



Ramsey Voice

Updates Newsletter

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Notes From the Head

Welcome to the final 2015 edition of the Ramsey Voice. We hope you have enjoyed reading about the success of our students and the wide range of activities in which they participate, both within school and the local community. Our aim is to be an outstanding school at the heart of the community, not only in terms of an Ofsted judgement, but based on the opinion of the people of Halstead and the local area. This view is growing and we are delighted to be oversubscribed with applications for entry into Year 7 for next September.

I would like to particularly draw your attention to the article written by David Iles, who is resigning as Governor before relocating to the West Country. On behalf of the students, parents and staff I would like to thank David for his contribution to supporting the Academy in recent years, enabling us to make the improvements to date.

Yet again the range of activities highlights opportunities for students and celebrates their achievements. We were delighted to welcome back former students to receive their GCSE certificates; these were presented by James Cleverly, MP for Braintree. The timing of the evening coincided with the release of national data highlighting the performance of the Academy compared to all schools in England. We were delighted with the results which showed that our students made significantly more progress than expected in a wide range of subjects (based on their ability when joining us from primary school).

In previous editions I have mentioned the intention to introduce and develop the Halstead Community Choir which has been supported by the Braintree District Council Mi Community Project. We are finally in a position to start the Choir which will hold its first session on Tuesday 5 January from 7.00 - 9.00 pm in the Main Hall. All ages and abilities are welcome to sing a range of classic rock and pop songs; no auditions are needed. As a special launch offer, the first four weeks are free of charge. Please come along, meet new people, exercise those vocal chords and have some fun!

The end of term has, as usual, been very busy with a range of activities. Year 11 students have completed their mock examinations and are awaiting their results. Unfortunately they will not be able to take much of a rest before returning in January to sit their real English Literature and ICT examinations. After this they will complete their preparations towards the GCSE summer examinations. The Academy were represented at the annual Remembrance Parade and the Torchlight Procession. In terms of music, the Choir performed at St. Andrew's Church with the Colchester Brass Band; led the singing at the annual Academy Carol Service and entertained the residents at a Residential Care Home. Students have enjoyed Christmas lunch with other members of their respective Houses and celebrated success at the end of term Achievement Assemblies.

I would like to thank all the students, parents, staff and Governors for their support during the year, supporting Ramsey Academy's continued development.

Finally I would like to wish everyone a restful holiday period and a prosperous 2016. - Mr R James

GCSE Awards Evening

On Thursday 26 November we welcomed back the Ramsey Class of 2015 and their parents to celebrate their successes. Students collected their GCSE certificates and awards were given to those who had excelled in individual subjects. We were delighted to be joined by James Cleverley, our local MP, who presented awards and addressed the audience.

The culmination of the evening was the presentation of Special Awards to the following Outstanding Contribution to Sport - James Walker, Lucy Jordan Plate - Hannah Page, David Fielding Award - Bethany Wheeler, Alan Dyer Award - Duncan Burns, Stewart Billson Award - Lucie Sharpe, Halstead Grammar School Old Girls Association - Rebecca Neale, Christopher Holmes Prize - Elizabeth McKean, Newell Shield - Megan Rawlinson, Old Colonians Association Prize for Languages - Kiara Plachy, The Milburn Drama Plate - Adam Brown.

Former Head Girl Rebecca Neale and Head Boy James Walker, thanked Mr Cleverley for his kind words and wished everyone success in the future.

This was a wonderful event and the gave former students, parents and staff the opportunity to catch up and reminisce about their time as part of the Ramsey community.
- Mr C Leys





Science Club

Science club was an enjoyable experience, as helping out the primary school children was always a pleasure. While they liked to have fun and talk to each other, they were always well behaved when it came to explaining what they had to do, and they actively showed an interest in learning about Science, doing experiments and working in groups.

I joined Science club when I was in Year 10 as it seemed to be an interesting club to help out with.

Some of the topics they covered included: making bath bombs, racing marbles run and we spent a lesson pretending to be Harry Potter. They also investigated how diseases spread and how diabetes can be tested.

