and the role to give myself the best chance of success and it worked. My daily responsibilities include supporting the pharmaceutical packaging process, ensuring that Good Manufacturing Process (GMP) is adhered to and completing documentation accurately. The most rewarding part of my job is knowing that the work I do has a direct impact on patients. When a batch is successfully completed, it's satisfying to know the medicine we manufacture will soon reach people whose lives could be improved, or even saved."

"On completion of the apprenticeship, I will gain a Level 3 qualification in Aseptic Science Manufacturing, and have valuable industry experience. I'd encourage anybody considering an apprenticeship to keep an open mindset. It may not be the route for everybody, but if you enjoy practical, hands on learning, an apprenticeship is fantastic. Getting an early chance to kickstart your career in the field that you choose is amazing and it has been one of the best decisions I've made."

Chloe Wymer

Chloe is a Process Operator at GSK, working in the SIBU Vials IVM2 area..

"In my current role I manufacture a medicine called Cabotegravir within an extremely sterile environment to ensure product quality and patient safety. I operate manufacturing equipment, perform in-process checks, complete GMP documentation and work closely with my team to maintain high standards of cleanliness and compliance. Before securing my permanent role, I completed a manufacturing apprenticeship at GSK, gaining a Level 3 Engineering qualification and achieving a Distinction. I also chose to complete an extra biology programme that GSK supported me through, and as a result, I achieved an A' Level in Biology alongside my engineering qualification."

"I chose an apprenticeship because I wanted to gain hands-on experience while still working towards a recognised qualification and to be paid while doing it. By the time I completed my apprenticeship, I had already built up three years of real-life experience in a working environment, and this has given me stronger opportunities to progress within the company and develop my career. I enjoy being part of a worldwide organisation that focuses on patients and their wellbeing and it's motivating to know that the medicines we manufacture are directly contributing to improving health outcomes for so many people. It is also great to network with GSK employees from different sites and countries and to be part of such a supportive, talented team."



Diary date..
SIXTH FORM
OPEN EVENING



Sixth Form



James Morland

As a student of A' Level Physics, Maths, Further Maths and Computing, James achieved excellent exam results at King James. He developed a passion for Science and for Astrology through our popular STEM programme, which includes a number of opportunities to explore celestial bodies and constellations, and as a result, he is now studying a Degree in Physics and Astrology at Durham University.



Millie-Ann McGowan

At King James, Millie-Ann studied Health & Social Care, Criminology and Sociology, celebrating great success in all three subjects. Now on track to fulfilling her dream of a career in medicine, she is studying a Degree in Diagnostic Radiography at the University of Cumbria, a course which combines academic study with clinical placements leading to a highly specialised qualification.



Ruby Ward

Ruby studied A'Level Art, Performing Arts and Health & Social Care in Sixth Form at King James. Now, she works as a Business Administrator at Durham Animal Feeds in Newton Aycliffe while she completes an Apprenticeship in Accounts. Ruby said, "I love going to work every day and being able to earn a wage and gain work experience while working towards a professional qualification."



Here at King James I Academy Sixth Form we offer a wide range of academic and vocational subjects to ensure that our students have the very best chance of success.

Whatever your aspirations, from university to employment or apprenticeships, we will help you to achieve your goal. We even offer the option of a third year in Sixth Form for those who wish to boost UCAS points or study an additional subject. Students can choose from the following subjects:

- Art
- Biology
- Business Studies
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Creative Media
- Core Maths
- Criminology
- Digital Systems & Data
- English Language
- English Literature
- Extended Project
- Food Science & Nutrition
- Football Academy
- Further Maths
- Geography
- Health & Social Care
- History
- Human Biology
- Maths
- Music Practitioners
- Performing Arts
- Photography
- Physics
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Sport

Earn while you learn!

There are a number of opportunities for Sixth Form students to take part in paid work whilst studying at King James. These offer not just a welcome source of income, but also a way to gain valuable work experience and a respected addition to their CV.

We have an extensive Primary Outreach Programme where pupils in Years 4 and 5 attend King James both during school hours and after school each week to take part in activities including Kickboxing, Trampolining, Film making, Photography, Art, Drama and Music. Each one of these employs an Outreach Assistant to support the subject teacher to deliver sessions.

