



# Opening Oxford: A guide for schools in Oxfordshire



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**About this Guide**

*Opening Oxford* was developed by Professor Alex Betts and Jenny Shilton Osborne, who worked together on its scope, structure, and approach. Jenny led the research, coordination, and writing, drawing on contributions from colleagues across the University and our community partners. Alex contributed content and helped shape the Guide throughout the process.

We are grateful to all our contributors and supporters, and especially to Katy Dawkins for bringing our ideas and content to life through the design of the Guide. It was collated and published in October 2026.



# Foreword

**PROFESSOR IRENE TRACEY CBE, FRS, FMedSci**  
**VICE-CHANCELLOR**



Growing up in Kidlington and attending St Thomas More Primary and Gosford Hill schools, I know how powerful it can be for young people to feel a real connection with the University of Oxford. That connection can spark ambition, broaden horizons, and open doors to opportunity.

Through our 2025–30 Strategic Plan, we are committed to strengthening the University's links with our local communities.

That means ensuring young people across Oxfordshire can see opportunities in the University, whether that is study, employment, or interest in our cultural assets. Universities thrive when they are part of the life of their region, and our region thrives when its young people are equipped to share in the benefits that our research, education, and innovation create.

Those young people are the future scientists, teachers, musicians, creatives, engineers, administrators, technicians, entrepreneurs, and leaders who will shape both Oxfordshire and the University in years to come. Our collective investment in them matters.

Strong connections between the University and many local schools already exist. Academics give talks in schools; staff and students volunteer in classrooms and offer enrichment in sport, music, and drama; our gardens, libraries, and museums welcome visits; and colleges provide outreach and advice on progression routes. Our award-winning apprenticeship programme and the many career pathways we offer broaden those opportunities further.

Yet I know it is not always easy for teachers to find what is available or identify who to approach. This Guide brings our offers together in one accessible place, so more schools and colleges can connect with us quickly and confidently.

My thanks go to colleagues across departments, colleges, and the Oxfordshire Schools Engagement Working Group for the work done in creating this resource. I hope you find it useful, and that through this Guide, more young people will discover and be inspired by all that Oxford has to offer.

Thank you for all you are doing to support our young people and my warmest wishes going forward.



**Professor Irene Tracey CBE, FRS, FMedSci**

# Introduction

**PROFESSOR ALEX BETTS**

**PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR FOR EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT, SPORT, AND COMMUNITY**



Growing up in close proximity to a world-leading university should offer a wealth of opportunities to young people.

It should provide the chance to visit museums, gardens, and libraries; learn about new subject areas; discover Nobel Prize-winning research; use sports facilities where Olympians train; spend time in beautiful parks; visit historic buildings where great authors have written; have access to music, theatre, and art; and be inspired to consider further study or exciting career options.

And yet Oxfordshire has a significant educational attainment gap, with high levels of youth inequality, and research shows that young people often view the University of Oxford as distant and unrelated to their lives.

Our departments and colleges have long provided a wide range of fantastic initiatives that target schools and further education colleges. Our Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) division reaches hundreds of thousands of young people every year. From chemistry to classics, academics regularly run schools' engagement days. The University invests in an award-winning apprenticeship scheme, and offers an extraordinary array of career opportunities. As one of the biggest employers in the city, and with staff working in a wide range of environments including gardens, museums, laboratories, kitchens, classrooms, sports fields and offices, there is so much opportunity for us to share.

However, these opportunities are not always visible or transparent to teachers across Oxfordshire. Sometimes, programmes run by the University may seem remote or intimidating.

There is more we can do to support teachers, and others working with young people, to navigate the University, and make the most of what's on offer. That is why we have compiled this Guide.

The Guide's aim is to make the University more accessible and relevant to schools and teachers, as well as other

organisations working with young people. For the first time, we have written a single guide bringing together opportunities from across the University.

To prepare the Guide, we coordinated across the various University departments and colleges that work with schools, including through a new Oxford Schools Engagement Working Group. Before writing the report, we also sought feedback on the most useful structure through focus groups with both colleagues and relevant teachers.

Our main audience is school and further education teachers (and lecturers). We are aware how time-constrained teachers are, and so have tried to write this in a way that will be as easy as possible to navigate, enabling you to identify the most relevant sections as efficient as possible. We hope you will also use this Guide to support opportunities for all your students. Some initiatives will be more relevant to some students than others, but we hope there is something for everyone.

Our overall aim is not simply to target students aspiring to study at Oxford, or even necessarily aspiring to go to university at all. We have successful 'access and outreach' programmes, run through both the central University and colleges, that support schools and young people from across the UK to learn about applying to study at the University. These programmes are highlighted in the Guide, but the Guide aims to go beyond that in its understanding of schools' engagement.

Our ultimate goal is for the University to be relevant and inspiring to all young people across Oxfordshire, regardless of background, aspiration, or attainment.

Over the past three years in my University role supporting the Vice-Chancellor's aspirations to strengthen our connections with the wider community, I have seen first-hand how effective the University's role can be in inspiring young people. We've pioneered a series of schools' engagement programmes focused on using the power of sport to build bridges between our students and young people from across the wider community. We've now run sports and education programmes for both primary and secondary school children across Oxford.