They investigated how different concentrations of acid effected how fast a cross disappears and they also investigated streamlining by making parachutes. - Max Ralph (Year 11)

Science Observatory Visit Report

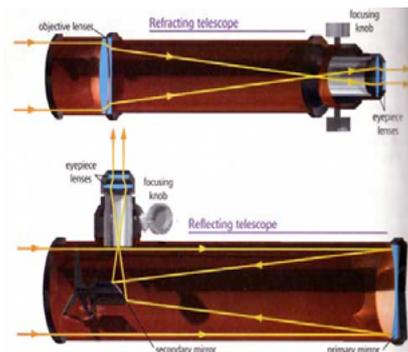
When we arrived at the Royal Observatory, we were astounded by the beautiful landscapes surrounding the area! Our first class consisted of studying how exoplanets, planets that don't orbit our Sun, orbited their sun! We did this by using practical equipment; polystyrene balls representing planets, a torch which represented the sun and a light sensor that allowed us to monitor the changes! We also learnt that if we discovered a planet ourselves, then our names could be scientifically published!

We were also given some time to explore the observatory ourselves; there were many interesting things to do, such as an interactive programme that allowed us to travel through space on a computer and learn about different stars and galaxies!

In our second class, we learned about telescopes and how they're used! We saw the structure of reflective and refractive telescopes and how different waves emit into them.

The best part of the day was the planetarium! We all filed into a cinema-like room, with comfortable seating that tilted backwards, so we could look up at the screen which was on the ceiling! As the lights dimmed and we were plunged into darkness, the screen came alive! The expert astronomer guided us through key constellations, different planets, our galaxy and much more whilst we all watched it on the big screen!

After taking pictures of the scenic landscapes, we all trooped back to the coach for the journey home! It was a fun, educational trip which we all thoroughly enjoyed! - Halimah Babor (Year 11)



Science Awards

- Year 7 - Frasier Hughes (Endeavour)
- Year 8 - Molly Gerrard (Endeavour)
- Year 9 - Noah Parkinson (Endeavour)
- Year 10 - Chloe Phillips-Taylor (Diversity)
- Year 11 - Sam Hawes (Diversity)
- Year 11 - Matt Bell (Diversity)

Gardening Club

With the cold weather upon us, our allotment has been put to bed for the winter. We have completed our last minute weeding which will make our lives easier in the spring. The fallen leaves have been collected from around our site, and they will be left to rot down as leaf mould to be used in the 2017 season.

'Halstead In Bloom' has given us dozens of geraniums and begonias from the town displays. We have chopped them back to the roots and re-potted them to over-winter in our greenhouse. They are already forming leaves and showing healthy growth.

The damaged polytunnel cover will be replaced in the spring when the days warm up and get longer. Again, thank you to the Halstead WI for the £200 to make this possible.

Our pallet skull fundraising project has netted £90 for us. This will go towards compost and soil improver at the beginning of the year. I was delighted to show a representative of the Jack Petchey organisation around our site. They were pleased with the tools purchased with Noah Parkinson's award and the electronic irrigation system on our polytunnel supplied by James Donald's award.

We are preparing ourselves for the RHS Rocket Project next Easter and will report on our experiments soon after. New members are always welcome. Come along and see what we do! - Mr S Pittuck



Dracula Spectacular - Stage Scenery and Props

A small group of enthusiastic scenery and prop designers/fabricators are making steady progress in producing weird and wonderful props. A number of them look remarkably like Gardening Club members come in from the cold!

Using bits of pallet wood and other scraps, we have made 25 gothic candle sticks and a couple of stakes (well, it is a musical about vampires!)

We are in full production of wooden stage blocks, which can be put together to form scenery on stage. These will be used to mock up an aeroplane and the furniture from an inn. The sheet material for these 16 blocks has been financed by a £200 Jack Petchey award secured by one of our drama students. They can be used for future productions - a valuable investment for the future.

Mobile gravestones (on wheels!) are coming off the production line. We are having fun using our imaginations and trust that we have achieved the right amount of creepiness.

We will be very busy next term constructing a bridge, a mad scientist's lab, trapdoors and a painted backdrop.

We would welcome more members to join our team. We build our arcane props during lunchtimes and after school. - Mr S Pittuck



Gothic Competition

Year 9 are currently writing 100 word mini sagas as part of a national story writing competition. This complements the English Faculty scheme of work on Gothic fiction. Following study of writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Susan Hill and Robert Browning, students have been working on their own imaginative stories. The competition deadline is December 24 so all entries must be in before the end of term. National winners will have their work published in an anthology and there are several prizes available. Mini sagas will be collected by English staff before the end of term. Alongside the national competition, Ramsey winners will also be selected. Look out for some of the best entries appearing in a future edition of The Ramsey Voice. - Mrs M Gibbs

Diversity Shriek Week!

