

PARENT/CARER BULLETIN

28 February 2025

Dear Parents/Carers,

While there is a lot going on this half-term, I wanted to take a moment to highlight some key events since our last bulletin. In particular, I wanted to draw attention to the school's production of *Les Misérables* - performances so powerful I still can't get the songs out of my head! The production has rightfully been described as 'breathtaking,' 'epic,' 'spectacular,' and 'out of this world,' and I remain in awe of its quality. This week's bulletin includes the article and photos we shared with the press, along with Mr Gutch's heartfelt reflections after watching the show, where he felt compelled to express how much he had been moved and inspired.

Our students' talent and their commitment are undeniable, but I would also like to take the opportunity to thank all the staff involved, especially Lara Ramrattan, Rebecca Clift, Jess Pymar, Nicholas Peters and Adam Grayson. Once again, they have gone above and beyond, investing countless hours of their own time into rehearsals, planning, and ensuring every detail was perfect. Their hard work, ambition and belief in our students have resulted in a show which will be etched in our memories as one of the greatest school productions ever.

Whilst we were all caught up in *Les Misérables* fever, we also held our interviews for year 11 students applying for places at Post-16. Over 400 students have applied to IGS which reflects the school's positive reputation across the region for excellent student outcomes and destinations, the breadth of the curriculum with almost 40 advanced courses on offer, the extensive enrichment and leadership opportunities and the quality of academic support and pastoral care. Indeed, recent publication of the level 3 value added A-level and academic scores for 2024 confirm that IGS is in the top 10% of all schools nationally, including independent schools and selective schools, for progress from GCSE to A-level.

Year 11 students who have been interviewed should now have received their Sixth Form offers for September 2025. A reminder that the deadline to accept offers is 15th March 2025, as we will soon begin building next year's timetable. All offers remain conditional on meeting our general post-16 entry requirements—at least four grades 4-9, including English and maths—along with subject-specific criteria. We hope this motivates students in these crucial final weeks and we wish them the very best as they prepare for their GCSEs. Year 11 students at IGS have certainly made a strong start to the half-term, successfully completing additional maths and English mocks this week. These provide valuable experience in managing exam conditions and offer key feedback for further improvement ahead of the real exams in May and June.

Following the publication of our Ofsted report, we have received a letter of congratulations from the Local Authority which has been included at the back of the bulletin.

Best wishes,

Carly Purnell

Headteacher's Awards

Congratulations to the following students who have been awarded the Headteacher Award over the last fortnight:

Zakariyya Walker 8LEA; Kitty Picken 10ERE; Esme Harris 11AE; Grace Jackson 11VEC; Matthew Disney 12LR; Bea McLean 7KL; Arlo Bates 8FPW; Flo Isherwood 9ALN; Ted Atkinson 10PC; Quentin McKie 11CSJ; Nicholas Archer 13PSN; Sid Coelho 7ACU; Alfie Brown 8JOW; George Charlton 9JLL; Evelyn Higgs 11AE; Charlie Wilson 13RED; Oliver Cliffe 13CDH

Students have received the award for demonstrating school values, being positive role models and making a positive difference to others in line with our school vision.



RED AWARD

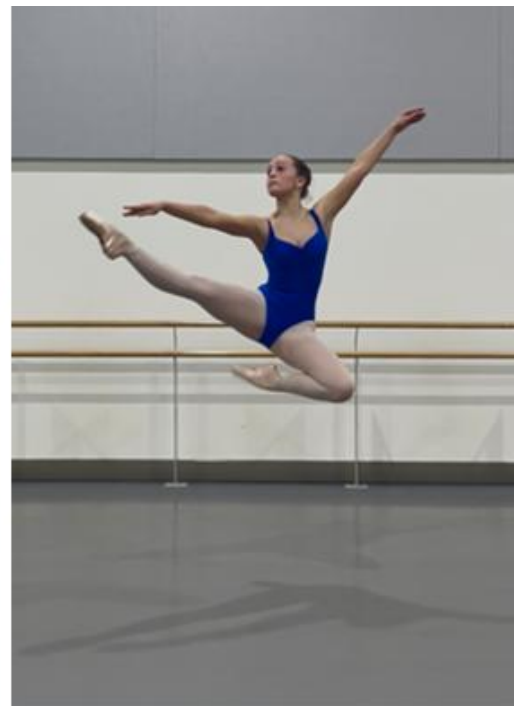
We are delighted to announce that we have been awarded the Red Kite Alliance RED (Respect, Equality & Diversity) Award in recognition of our ongoing work to embed a culture of mutual respect, to champion equality and to celebrate diversity at IGS.