The positive impact of these programmes has convinced me that Oxfordshire schools' engagement is one of the areas where the University can make the greatest difference. The more I have learned about our other schools' engagement work across departments and colleges, the more I have become persuaded that there is already a lot going on, but that a big part of the gap relates to communication, and the absence of coordinated information-sharing, internally, within the University and, externally, with schools and teachers.

I'm particularly grateful to Jenny Shilton Osborne, our Schools Engagement Officer, who has led the research, coordination, and writing of this Guide, working with colleagues and partners across Oxfordshire to bring together the breadth of activity represented here.

We have structured this Guide based on a 'Cradle-to-Career' logic, following the language used by a range of UK organisations and increasingly adopted in Oxfordshire, including by the River Learning Trust. It sequences from pre-school to primary school to secondary school to future opportunities, including relating to careers and further study.

Within the main schools' sections, the Guide is structured by key stage, and offers a subject-by-subject approach followed by an outline of initiatives available to support enrichment activities. Each entry has accompanying icons, providing key information such as whether the activity is free, online, or in-person, and whether it runs on an ongoing basis. The main body of the Guide is complemented by case studies, and wherever possible, we provide follow-up information, including relevant contact details.

The future careers section is an important part of what the University can offer. Many people assume universities are about professors and students, but the University and its colleges offer an array of career opportunities from human resources to administration, finance, catering, laboratory science, horticulture, and IT. Our apprenticeships scheme and ever-growing work experience opportunities offer relevant pathways and insights into possible careers.

We also include information relating to the schools' engagement work of some of our main partner organisations, where there is a particularly strong and established connection to the University. In addition, we try to highlight the opportunities that are readily available for schools interested in visiting the city centre, and sources of inspiration that can be found on walking tours – whether architectural, literary, or scientific. In the city of JRR Tolkien, CS Lewis, Oscar Wilde, Roger Bannister, Dorothy Hodgkin, Sarah Gilbert, and William Golding, there should be no shortage of inspiration.

This Guide brings together a wide range of opportunities available at the time of publication, but it cannot be exhaustive: activities and programmes are continually developing across the University, and there will be others that are not represented here. Every effort has been made to ensure the information included is accurate; however, programmes, costs, eligibility, and contact details may change, so please check the relevant websites for the latest information.

We hope that through this guide, we can start a series of conversations that open up greater opportunity for young people in Oxfordshire.



# Navigating the University

## The University

### Divisions, Departments, and Places

Departments bring together teaching and research in a particular subject area, and organise much of the academic work of the University. There are more public-facing aspects of the institutions, including our museums, green spaces, and sport centre. The divisions, departments, and places are all supported by our central administration.



## ACADEMIC DIVISIONS

There are four divisions that coordinate the work of the academic departments. Departments focus on particular academic subject areas, or more professional areas of practice.

### Humanities Division

Ertegun Graduate Scholarship Programme in the Humanities  
Asian and Middle Eastern Studies  
Classics  
English Language and Literature  
History  
Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics  
Medieval and Modern Languages  
Music  
Philosophy  
Theology and Religion  
History of Art Department  
Institute for Ethics in AI  
Modern Slavery & Human Rights Policy & Evidence Centre  
Rothermere American Institute  
Ruskin School of Art  
TORCH (The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities)  
Voltaire Foundation

### Maths, Physics and Life Sciences (MPLS) Division

Biology  
Chemistry  
Computer Science  
Earth Sciences  
Engineering Science  
Materials  
Mathematical Institute  
Physics  
Statistics  
Begbroke Science Park  
Doctoral Training Centre

### Medical Sciences Division (MSD)

Biochemistry  
Clinical Medicine  
Medicine  
Oncology  
Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences  
Pathology  
Physiology, Anatomy & Genetics  
Psychiatry  
Surgical Sciences  
Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences  
Nuffield Department of Experimental Psychology  
Nuffield Department of Paediatrics  
Nuffield Department of Population Health  
Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences  
Nuffield Department of Women's & Reproductive Health  
Radcliffe Department of Medicine  
Sir William Dunn School of Pharmacology

### Social Sciences Division (SSD)

Anthropology and Museum Ethnography  
Archaeology  
Blavatnik School of Government  
Economics  
Education  
Geography and the Environment  
International Development  
Law  
Oxford Internet Institute  
Oxford Martin School  
Oxford School of Global and Area Studies  
Politics and International Relations  
Saïd Business School  
Social Policy and Intervention  
Sociology



## ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY

These are other buildings, spaces, and places which support education and research, and in many cases have a public-facing element.