From 19 October until the 23 October, Diversity House had their charity week, raising funds towards "For Daisy and DIPG Brain Cancer Research". This charity was chosen by the students as a local fund that they felt they wanted to help raise money for, to help with the progress on fighting the devastating condition of DIPG brain cancer.

Over the 5 days, various events were organised with a theme based around a "Shriek Week", Ghouls and ghosts featured in each of the activities across the week. Each day at break time, students from each year brought in cakes and drinks to sell in the Hall. Some were themed with spiders, cobwebs and potions to give everyone a fright and the treats were enjoyed by all!

At lunchtime each day there were also unique events taking place, all organised and planned by the Student Management Team and House Council for Diversity. On Monday there was a very competitive rematch, with the boys from Diversity against the Ramsey Girls Netball team. The game was very exciting and very close, with the girls having a clear lead at half time. In the second half, the boys regrouped, changed strategy and in the closing minutes managed to secure the win. A big thank you to all of those who played, and of course, all of the spectators.

The main hall on Tuesday and Thursday lunchtime became a cinema for the brave, with a showing of Monster House, a fantastic animation based on a haunted mansion. Again, there was a fantastic turn out, with the hall being packed from wall to wall and a great time was had by all.

On Wednesday lunchtime, students challenged the Diversity staff to a game of ultimate Frisbee in the Gym. With the stands full of eager students from all years, the game was fast paced and great fun. The Diversity students performed fantastically, and although they lost, they did so with pride and a great sense of sportsmanship. Well done to all involved!

The final day of the Shriek Week was the non-uniform day, where everyone had the chance to come to school as a gruesome or frightful character of their choice. All students who attended in fancy dress were appropriately dressed and a great day was had by all. Students had the chance to have their photos taken in a photo booth, and I have copies of the photos if any students would like to come and collect them.

I would once again like to thank everyone from Diversity who helped in the organisation of the day and made it a huge success. I would also like to thank every student who participated in the events or came along to support, we could not do these weeks without your support. And finally, I would like to thank all of you at home for your support with sending them in with money, cakes and fancy dress outfits to make the week as fun as it was.

In total we raised a huge £1085.04 for Daisy and DIPG Brain Cancer Research. Thank you! - Mr Lugton



Homework Club

In order to support students completing homework on time The Ramsey Academy offers a homework club. This is available to students in all year groups.

Homework club takes place during Monday lunchtime at 1.10pm and Tuesday - Friday mornings at 8am - 8.25am. Students are supported with completing their homework and are welcome to complete homework for the day ahead or just to print the work required. On a Monday the club is also a compulsory club for students who have received a high number of homework detentions. This facility is available to students in order to provide them with an appropriate learning environment and resources they may need to complete homework. Some students may struggle with organising completion of homework and staff are willing to help them with this.

If you have any troubles with Show My Homework, please contact Ms C Sterland: csterland@ramseyacademy.com
- Miss H Ralph and Miss L Buschman



Governor Pen Portrait

I have been associated with the Ramsey for three decades. My own four children attended the school, and, as Head of Richard de Clare, I sent half the Ramsey's annual intake of Year 7 students every September. I have always lived just a few minutes walk from the school and I have shared the community's hopes and aspirations for our children and young people.

Parents will know that a few years ago the school went through a very difficult period, culminating in a poor Ofsted. At that time I was working in a number of schools across Essex as a Consultant Leader, always hoping that I would have the opportunity to contribute more to my own local community, through Ramsey. That opportunity came when I was invited to join the new Local Governing Body and the Multi Academy Trust.

Since then, I have witnessed an amazing transformation.

Under the guidance and stewardship of Notley's then Executive Head Teacher, Simon Thompson, and Head Teachers Dan Gee and now Rob James, The Ramsey Academy, Halstead has shown itself to be one of the most improved secondary schools in the country. That is a remarkable achievement in so short a time.