Danny Clay, pictured below with pupils from St Andrew's Academy, worked in the Media Department for two years, helping to deliver a film making experience using green screen technology. He said, "I have really enjoyed working with primary pupils. They are so enthusiastic about learning new things and excited to see themselves in the finished product on Youtube. Alongside the opportunity to earn, being an Outreach Assistant has been an excellent addition to my CV as I have gained work experience and developed lots of new skills. It has also given me much more confidence and I now feel better prepared for university."



In addition to this, Year 5 Curriculum Weeks offers an opportunity for a team of Sixth Formers to work with visiting pupils from multiple schools as they take part in different lessons across the Academy over a two week period. Sixth Formers take responsibility for making sure their allocated group are escorted around school and ensure that they feel safe, confident and included. This is an important job and many of our students find it a rewarding experience.



Year 12 Work Experience

Each year, our Year 12 students take part in Work Experience Week, with placements in a wide range of sectors.

In July, students worked at Woodham Academy, Hewitts Solicitors, Smith Roddam Solicitors, Shildon Alive, Investing in Children, And Eve Studio, Bishop Auckland Hospital, Darlington Memorial Hospital, Breaking Bread, The Auckland Project, 4 Paws Farm, Durham University, Durham Hospital, Thornhill Primary School, Handling Sales Equipment, St Andrews Primary, Evergreen Primary, Durham Development Ltd, Hathway Roofing and Teescraft Engineering.

AJ Pye, pictured above, spent the week at Change Plastering in Shildon. He said, "I have really enjoyed working this week and have learned so much. Plastering is hard work and it takes a lot of skill but it is so satisfying when you get it right."

University visits

Whilst in Year 12, our Sixth Form students attend events at different universities to explore their options before making an application.

In the past year, students have visited Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside Universities to take part in workshops, talk to lecturers and enjoy a guided tour of the study facilities and student accommodation. They also enjoyed a trip to York St John University which included a visit to the city's Christmas Market.



Diary dates

5 Sept	Year 13 trip to Lanzarote
7 Sept	Sixth Form Parents info sessions: Year 12 at 6.00pm Year 13 at 6.30pm
16 Sept	Year 6 Open Evening
18 Sept	Media visit to Auckland Castle
28 Sept	Year 11 Geography field trip
28 Sept	Year 7 visit to Auckland Castle
1 Oct	Year 11 Parents info session - 5pm
6 Oct	Year 7 Settling-In Evening - 4pm
12 Oct	Outward Bound trip departs
20 Oct	Careers Fair
21 Oct	Sixth Form Open Evening
23 Oct	Academy closes for half term (1 week)

Join us at Year 6

Open Evening

SEPT
16



Our Year 6 Open Evening, will take place from 5.30pm - 7.30pm on Wednesday 16th September. The event is designed to support Year 6 pupils and their families in making an informed decision about which secondary school will be best for them in September 2027. At the event you can:

- Meet school leaders and teachers
- Hear about our curriculum
- Talk to students
- Take a tour of our facilities
- Join in a variety of activities in all subjects
- View student work
- Find out about extra-curricular opportunities
- Sample our Academy menu
- Find out about school transport
- Enter our Open Evening competition!

Sixth Form Open Evening

OCT
21



If you are in Year 11, our Sixth Form Open Evening will help you begin to make plans for your future. Join us from 6.00pm-8.00pm to:

- Meet our dedicated Sixth Form Team
- Find out about subject options
- Talk to subject teachers and students
- Take a tour of Academy facilities
- View our Common Room and Study Zone
- Find out about extra-curricular opportunities and trips

Free Breakfast!

Every morning, from 8.00am-8.30am in our Dining Hall, King James students can enjoy a free breakfast to set them up for the day ahead.

Students can enjoy a bagel or a selection of Kellogg's cereals for free; we can even cater for food allergies on request.

PARENTS HELP US SHAPE THE FUTURE

We are always looking for enthusiastic parents to join our Parents' Forum group.

This group meets to discuss ideas to improve the learning experience we offer, and raise the profile of King James in our community. To register your interest, please call Main Reception on 01388 603388.

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