### Department for Continuing Education

Language Centre  
Oxford Lifelong Learning

### Oxford University Press

### Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM)

Ashmolean Museum  
Bodleian Libraries (Old Bodleian Library, Radcliffe Camera, Weston Library)  
History of Science Museum  
Oxford Botanic Garden & Arboretum  
Oxford University Museum of Natural History  
Pitt Rivers Museum

### University Places and Green Spaces

University Parks  
Wytham Woods  
Hill End  
Sheldonian Theatre  
Examination Schools  
Clarendon Building  
Radcliffe Observatory Quarter

Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities  
Iffley Road Sports Centre

The **University of Oxford** is a huge organisation, made up of academic departments, museums, libraries, and other University services, alongside individual colleges and Permanent Private Halls (PPHs). These different parts are closely connected, but don't all work in quite the same way – and many of their buildings and spaces are open to schools and the public. These pages show how the different parts of Oxford fit together, and the many places that offer the opportunities in this guide.

## The Colleges

### 39 Colleges, four Permanent Private Halls

The colleges and permanent private halls are academic communities where students live, study, and socialise for the duration of their degree. They provide teaching, support, and a home within the wider University, primarily for undergraduate students, but some for postgraduate studies as well.



#### COLLEGES

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| All Souls          | Oriel               |
| Balliol            | Pembroke            |
| Brasenose          | The Queen's College |
| Christ Church      | Reuben              |
| Corpus Christi     | St Anne's           |
| Exeter             | St Antony's         |
| Green Templeton    | St Catherine's      |
| Harris Manchester  | St Cross            |
| Hertford           | St Edmund Hall      |
| Jesus              | St Hilda's          |
| Keble              | St Hugh's           |
| Kellogg            | St John's           |
| Lady Margaret Hall | St Peter's          |
| Linacre            | Somerville          |
| Lincoln            | Trinity             |
| Magdalen           | University College  |
| Mansfield          | Wadham              |
| Merton             | Wolfson             |
| New College        | Worcester           |
| Nuffield           |                     |

#### PERMANENT PRIVATE HALLS

Blackfriars  
Campion Hall  
Regent's Park College  
Wycliffe Hall

## Oxford's colleges

Every undergraduate student belongs to an **Oxford college** as well as learning in academic departments across the wider University. Colleges provide a smaller academic and social community where students live, study, eat, and socialise, and much of Oxford's distinctive small-group teaching (the tutorial system) takes place through them. When applying to Oxford, students apply for their chosen degree course and can express a preference for a college that offers it – or make an open application and be allocated one. Colleges don't specialise in particular subjects, although not every college offers every course. Each is an independent institution in its own right: deeply connected to the University, but organisationally distinct from it.

Every college is different varying in size, location, culture, and facilities. Many have their own library, dining hall, chapel, gardens, and 'quads' – open courtyards surrounded by college buildings and lawns, where you'll frequently find students, and sometimes college animals, socialising during the spring and summer months. They also have student accommodation, common rooms, teaching and seminar rooms, and spaces for lectures, events, and performances. Some also have sports grounds, cafés, archives, and important historic or art collections.

**What can colleges offer schools?** Many colleges welcome visitors and may offer pre-arranged guided or self-guided school visits, often free of charge. Access and outreach teams can advise on what there is to discover and what might be possible for your group. You might visit Balliol College's exquisite chapel and dining hall, explore the beautiful gardens and lake at **Worcester College**, or discover the **Shelley Memorial at University College**. Check out our Exploring Oxford Independently map on page 56 for more suggestions, and contact individual colleges' access and outreach teams in advance to discuss a school visit.

### Your Oxford link: Trinity College

Through the **Oxford for UK** regional outreach system, colleges are linked with different parts of the country, giving schools a specific contact and support from the University. **Trinity College is the link college for Oxfordshire**, through **Oxford for Oxford**, working with pupils from Years 1–13 and offering school visits, workshops, museum activities, teacher CPD, information and guidance, and support for parents and carers. Trinity can also help local schools navigate opportunities across the wider University. Some provision is prioritised for schools and communities underrepresented in higher education, but all Oxfordshire schools are encouraged to explore what support may be available. The regional link is purely for outreach: pupils remain free to apply to any college offering their chosen course. **Read more about Trinity's work with Oxfordshire schools in our case study on page 33.**

# Primary

YEAR 1–YEAR 6, KEY STAGES 1 & 2

KS  
2

Key Stage



In person



Online  
resources



On  
demand



Open to  
all



Open to  
Oxfordshire  
State  
schools



Free



Small fee  
(bursaries  
available)



Annual  
programme



Applications/  
nominations



Prioritised  
or targeted  
places



Currently  
partnered  
schools

## CURRICULUM

### Biology

From plants and pollination to pandemics, biology is the study of life sciences. Building on knowledge built up over centuries of meticulous study, there is still so much more to learn about our biological world. The **Department of Biology** is committed to making biology accessible to everyone, and we work with the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the Oxford Botanic Garden to contribute to a variety of school workshops and learning activities. We also run public engagement events throughout the year for families, and take part in Oxford Twinning's **Primary Science Day**, helping young people discover biology through hands-on activities and opportunities to meet researchers.

View our series of **online learning videos**, curated with Oxford Sparks (read more about Oxford Sparks on page 26), demonstrating the wide range of our research. They are ideal for home learning and for anyone keen to discover just how broad and diverse the field of biology is. Videos suitable from age 5 upwards.

#### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT US: [comms@biology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:comms@biology.ox.ac.uk)



### Chemistry

Chemistry is all around us, from the medicines we take and the food we eat to the materials that shape our everyday lives. The **Department of Chemistry**'s primary programmes are designed to spark curiosity about the chemical sciences through interactive experiences connecting classroom learning with the wider world. Working with Oxford colleges and partner organisations, we help children discover how chemistry shapes their lives and to see science as something they can enjoy and explore. Many of our activities take place with partnered schools, or during organised programmes such as the Twinning Programme. As well as these limited in-person sessions, we have a collection of free practical resources for classroom and home learning, with child-friendly instructions, science explainers, and guidance for adults.

The Department coordinates and delivers the annual **MPLS Primary Science Days**, working with Oxford Colleges and Departments, where pupils take part in hands-on workshops and curriculum-linked lecture demonstrations, and meet current undergraduate students and researchers. Other activities include the **Merck Curiosity Cube**, a mobile science laboratory exploring a different scientific theme each year, and curriculum-linked chemistry

**workshops** on topics including chemical reactions, density and the chemistry of colour. These in-person opportunities are primarily delivered through the Twinning Programme and participating Oxford colleges, and availability is subject to departmental capacity. If your school is part of the University's Twinning Programme, please contact your Oxford college or Oxford Hub.

#### FIND OUT MORE

Free teaching and learning resources:



**CONTACT:** Schools in Oxford and Oxfordshire wishing to explore future partnership opportunities should contact Trinity College, the University's link college for the county, in the first instance: [access.officer@trinity.ox.ac.uk](mailto:access.officer@trinity.ox.ac.uk).

For queries about advertised opportunities, contact [outreach@chem.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@chem.ox.ac.uk)



Photos below, left to right:  
Pill coding; Chemistry session



## CASE STUDY:

# The Oxford College Twinning Project



The Oxford College Twinning Project brings together **Oxford colleges, local primary schools** and the Oxford Hub to build **long-term partnerships** that help tackle educational disadvantage while **strengthening relationships** between the University and the local community. The project recognises that many children growing up in Oxford face significant barriers to educational success, despite living alongside one of the world's leading universities. Developed in 2021 and piloted with five college-school partnerships in 2022, the project has since grown to **ten twinned colleges and primary schools**, with a focus on schools serving communities experiencing some of the greatest educational disadvantage in the city. Participating colleges are paired with a local primary school, creating a sustained relationship that grows over time. Each programme is developed in partnership between the school and the college, taking into account specific needs, interests and goals for its children. Oxford Hub and **Trinity College** work together to coordinate trained student volunteers providing one-to-one tutoring and reading support, while colleges work closely with their partner schools to develop enrichment opportunities that reflect pupils' interests and needs. Activities have included visits to colleges, museums and libraries, biodiversity projects, Year 6 celebrations, careers conversations, college tours, and subject-specific workshops. In 2025/26 alone, **1,573** primary pupils took part in **36** enrichment activities, and **373** one-to-one and small-group academic support sessions. A further **35** undergraduate students supported enrichment activities in their colleges.

A key strength of Twinning is that it connects schools with people, places and expertise across the wider University. The annual **MPLS Primary Science Day**, held in June each year, brought **240 local Year 5 pupils** from twinned schools together for hands-on workshops from teams across the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division. Academics and undergraduate students from departments including Chemistry, Biology, Computer Science, Physics, Mathematics, Engineering Science, Earth Sciences, and Materials Science, delivered workshops designed to inspire curiosity and enthusiasm for STEM subjects. Elsewhere, pupils have made mini galaxies with Physics researchers, invented stories from mysterious objects in Trinity's library, explored GLAM collections and discovered Mansfield College's unexpected history as a **Second World War code-breaking centre** through maths and logic activities. At St John Fisher Catholic Primary School in Blackbird Leys, its partnership with Mansfield College has enabled every class to take part in college workshops and visits to places including the Botanic Garden and Ashmolean Museum, alongside weekly maths tutoring for Year 4 pupils. In 2025/26 **184 pupils at the school accessed enrichment opportunities and 31 received tutoring**. Headteacher Paul Higgins describes the partnership as helping to build *"a genuine relationship with Mansfield College, breaking down perceived barriers between our community and the University"*, adding that many of the resulting experiences

*"simply would not have happened without this partnership."*

One parent described the school's Mansfield graduation ceremony as her favourite moment in ten years at St John Fisher – a powerful example of the pride and sense of belonging these sustained relationships can create.

As well as academic support, the programme helps children develop confidence, curiosity and a stronger connection with their city: **90%** of teachers said enrichment helped pupils build a stronger sense of connection to Oxford, and **89%** agreed that Twinning gave them access to enrichment opportunities they might otherwise not have had. By the end of their time at primary school, it is hoped that every child in a Twinned school will have visited their partner college, met current students, and been welcomed to explore university life. The relationship works in both directions: **95%** of student tutors surveyed said volunteering enabled them to participate actively in the Oxford community, and the same proportion said it helped them feel more connected to Oxford as a city.