Over a two-year period, we have been on a journey, working hard to further develop our vision and values, our whole school policies and our Personal Development curriculum to ensure that we foster an inclusive and tolerant school culture that champions respect for all our stakeholders. We will continue to work hard to ensure we embrace these qualities in everything we do. Our submission was deemed to be 'especially strong' amongst the many schools that form the Red Kite Alliance of primary and secondary schools across North and West Yorkshire.

As a school we have worked with many stakeholders; from our students, staff, parents and governors as well as many external bodies and charities to bring a wealth of activities and experiences to our school in recent years: from our year 9 Diversity Day in the summer term to the huge array of opportunities for students to work with the local community, from fundraising during charities week to the wide range of trips on offer which broaden students' horizons.

This award is testimony to our work in ensuring all our students have 'a place at the table' when it comes to their personal development, that they are culturally enriched via the experiences we offer them and can share in the celebration of the diverse and everchanging world of which IGS is a part, and ultimately growing in 'wisdom and stature'. The published RED award report can also be read as an attachment to this Parent Bulletin and found on our website. Many thanks to all those who have played a role in securing this award. **Mr Kehoe: Associate Assistant Headteacher**

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland: Ballet



Congratulations to **Kitty (Kathryn) Picken IOERE** who after a successful audition has been accepted by the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Ballet School. Kitty will spend the summer there on an intensive course, detailed below.

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is a World Top Ten institution for performing arts education (QS World Rankings 2024)

“One of the top performing arts institutions in the world” The Sunday Times, May 2024

The course is taught by staff who work in the RCS School of Dance, with additional expert guest teachers. Students benefit from having the opportunity to creatively engage with the different styles taught by these specialists in the field of ballet and contemporary dance.

The course is practical, rigorous and aims to prepare young dancers working towards or currently in vocational dance training. Students have daily classical technique classes with pointework and virtuosity. Additionally, students will participate in classes in a range of supporting subjects, including contemporary dance, classical repertoire, solos, creative/choreography and conditioning.

The summer school aims to create an inspiring, challenging and supporting environment for young dancers to further develop their skills and talents.

By the end of the course students will have:

- strengthened their classical ballet technique
- experienced a professional approach to practice
- participated in repertoire, creative, conditioning and contemporary sessions

This is an amazing achievement for Kitty and thoroughly well deserved!

Maths Trust Team Challenge at the Leeds Mathematics School

On Friday 14th December, four of our talented students represented IGS in the UK Maths Trust Team Challenge at the Leeds Mathematics School, competing against 14 other schools from across Leeds. The event was packed with exciting and demanding maths problems across four rounds, testing our students' resilience, problem-solving skills, and teamwork. The rounds included a tricky cross-number puzzle and a fun, fast-paced relay round to wrap up the competition.

This marks IGS's return to the challenge since 2019, and we are thrilled to announce that our team performed exceptionally well, finishing 5th out of 15 schools! All four students said they had an enjoyable and rewarding day! A huge congratulations to:

- John James Aynsley
- Samuel Renshaw
- Layla-Rae Stancliffe
- Ted Attack

Your hard work and determination really paid off!



On behalf of Ms. Cloughton Deputy Headteacher: Curriculum Overviews

Please find your half termly link to the Curriculum Overviews. For information relating to the Key Stage 3 or 4 curriculum and subject specific information, please follow this [link](#). For all Post 16 Curriculum Overviews, please follow this [link](#) and for further information about each subject, please follow the subject information [link](#).