This transformation has not happened by accident - indeed, the opposite is true. There has been a relentless focus on the part of Staff, Governors and Trustees to examine every aspect of the school and to improve it. The premises and resources have been improved to provide a working and learning environment worthy of our students in the 21st century. More importantly, there is a drive to improve the quality of teaching and of learning that drills down through every subject, in every lesson and for every pupil. Of course, the job will never be finished - developments can always be made, as the leadership and staff are well aware. One of the things that has impressed me most, as an experienced and successful practitioner, is how well Mr James and his staff have been able to put in place systems, policies and practices that make it so much easier for students to be successful - and how hard it will be in the future for anyone to slip through the net.

Being a Governor at The Ramsey Academy, Halstead over the last few years has been incredibly rewarding. The workload is not onerous and the responsibility is limited: the day to day management and running of the school is quite rightly vested in Mr James and his Leadership Team. We have a duty to support the school, but also to challenge what the school is doing, and thus ensure that it is on track to deliver the values and aspirations of our local community - that's why we have a Local Governing Body, after all. You don't have to be an expert to be a Governor. My own background has enabled me to contribute on Special Educational Needs and on Safeguarding, but we have a true mix of experience, expertise and interests within the Governing Body. There are no cliques or sub groups: everyone has one purpose and one only which is to allow every student and member of staff to achieve their potential.

I would venture to suggest that the students attending The Ramsey Academy, Halstead - your children - represent Halstead's most important asset. It is vital that the school continues to be successful, week in week out: the future of the town depends upon it. I have always been immensely proud to be a part of this community, and I have always been in awe of our young people and what they can achieve. I am now more confident than ever that under the leadership of Mr James, and with the support of the Governors, we will be able to give those young people the start to life that they so richly deserve. - Mr David Iles



Remembrance Service



On Sunday 14 November Lewis Crow (Head Boy), Mr James and I went to the Halstead Memorial Service to remember those lost in war. It started in the public gardens where moving speeches were made and poppy wreaths and crosses were placed on the memorial statue. Lewis and I placed a cross to show our respect. After this, we walked through the town to St. Andrew's Church where wreaths and crosses were placed on the memorial statue. This was then followed by a service in the church to remember and pay respects to those lost. This included the singing of hymns and many speeches from local Halstead people to pay their respects. - Emma Gooden (Head Girl)

The Ramsey Award

Pixl Edge is a new and exciting initiative that we are running at The Ramsey Academy. Its aim is to prepare our students for life after Ramsey, whether that be college, sixth form or apprenticeships. The Pixl Edge programme is an online platform built to demonstrate the amazing things our pupils do in and outside school.

The purpose of this is to give our students 'the Edge' in the application and interview stages. All the students need to do is complete a short form explaining how they have completed the task and how it demonstrates one of the key attributes that employers are looking for: Leadership, Organisation, Resilience, Initiative or Communication. We hope that all pupils will be successful at each stage of the programme and receive their certificates and rewards.



The encouragement and assistance from parents/carers would be very much appreciated in allowing your child to reach their full potential. Any additional information can be found by searching Pixl Edge on Google. - Mr M Child

Your community choir needs YOU!



Introducing a brand new community choir for all ages and all abilities!

Classic rock and pop songs,
led by professional tutors.
Come along to our launch event.
Tuesday 5 January 2016 @ 7.00 – 9.00pm
The Ramsey Academy, Halstead.
(and every Tuesday thereafter)



Halstead
COMMUNITY CHOIR

INTRODUCTORY OFFER!
First four weeks in January free of charge
After that £2.00 (adults) £1.00 (children)

Art Trip

On Friday 27 November we went to Colchester Zoo to collect and create images and sketches to help us to add more pattern, texture and detail to our artwork, as well as having a first-hand view of all the animals and researching them further. We mainly focused on spots and stripes (patterns) and sea life; our research on sea life will go towards helping us create a final piece and adding more detail to the work in our sketch books. When we got there we went into a room that had different parts of animals in, such as: alligator skulls, tigers and cheetah fur, snakes and spiders' skin, shells and coral, seahorses and sea urchins, turtles and insects. This allowed us to get close up pictures and ask any questions we had to find out more about the animals.