By creating sustained relationships between schools, colleges, and the wider University community, the Oxford College Twinning Project helps to strengthen connections across the city, and ensure more young people can benefit from everything Oxford has to offer.

**How to get involved:** The Twinning Project works with identified Oxford primary schools with higher levels of need, rather than through open application. Schools interested in finding out more about the programme or other support available through Oxford Hub are welcome to get in touch.

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: [volunteer@oxfordhub.org](mailto:volunteer@oxfordhub.org)

### 2025/6 in numbers

**1,573** pupils

**36** enrichment activities

**373** tutoring sessions

**92%** of teachers saw increased academic confidence

**90%** saw increased connection to Oxford

Is there anything else you would like to share about your recent visit?

No I don't have any others to share.  
Today made me feel like I was in university.

## Earth Sciences

Why do volcanoes erupt? How are fossils formed? What can rocks tell us about the history of our planet? We love helping children discover the answers to these questions, and many more, through hands-on workshops for school children **aged 7+**, that bring Earth Sciences into the classroom.

Researchers and outreach specialists from the **Department of Earth Sciences** visit Oxfordshire primary schools with interactive sessions designed to complement the curriculum while inspiring curiosity about the natural world. Younger pupils can investigate **Rocks & Volcanoes (Years 3-4)**, while older children explore topics including **Planetary Interiors, Volatile Volcanoes, Shaking Quakes** and **Fantastic Fossils (Years 5-6)**. Every workshop encourages pupils to ask questions, handle real scientific ideas and discover how Earth scientists help us understand the world around us.

Since 2023, we've delivered **more than 200 workshops**, reaching **over 5,300 pupils** in schools across Oxfordshire. We work with schools of all sizes and actively encourage enquiries from those serving communities that are currently underrepresented in the geosciences or have had fewer opportunities to engage with the University. Teachers consistently praise the enthusiasm of our researchers and the way workshops are tailored to different ages and abilities. Enquiries open in **August** for workshops for the following school year, delivered during **September – May**.

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: [outreach@earth.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@earth.ox.ac.uk)



## English

Helping children become independent and confident readers is the foundation of almost all future learning. Building on its three-year **Raise a Reader** campaign, **Oxford University Press (OUP)** continues to support schools, teachers and families in this crucial skill, with free, research-informed resources that encourage reading for pleasure and strengthen literacy.

Raise a Reader, developed in response to the detrimental impact of the pandemic on children's language and reading development, worked with schools, teachers, libraries and families to help more children discover a love of reading. In Oxfordshire, the programme supported **20 primary schools** in disadvantaged communities, creating new school libraries stocked with **more than 10,000 books**, providing specialist teacher training and helping thousands of children enjoy richer opportunities to read. Although the campaign has now come to an end, its legacy continues through the free resources and guidance available to all schools and families.

**Oxford Owl** is OUP's **free, online learning platform** for primary schools and families. Teachers and parents can create a free account to access a library of eBooks, phonics and reading resources, classroom activities, curriculum guidance and practical advice to support reading, literacy and mathematics, for children aged **3–11**.

### FIND OUT MORE

Oxford Owl:



Raise a Reader:



## GLAM Spotlight

### Pitt Rivers Museum

The **Pitt Rivers Museum's** anthropological and archaeological collections allow visitors to encounter objects from cultures around the world, while engaging with themes of history, art and design, sustainability, and the diverse ways people have made and used objects. Primary sessions include Ancient Maya, Kingdom of Benin, Ancient Egypt, the Inuit, and Stone Age to Iron Age, as well as exploring how people in different cultures have adapted to their environments. There is plenty of opportunity for interaction with objects and activities; in **Puppets and Stories**, pupils handle Javanese shadow puppets and then use them to perform part of the story of the Ramayana, and in **Expression and Adornment**, students examine how and why people decorate their bodies using jewellery, tattoos, clothing, and other ornamentation, then design and create their own ornament reflecting their own identity. Around **14,000 school students aged 3–18 visit the Museum each year**.

**Cost:** £125 per standard taught session – costs for other sessions vary, please check website. **SEND sessions** are free.

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: [education@prm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:education@prm.ox.ac.uk)



Photos below, left to right:  
Fantastic Fossils; Volatile Volcanoes.  
Credit: Charlie Rex.



## Oxford University Museum of Natural History

At the **Oxford University Museum of Natural History**, primary and secondary sessions allow access to extraordinary items that bring natural history to life. In sessions designed for **KS1** and **KS2**, pupils learn through real specimens, with topics ranging from live minibeasts and dinosaurs, to evolution and biodiversity. **Evolve, Adapt, Survive** uses authentic museum specimens to track the evolution of vertebrates from the first amphibians to today's incredible diversity of land animals, and how Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace developed the theory of natural selection. Following this, using a digital museum trail, pupils help TV presenter Steve Backshall uncover evidence for evolution. Other sessions invite children to examine and handle skeletons, from lion skulls to elephant bones, and real insects when they dive into the world of minibeasts in **Bugs and Their Habitats**. Eligible Oxfordshire primary schools can apply for bursary support, and sessions for SEND groups are free; most workshops can be adapted to meet a wide range of learning needs. The museum offers training for teachers on how to teach evolution and inheritance, as well as a host of online support and resources, including a dedicated children and teachers **Learning Zone**, with information, resources, and activities on natural history topics.