Les Misérables

SCHOOL EDITION



IGS's Production of *Les Misérables* Leaves Audiences Wowed Students earn standing ovations every night with comparisons to the West End

Pupils from Ilkley Grammar School have wowed more than 1,000 spectators in a week of sold-out performances of the West End classic, *Les Misérables* (School Edition). Each night ended in a standing ovation, with audiences describing the production as “breathtaking,” “epic,” “spectacular” and “out of this world”. One lady who watched the opening night wrote: “It was absolutely magnificent from beginning to end. I've never seen a school show so polished and flawless. I've seen *Les Mis* at least 26 times, many of them in the West End and your show was up there with the best of them!”

Set against the backdrop of 19th-century France, *Les Misérables* is a story of passion, redemption, and the unyielding human spirit. Featuring a world-renowned score, including “I Dreamed a Dream,” “On My Own,” and “One Day More,” this production transported audiences into Victor Hugo’s timeless masterpiece with extraordinary vocals, compelling acting, and stunning technical execution.

With a cast of 53 IGS students, a 19-piece live student orchestra, and a large student backstage and technical crew who managed all aspects of lighting, sound, costumes, set design, and special effects, the scale of the production was immense. *Les Misérables*, as a sung-through musical, is an ambitious challenge for any company, let alone a school, with a demanding score and centred on flawed and complex adult characters far beyond the students’ years. Yet, IGS students not only met this challenge— as one audience member wrote, “they nailed it!”

Musical Director, Vic Chapman stated, “It has been a privilege to work with our incredibly talented students and staff on *Les Misérables*. The score is undoubtedly the most challenging we’ve ever undertaken.

The ‘sung-through’ libretto meant that our incredible orchestra were required to play continuously for up to 80 minutes at a time!! I am so proud that our student orchestra was able to perfect such a difficult score, performing with sensitivity and attention to detail.

The vocal score is also incredibly demanding and is composed for mature voices. The stamina required and vocal range, for some of our principal characters, is almost operatic in nature and our vocalists went above and beyond. At times, I forgot this was a school production!!”



Jessica Pymar, Assistant Musical and Vocal director added “I am so proud of our fantastic, talented and hardworking students on their stunning performances of a very challenging musical; whether that be a lead role, in the ensemble, playing in the orchestra or behind the scenes, they absolutely deserved their standing ovation every night.

As well the incredible finished product, a real highlight for me is seeing students of all ages, from years 7 to year 13, working tirelessly together in rehearsals, making long lasting friendships and just generally having a great time. It was clear from the speeches and emotion behind the curtain on the final night how much the school production means to students, and it is such a privilege to be a part of that.”

Among the standout performances were Cecilia Hester as Fantine, delivering a heart-wrenching “I Dreamed a Dream,” Benjamin Kirk’s emotional portrayal of Marius in “Empty Chairs at Empty Tables,” and seasoned performer Justin Derla as Jean Valjean, whose deeply moving and masterfully controlled rendition of “Bring Him Home” left the audience in awestruck silence before erupting into applause. Matthew Disney brought both gravitas and torment to the role of Javert, delivering a commanding and conflicted performance, with a spine-tingling rendition of “Stars.” Jeff Cook’s charismatic presence as Enjolras ignited the revolution in “Red and Black,” while the comedic brilliance of James Hepworth



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and Daisy Button as the scheming Thénardières provided perfectly timed moments of light relief. Evelyn Kennedy’s portrayal of Éponine was particularly heart-wrenching, with her raw and vulnerable performance in “On My Own” leaving the audience truly spellbound, capturing both the yearning and quiet strength of the character. Emma Chapman’s portrayal of Cosette was equally stunning—her beautiful, lyrical soprano voice was perfectly suited to the role and shone in “A Heart Full of Love,” capturing the innocence and emotion of the character. Year 8 student Jessica Dawson as Gavroche, year 9 Millie Shepherd as Young Cosette, and year 11 student Sam Woodward as the Bishop of Digne also showcased exceptional stage presence and vocal ability, standing out alongside the passion and revolutionary fervour of the ABC students.

Beyond the stunning solo performances, it was the powerful, rousing ensemble numbers that truly elevated this production to something extraordinary. Songs “At the End of the Day,” “Do You Hear the People Sing?” and the triumphant Act One finale, “One Day More,” swept the audience away, filling the school hall with an overwhelming sense of unity, passion, and energy. The sheer vocal power of the entire company, combined with impactful staging and dynamic lighting, made these moments an unforgettable theatrical experience.