While we were looking at the animals we made small sketches in our sketch books and explored different ways of drawing them: at the same time we were thinking about what media we could use to create more detailed drawings of them. After the zoo trip we put together two A3 pages of sketches, paintings and studies that we had collected. It was a worthwhile day and everyone benefited and enjoyed the experience. - Beth Pilkington (Year 10)



Get Online Week

Greenfields celebrates National Get Online Week with volunteer 'skill swap' with school. Pupils from The Ramsey Academy, Halstead, have volunteered to take part in Greenfields 'skill swap' scheme, which launched on 15 October as part of National Get Online Week (12-18 October)

Around 20 pupils have volunteered to teach some of Greenfields' older residents how to get online; in exchange the residents are teaching the pupils a range of skills acquired over the years, cooking, music, gardening - and everything in between!

Val said: "Being online can change someone's life. Not only can you get discounted products and services, such as clothes and insurance; but you can also keep in touch with friends and family from around the world, and find like-minded people who

share your interests - no matter where they live. I want to give all of our residents the opportunity to experience these benefits."

One resident who has been attending Greenfields' Be Connected workshops, said: "Since attending the workshops, I have learnt how to email my friends and family, see where my lifelong penfriends live by using Google Maps and, at our next session, I am going to learn how to Skype my son in Australia. I never thought I would be able to do any of these things - I am so proud and can't thank Val and Greenfields' Digi-Pals enough."

The Ramsey School pupils and Greenfields residents met for the first time on Thursday 15 October at a tea-party at Symonds Court older peoples' scheme in Halstead, and will begin the skill swap sessions in the next month.

Choir and Carol Service

The Ramsey Academy Choir and Band have been very busy over the Festive Season. On 28 November the choir performed outside the Old Post Office as part of The Halstead Christmas Fayre. On 5 December we performed at a Christmas Concert with The Colchester Brass Band at St Andrew's Church. On Friday 11 December we visited the Colne View Care Home to entertain the residents and then returned to St Andrew's on Monday 14 December for the Annual Carol Service. Well done and thank you to Amelia Bell, Maximus Felton, Dion Cardwell, Jasmin Selby, Liberty Bugbee, Hannah Birch, Rosie Shackell, Emily Williamson, Mollie Brine, Phoebe Warren, Lilly McKean, Olivia Vinter, David Mead, Bridget Clegg, Lolly Cooke, Beth Lucas, Beth Curnock, Hannah Peters, Sasha Turner, Lucy Swainsbury, Tony Finch, Jessica Maddocks and Terry Shortt. - Mr Lewis-James

Careers Fair

On 10 November, the annual Careers Fair was held to assist the Year 11 students in making the right decisions for them in relation to life after The Ramsey Academy, Halstead. This year a number of educational providers and advisors were able to attend the fair. In attendance this year were: Colchester Institute, Colchester Sixth Form, Easton and Otley College, Writtle College, Apprenticeship Roadshow, Essex Outreach and The Ramsey Academy Careers Advisor.

The evening gave our students the opportunity to gain further information about the establishments and ask any questions about aspects they may have been unsure about. The evening was a great success and the planning for next year is already in place. We hope that even more providers will attend to give our students the best opportunities for the future. - Mr M child

The Ramsey Academy Orienteering Team

The Ramsey Academy Orienteering team are consistently successful in their sport. Recently they competed in the British Schools Championships, resulting in the Year 11 girls' team winning silver and the whole team finishing in third place. For the past 5 years, since the team was formed, they have always been placed in this competition which includes teams from all over the country. They have travelled as far afield as Scotland to compete.

The team regularly represent the Academy in league events and travel to different regions in East Anglia to compete against other schools. As a small school, The Ramsey Academy, Halstead are competing against some much larger schools, but the students consistently get placed in their classes, gaining points which are then totalled up at the end of the orienteering season when medals and trophies are presented.

The East Anglian Schools' Championships at Hylands Park this year, was the most successful ever for the team. Fifteen members took part and every age category won medals including gold, silver and bronze.

This shows the level of commitment given by students, not just competing, but in the training sessions available to them. They represent the local club, the Essex Stragglers, and some of them have been selected to represent the East Anglian Junior Squad. Orienteering has grown into a very popular sport. It tests both mental and physical abilities. Competitors must navigate themselves around a course, finding electronic checkpoints along the way in the correct order. All this, of course, is done against the clock! Getting a control in the wrong order will result in the score being void. There are different colour courses depending upon the difficulty, and will cover different distances from around 1.5km to around 7.5km. Students can be running across parkland one week and forests of Thetford the next.