**Cost:** £125 per standard taught session; costs for other sessions vary, please check website.

Bursaries available for eligible schools for session and transport costs; SEND sessions are free.

### FIND OUT MORE



### Learning Zone:



**CONTACT:** [education@oum.ox.ac.uk](mailto:education@oum.ox.ac.uk)



## Languages

Learning another language develops a child's memory, creativity, problem solving, and grows their knowledge of the world. **Creative Multilingualism**, a project from the **Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages**, offers a collection of **free classroom resources** for primary school teachers to support and enrich language learning. The project began as a research programme exploring the links between creativity and language, starting from the premise that languages are central to self-expression, and to individual and cultural identity. We hope that our learning and insights will help teachers build creativity into lessons and encourage children to value all the languages they speak, both at school and at home. These resources include creative activities, stories, films and lesson exercises.

### FIND OUT MORE

**Modern Languages:**



**More on Creative Multilingualism:**



**CONTACT:** [schools.liaison@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:schools.liaison@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk)



## Maths

The **Oxford Maths Festival** is a hugely popular **annual free event** for families and residents local to Oxfordshire. Organised by the **Mathematics Department** and held over the **second weekend in May**, this festival focuses on the more unexpected sides of maths, in a relaxed, friendly, and welcoming environment. Over two days, families can immerse themselves in a wide range of events, including shows, workshops, craft activities, board games, hands-on maths and other drop-in activities. Suitable for **children aged 4-13 and their families**, everyone is welcome, no matter what your mathematical skills are.

The Oxford Maths Festival runs drop-in stalls on Saturday in **Templars Square** shopping centre in Cowley, followed by more events on Sunday in the **Oxford Maths Institute** in central Oxford. All

sessions are free to join, and Sunday requires advanced booking via the weblink below.

*"I just wanted to say that my sons and I had the most enjoyable time at the Maths Festival on Sunday. They loved learning about the maths behind the activities, interacting with the volunteers and being introduced to areas of maths they'd not encountered before... Thank you to you and your team for putting on such a fantastic event!"*

*"Thank you for your time and efforts with the maths festival today. Absolutely brilliant initiative!!"*

### FIND OUT MORE



**CONTACT:** [outreach@maths.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@maths.ox.ac.uk)



## Material Science

The **Department of Materials** regularly run short 30-60 minutes workshops for schools, either at your school or at our department on Parks Road, Oxford. Topics include the **Science of Slime** and the **Egg Drop Challenge** (both suitable for **Year 5+**). Please visit our department website's schools outreach pages to see all the available workshops, and sign up to our mailing list to receive a newsletter specifically for teachers, detailing upcoming events.

### FIND OUT MORE

**Workshops:**



**Events:**



**Sign up to the mailing list:**



**CONTACT:** [schools.liaison@materials.ox.ac.uk](mailto:schools.liaison@materials.ox.ac.uk)



## Music

Discover music through one of Britain's finest collections of musical instruments. At the **Faculty of Music**, home to the **Bate Collection**, we care for 1,000 musical instruments from across the world, spanning from the Renaissance to the present day, and use them to bring music and history to life for learners of all ages.

Our **Tudor Music workshop** introduces pupils in **Years 5-6** to the sounds and instruments of Tudor England, exploring the music of sailors, families, and the royal court. Pupils will have the opportunity to play early instruments from the collection, making this a fun, hands-on way to enrich learning about the Tudor period. Alternatively a **Bate Collection Tour and Handling Session** explores the themes of the collection's Resonance exhibition, and includes hands-on experience of some of these unique instruments.

Sessions can accommodate up to **32 pupils**, and take place at the Bate Collection in Oxford. Both can be combined with Tudor-themed sessions at other University museums.

**Cost:** £125 for Tudor Workshop (60-90 minutes); £120 for Tour and Handling session (45-60 minutes). We are pleased to offer discounts for groups with Pupil Premium – please enquire. The sessions can also be adapted for older pupils.

### FIND OUT MORE



**CONTACT:** [bate.education@music.ox.ac.uk](mailto:bate.education@music.ox.ac.uk)



Celebrate music, languages and the diversity of Oxfordshire through **Children of the World**, a **free musical resource for schools**. Commissioned by the **Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages**, the project is part of the One Voice, One Oxfordshire theme of the High Sheriff for 2027-8, promoting music as a unifying medium.

Designed primarily for **Year 5** pupils (adaptable for other primary and lower secondary year groups), the **downloadable resources** include song lyrics, vocal and piano scores, backing tracks, learning PowerPoints and band parts. Schools can perform the piece in assemblies, concerts or community events, or work alongside local musicians to take part in county-wide performances.