The production of Les Misérables was a result of over five months of hard work and dedication, with students auditioning as early as May last year and rehearsing tirelessly from September, alongside their academic commitments.

Lara Ramrattan, Head of Drama at IGS who, alongside Rebecca Clift, directed and produced the show stated, *“I feel immensely lucky to work with such talented, creative and dedicated students who support and encourage each other to achieve their best whether they are: set and prop designers; musicians in the orchestra; singers, actors and dancers in the cast or members of the backstage team. The students have taken our direction to create a powerful and emotive show, and we are brimming with pride. Vive La Production!!”*

Headteacher, Carly Purnell added, *“I am bursting with pride at what our students have achieved. The soaring vocals, the deeply moving performances, the powerful ensemble numbers, and the sheer visceral emotional intensity of this show have been nothing short of breathtaking. From laughter to tears, from spine-tingling anthems to the most raw and heartfelt moments, this cast and crew have taken us on an unforgettable journey.”*

“Supported and encouraged by our amazing staff who directed and produced the show, our students have shown us that ambition, talent, and hard work can achieve the extraordinary. Each night, as the final curtain fell, it has been clear that Les Misérables had left an indelible mark on every member of the audience. This was more than just a school production—it was a phenomenal piece of theatre that will be remembered for years to come.”

Les Misérables – A tour de force!

Returning home after the final performance of Les Misérables I was almost speechless and aware that it would be very hard to put into words what I had just seen. In a year which has already had its fair share of highlights and momentous moments it felt as if those in the audience had just witnessed a very significant moment not just for the Creative Arts Team but for Ilkley Grammar School as a whole.

A *tour de force* is ‘a performance or achievement that has been accomplished or managed with great skill’. It was surely that – without doubt the highest quality school production I have ever seen. But what was it about it that was so significant?

Was it the warm welcome and introduction from the leader of the backstage team which let us know we were in safe hands? Was it the astounding quality and range of the singing from every performer on that stage? Was it the assured and characterful acting from every member of this remarkable ensemble cast? Was it the clarity of the storytelling – a notoriously difficult story to tell? Was it the quiet, yet consummate professionalism of the stage crew? Was it the faultless quality of the sound and lighting? Was it the creativity of the set design? Was it the incredible stamina and exquisite harmony of the orchestra? Was it those moments when you could enjoy the confidence and experience shining through in the senior students, and yet also see new young stars being born right left right and centre in front of your eyes? Was it the classic story of suffering, redemption and hope which speaks so profoundly to our school values of respect, responsibility, resilience, kindness, courage and pride? Was it that we are living in a moment in time when it is more important than ever to stand up for what you believe? Was it the fact that if you shut your eyes, you could almost have been listening to the cast from the film (and sometimes better!). Was it our knowledge of the countless days and afternoons that students and staff have spent rehearsing and refining the production in recent months? Was it the knowledge that so many of these performers have such bright futures ahead of them? Was it the stage filled to bursting with performers which reminds us that our students deserve the best possible facilities to match their incredible talents (and will soon have them)? Was it the expectant friends, staff, parents and grandparents waiting to enter the auditorium? Was it the audible gasp from the audience as another amazing number reached its climax? Was it the knowledge that the catering team had been secretly listening in during rehearsals? Was it that sense you get when you see remarkable teamwork and realise that so much more can be achieved with others than on our own? Was it the knowledge that this incredible cast will put on their school uniforms tomorrow and return to a normal school day as if nothing has happened – but changed somehow within?

It was all those things and more, but most of all for me it was the sense that this production created, for performers and audience members alike, a profound feeling of *belonging* – of being part of something special and of being part of a community.

This production has been so special in many ways, and the Creative Arts (and wider production team) have raised the bar once again, but it also points the way forward for us as a school – we must create as many rich and varied experiences for students as we can, in all areas of school life, so that everyone – *everyone* - feels they belong. **Mr Gutch: Deputy Headteacher**



Year 7 Netball

The U12 team went across to Guiseley on Tuesday and continued their undefeated streak this season. The girls worked well as a team and showed great knowledge and control throughout the game. The girls were able to play well in a variety of positions and ended up winning 16-0.