I am proud to have been part of this team for the past 5 years and each and every one of them is a credit to The Ramsey Academy. - Julie Edwards - Squad Leader



Table Tennis

The District Table Tennis Competition was held at The Ramsey Academy on Monday 19 October. Ramsey won the competition in every single age group! Congratulations to all of the students who represented the school. All of our teams went on to play in the County Competition in Harlow on Friday 13 November. The U13 boys finished 4th; U16 boys came 3rd and our U13 girls team won the County Championship! They will now play in the zone finals on Saturday 30 January in London. Table Tennis Club takes place on Mondays after school in the gym for all year groups. Please come along if you are interested in playing!

U13 Girls: Mia Charles, Maisie Smith, Molly Gerrard, Millie Slee

U13 Boys: Ben Tyrell, James Tarbin, Owen Tuthill, Harry Tarbin

U16 Boys: Sam Hawes, Lewis Brennen, Charles Mallett, Lewis Crow

Miss S Patching

Cross Country

On Wednesday 18 November, Mr Charlton, Mrs Blunkell and Miss Giorgio took a total of 22 pupils to compete in the North West Essex Cross Country Championship at the Discovery Centre, Notley. Ramsey Academy pupils were, as always, excellently behaved on what was a very cold and wet afternoon. A total of 12 schools took part and roughly 6 pupils from each of these schools, in their age group, ran.

Our stand-out runners from the Year 7 boys' race were Ben Johnstone and Sam Bell, who came 10th and 12th respectively, both running a superb race in a competitive field. Our stand-out runners from the Year 7 girls' race were Grace Jackson and Mia Toms, who came 12th and 13th respectively, again both running a great race. The final category was a mixture of Year 8s and Year 9s. Dominic Emmerson came 10th and Oliver Brooker, 13th; these were our stand-out boys runners. Molly Gerrard in Year 8 came 26th and Beth Lucas, 29th. Both ran excellent races in a very competitive girls' category.

All other runners did extremely well in their respective races, putting in their best effort and representing the school superbly: Owen Smith, Frasier Hughes, Ben Seabrook, Ryan Paulson, Ellie White, Hannah Wallace, Jake Miller, James Potter, Tommy Harrington, Tom Williams, Sky Smith, Hannah Peters, Elissa Matthews and Lolly Cooke. Our 4 Year 10s: Harry Cosby, Morgan Cutmore, Lucy Stokes and Jasmine May came along to help out with the event. Other members of staff told me on numerous occasions that they were 'excellent help' and 'a credit to our school', which was great to hear.

I would like to personally thank all of our pupils for their hard work. I would also like to thank Mrs Blunkell and Miss Giorgio for their help in what was a successful afternoon out representing the Ramsey Academy. - Mr G Charlton



November and December Netball Tournaments

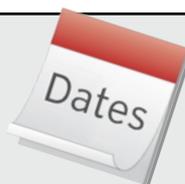
Unfortunately the Year 8 tournament had to be cancelled due to bad weather; this will be played in January. The date will be confirmed.

On the 10 November, our Year 9 netball team set off to Alec Hunter School in Braintree. We played against 7 different schools: Maltings, HRS, Honeywood, Tabor, Alec Hunter, Forest Hall and Notley. Despite the horrible weather, we did the best we could and we learnt a lot from our games and look forward to our next competition.

Many Thanks to Miss Patching for taking us to the match and to Jessica Leach and Lucy Stokes for coming to score our games. - Lolly Cooke (Year 9)



Dates For your Diary...



4 Jan - Non student day Years 7-10.
4 Jan - Year 11 English Revision Day.
7 Jan - Year 8 Parents' Evening.
18 Jan - Year 9 exams commence
21 Jan - Year 11 Parents' Evening
1 Feb - Year 10 exams commence
15 Feb - Half term week

Sports Award

A huge congratulations to both Emma Gooden and Lewis Brennan - our 'Active Braintree' Sports Awards winners!

Emma Gooden received highly commended for 'Young Volunteer of the Year' and Lewis Brennan won 'Young Volunteer of the Year'. A big congratulations to them both!