All resources are free to download, with no charge for schools to perform the work.

### FIND OUT MORE



## Neuroscience

**Oxford Centre for Integrative Neuroimaging (OxCIN) & Department of Experimental Psychology**

Interested in brains? So are we! At **OxCIN**, we want to share our knowledge of how brains work and how we can shape our own brain development. Our researchers **can visit your primary school** to deliver interactive workshops, or talk in assemblies exploring how the brain works. We also offer children in **Year 6** the opportunity to visit our centre in the John Radcliffe Hospital to experience a **live demonstration of an MRI scanner** and take part in an interactive talk. Email us for more information.

### FIND OUT MORE



**CONTACT:** [carinne.piekema@ndcn.ox.ac.uk](mailto:carinne.piekema@ndcn.ox.ac.uk) or [barbara.robinson@ndcn.ox.ac.uk](mailto:barbara.robinson@ndcn.ox.ac.uk)



## Pharmacology

How are new **medicines** discovered? How do they help us when we're ill? At the **Department of Pharmacology**, we love introducing children and young people to the science behind medicines through creative, hands-on activities.

Since 2023, we've welcomed **Year 5 pupils** from **East Oxford Primary School** into the Department of Pharmacology for an **annual department open day**, a series of **interactive workshops** developed by our master's students and researchers. Children investigate topics including learning where medicines come from, and how they are developed, and engage in practical experiments, games, models and creative activities. They meet scientists, explore real laboratories, and discover how research helps improve lives. Pupils consistently describe the experience as inspirational and exciting, with comments including *"I always hated science but now I love science!!!!"* and *"Today was the best day ever."*

We've also developed **workshops** for other local schools, including our imaginative **Make a Medicine** activity. Here, pupils design and build their own medicines, while learning how new treatments are discovered and developed, and the vital role that cells play in drug discovery.

Please get in touch if your school would like to discuss options for hosting similar workshops, subject to capacity within the department.

### FIND OUT MORE



**CONTACT:** [reception@pharm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:reception@pharm.ox.ac.uk)



Photos, left to right:

Tudor Music. Credit: Jasper Minton-Taylor;  
Story of a medicine, Pharmacology.



SPOTLIGHT  
ON...

## Early Years

Across the University, researchers are working to better understand and support young children's learning and development.

Working with children, families, and Early Years practitioners, research considers language, early maths, emotion regulation, attention, and cognitive development, and feeds into policy development and practice in early years settings. Alongside this research, the University's museums, gardens and partner organisations offer opportunities for young children to learn through play, stories, objects, nature, and exploration.

Researchers in the **Department of Education** have developed **LangQuest-EY**, a free questionnaire and resource to help Early Years educators assess and develop how they support children's communication and language. In collaboration with Early Years experts, the tool supports practitioners with practical approaches including encouraging back-and-forth conversations, introducing rich vocabulary, and creating environments that encourage communication. The Oxford Education Deanery also provides free, research-informed resources to support oral language development.

## FIND OUT MORE

LangQuest-EY:

Oxford Education  
Deanery resources:

The **Oxford Centre for Emerging Minds Research (OCEMR)** brings together researchers studying children's development and mental health, from language and literacy to attention, neurodiversity and emotional wellbeing. Within the Centre, the **UPLIFT Lab**, led by Dr Alexandra Hendry, investigates early childhood development, including the thinking and emotion-regulation skills that help children plan, solve problems, and control their impulses. Tools and supports include the **Early Executive Functions Questionnaire**, a free carer-report measure that identifies strengths and difficulties in thinking and regulation skills amongst 10- to 36-month-olds, and the **Supporting Toddlers' Attention, Regulation and Thinking skills (START)** programme. START was developed in partnership with parents and early years practitioners as a neurodiversity-affirming programme that meets toddlers where they are, and celebrates their unique interests and strengths. START is currently offered as groups for parents or childminders to attend with children, with a version for nurseries coming soon.

The **Attention, Brain & Cognitive Development (ABCD) Lab**, led by Professor Gaia Scerif, explores how attention and cognitive skills develop in young children, including the foundations of early mathematical learning. Our work includes collaborating with educators in nurseries, locally and nationally, to develop professional development and activities that support early numeracy, with the **Orchestrating Numeracy and the Executive (The ONE)** programme. We also connect with early years educators including teachers and teaching assistants who support thinking skills such as self-regulation and numeracy for children with rare genetic conditions (e.g., Down Syndrome) early in primary schools, in project **Mathematical Inclusion for Neurodiversity (MathMIND)**. The

Centre also includes **Professor Kate Nation's ReadOxford Lab**, researching children's language and literacy development; its work includes **Bookness**, the research partnership with The Story Museum exploring how children learn through books, audiobooks and oral storytelling. Read more about our work with The Story Museum on page 47. Such research is helping us understand how skills developed in the earliest years contribute to children's later learning and wellbeing.