Year 7 Girls' Football – Leeds Cup



The U12 girls gained a spot in the Leeds Cup semi-finals after an outstanding performance against Ralph Thoresby on Thursday 6th February winning 6-2. There was a fantastic team effort and good application of pressure throughout the game. The girls will go on to play either Roundhay or Temple Moor in the next round. **POM: Olivia Harrison 7FEN**



Year 7 Football Practice



Year 8 Girls' Football

Match Report: Year 8 Girls ESFA Cup Thriller

In a game filled with drama and determination, the year 8 girls produced a stunning performance to edge a thrilling contest in the ESFA Cup.

The first half was a tense battle, with neither team able to gain control or create clear-cut chances. Both defences stood strong, and the game remained deadlocked at 0-0 going into halftime.

The second half, however, was a completely different story. Ribbersdale struck first, taking a 1-0 lead, but our team responded quickly to bring the game level at 1-1. Just as momentum seemed to shift in our favour, we found ourselves trailing again at 2-1.

Then came a moment of magic from Neve Curtin, who produced a breathtaking solo effort dribbling past the entire Ribbersdale team before unleashing an unstoppable shot into the top corner to make it 2-2. With confidence growing, we took the lead for the first time in the match, going 3-2 up.

However, Ribbersdale refused to back down and found another equalizer, making it 3-3 with just minutes remaining. Both teams were fighting for every ball, pushing for a late winner. In the dying moments, Lois stepped up to seal the victory with a dramatic late goal, sending the team through in spectacular fashion.

A fantastic team effort, showing resilience, skill, and determination on to the next round!



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IGS Ski Trip 2025 Gitschberg-Jochtal



Last week, 80 excited year 8 students set off on an unforgettable ski trip to the stunning slopes of Gitschberg-Jochtal and Plose. From the moment we arrived, the group embraced the adventure, taking to the slopes with enthusiasm and determination. Whether complete beginners or more experienced skiers, everyone made fantastic progress, gaining confidence and skills throughout the week.

Beyond skiing, the trip was packed with memorable evening activities. A lively pizza night gave everyone the chance to relax and refuel after a day on the slopes, while the curling night added a fun competitive edge to the week. To round things off, the disco night was a definite highlight, with students (and teachers!) showing off their best dance moves.

Most importantly, the students were a credit to the school throughout the trip. Their positivity, resilience, and team spirit made the experience truly special. It was fantastic to see friendships strengthened and new ones formed, all against the breathtaking backdrop of the Italian Alps.





Spanish Exchange February 2025

Over February half term, Year 11 set off on the exciting cultural experience: the Spanish exchange to Madrid which is now in its 17th Year with Escuela Pías in Pozuelo Madrid. 25 students and 3 teachers from Modern Foreign Languages journeyed to Spain's capital and surrounding regions. We enjoyed day trips to the city of Toledo, the ancient capital of Spain, known as the city of the 3 religions with a Catholic Cathedral, its Jewish Basilica and its Moorish Muslim Mosque. We also visited the beautiful city of Segovia with its 'Al-cazar' (Fortress) renowned for being the inspiration behind Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom as well as exploring many of Madrid's alluring attractions including the spectacular Plaza Mayor, Palacio Real as well as many other cultural sites. Students were fully immersed in the culture having spent the whole week with host families to, not only improve their Spanish acquisition, but also heighten their cultural capital via the art, architecture, gastronomy, history, and mucho mucho más. We are very much looking forward to welcoming our Spanish 'compañeros' on their leg of the exchange on Friday 21st March for a week.



Below you can read about the experience of one of Year 11s Suki Hutchinson:

Our first full day in Toledo was all about exploring. We walked through its winding streets, taking in the lively atmosphere. From the top of the city, we got some amazing views of the river and rooftops. Everywhere we looked was so beautiful. Then, we were given some time to explore the town freely, on our own. Me and my friends discovered many souvenir shops in the many beautiful winding streets of Toledo.

At the weekend, we spent time with our Spanish exchange families. My host family and I went into Madrid on Saturday, exploring the city. It was nice to be given the opportunity of experiencing things from a local perspective: food, culture and customs.

On Monday, we visited Segovia and were given a great tour from a really friendly guide. We saw the famous Roman aqueduct, walked through the old town, and visited the Alcázar. The city was very beautiful, and the tour made it even more interesting with all the history and stories.

On Tuesday, we visited the Plaza Mayor: 'the main town square' which had a very lively atmosphere with street performers and diners as well as many historic buildings. Many people tried the traditional 'bocadillo de calamares' (calamari sandwiches). Afterwards, we were given the opportunity to explore the city of Madrid, seeing more sights and getting some shopping time. Wednesday was my favourite day of the trip. We started with a visit to Madrid's bullring, Las Ventas, learning about its history and traditions. Then, we toured the Bernabéu Stadium, which was an amazing experience. In the evening, back in Pozuelo, we had a farewell meal with our exchange partners and teachers.

We are all very excited to welcome our Spanish partners in a couple of weeks' time. It has truly been a life changing experience and has helped improved my Spanish.



Department of Children's Services
Aiming High for Children

Mrs Carly Purnell
Ilkley Grammar School
Cowpasture Road
Ilkley
West Yorkshire
LS29 8TR

7 February 2025

Dear Carly

We have received your recent Ofsted inspection report and would like to offer our congratulations to all at Ilkley Grammar School for the efforts, hard work and drive to ensure the school secured Outstanding judgements across all areas. This is indeed an achievement to be celebrated and shared more widely.

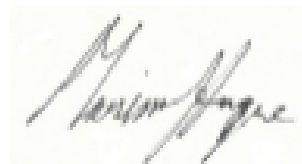
Inspectors commented that Ilkley Grammar School is an 'amazing school' where 'every pupil gets a chance to shine'. The inspectors acknowledge the impact of your strong and ambitious leadership and the report clearly recognises school leaders' uncompromising vision for every pupil to experience an outstanding education and to achieve their personal best.

The report highlights pupils' very positive attitude to learning and their exemplary behaviour. It also acknowledges the highly effective curriculum, the teaching of reading, the love of learning instilled in the pupils through the raised expectations, and the school's high aspirations for every pupil. The school's sixth form is particularly praised: 'The sixth-form provision is a shining light within the school'; as is the extra curricula offer afforded to the whole school.

I am very pleased to see the acknowledgement of the impact of the school's highly experienced governors and their contribution to the improvement of the school. Our sincere thanks go to the governing board and trust.

Please pass on our gratitude and best wishes to the children, staff, and parents of the school. Wishing you success in your drive to ensure the children at Ilkley Grammar School continue to benefit from the outstanding practice, leadership and provision.

Yours sincerely



Mariam Haque
Strategic Director
Children's Services

cc: Alan Halsall, Chair of Trust





We were very sad to hear of the passing in March of Pippa Simpson aged 25, after a 6-year fight with brain cancer. **Pippa attended IGS** and Leeds university before working for the NHS in the surgery in Burley. We're sure she'll be remembered by many people.

Music was Pippa's greatest talent and passion, and one of her final wishes was for a festival to be held in her memory to raise money for **Teenage Cancer Trust** - who provided Pippa and her family with exceptional care and emotional support, meaning Pippa never had to go through her most difficult times alone.

Pippa's sister Lara and friend Cornell have put together a full day's programme of amazing musicians **from midday till 11pm on Sunday 4th May at Ghyll Royd School**. There will be music, food outlets, a bar, various stalls, a raffle, and much more and [tickets can be purchased here](#)

Fancy your chances at the



QUIZ & CURRY NIGHT




Friday 21st March 2025
 Ilkley Grammar School "B Hall"
 Bar opens 7pm. Quiz starts 7:30pm



ILKLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL
A MOORLANDS LEARNING TRUST ACADEMY

Includes supper:-
 meat or veggie
 curry AND dessert.

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TICKETS £15 per person

Come as a team OR join a table on the night.
 Link also on IGS PTA webpage & IGS PTA facebook page. **CLICK TO BUY TICKETS:-**

BUY TICKETS

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