The **Oxford University BabyLab**, part of the Department of Experimental Psychology, has been studying how babies and toddlers learn since 1992, with more than 7,500 children taking part. Oxfordshire families can register for studies, initially involving children from birth to around 30 months. For example, the BabyLab's online **Oxford Communicative Development Inventory (CDI)** tool helps families explore and better understand their child's developing vocabulary for children under 30 months.

Over time, the BabyLab "has grown up", and connects to research on thinking skills, language and numeracy in pre-school and beyond, in connection with the **UPLIFT Lab**, the **ABCD Lab**, **ReadOxford**, and beyond. Depending on the research questions, children might play games or look at pictures while researchers follow their eye movements, to investigate how language and learning develop, share book reading, play with problem solving toys, or engage with games that tell us about the foundations of numeracy.

## FIND OUT MORE

ReadOxford:



UPLIFT Lab:



OCEMR:



ABCD Lab:



Oxford University BabyLab:



There are plenty of opportunities to learn by doing too. At the **Oxford University Museum of Natural History**, **Early Years sessions and resources for visits** include **Dinosaur Hunters**, **Funny Bones** and **Bug Bonanza**, where children explore some of the Museum's five million pinned insects – and meet some live minibeasts.

At **Harcourt Arboretum**, **Arboretum Adventures for Under 5s** uses seasonal activities to help younger children explore the natural world. **Hill End Outdoor Education Centre** provides **Forest Tots** offers child-led woodland sessions for ages 2–6, with activities including storytelling, den building, bug hunting, sensory play and nature crafts. Hill End also provides **Forest School training** for Early Years practitioners and teachers.

## FIND OUT MORE

Museum of  
Natural History –  
Early Years:Oxford Botanic  
Garden &  
Arboretum:

Hill End:



## Physics

Physics helps us understand everything, from the weather and space, to light, sound, and the materials around us. In the **Department of Physics**, researchers and students work closely with a number of targeted local primary schools, offering interactive physics workshops, and activities designed to demonstrate that physics is something that anyone can do.

Where capacity allows, we are also pleased to discuss opportunities for researchers to **visit other schools** in Oxfordshire for activities such as STEM fairs, careers days and topic-based workshops, delivered either in school or online. Schools interested in arranging a visit are encouraged to complete the booking request form on our website. It may also be possible to loan kit for your classroom to teach topics such as forces, electricity, and space.

We've also created **online learning resources** for primary schools, including a Weather Watcher project and Quantum Materials workbook:



**FIND OUT MORE**



**CONTACT:**

[schools.liaison@physics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:schools.liaison@physics.ox.ac.uk) for more information and to make a booking request.



## ENRICHMENT

### Arts and Culture

#### Classics

Here at the **Faculty of Classics** we celebrate the ancient world. Classical subjects can enrich many aspects of the primary curriculum, bringing to life topics such as **Ancient Greece** and **Rome**, mythology, history, literature, and democracy. Explore Classics with us through **interactive talks** and **workshops**. You can also continue exploring these themes through Oxford's museums and collections – see **Exploring Oxford Independently** (page 56).

Our **Classical Conversations programme** brings Oxford Classicists into your classroom for lively, interactive sessions exploring Classical topics. From Ancient Greece and Rome to mythology, archaeology, and daily life in the ancient world, we can offer virtual or in-person talks by our Outreach Team. We're also working with select local schools on a **Literacy Through Latin** programme, where Oxford graduates support after-school Latin clubs for primary pupils.

If your school would like to explore Classics in a way that complements your curriculum, we'd be delighted to develop a programme with you.

**FIND OUT MORE**



**CONTACT:** [outreach@classics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@classics.ox.ac.uk)



### Nature and Sustainability

#### GLAM Spotlight: Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum

The **Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum** (OBGA) offers hands-on, curriculum-linked learning across two very different sites. At the historic **Botanic Garden**, pupils can explore plants from deserts or rainforests from around the world; at **Harcourt Arboretum**, five miles from central Oxford, children explore a unique collection of trees set across about 130 acres of woodland, coppice, and wildflower meadow. Sessions for **Foundation**, **KS1** and **KS2** are designed to be practical and multisensory, and include seasonal sessions such as **Amazing Autumn**, **Spring Splendour**, **Winter Woodland**, **Habitats**, **Botanic Plants**, and **Marvellous Meadows**. Sessions encourage curiosity about the natural world while developing children's understanding of plants, habitats and conservation. Schools can also continue exploring independently after a taught session.

**Cost:** £125 per taught session (up to 35 pupils); bespoke full-day programmes are also available.

**FIND OUT MORE**



**CONTACT:**

[primaryeducation@obg.ox.ac.uk](mailto:primaryeducation@obg.ox.ac.uk) or [secondaryeducation@obg.ox.ac.uk](mailto:secondaryeducation@obg.ox.ac.uk)



## Sports

### Vice-Chancellor's Sports Ambassadors Programme

Taking part in sport offers so much more than physical exercise. Learning to work with others, adapt when something doesn't go to plan, persevere through challenges, and support a teammate, are skills that children carry far beyond the playing field. Building on the success of the secondary-school based Oxford Young Sport Leaders Programme (see page 30), the **Vice-Chancellor's Sports Ambassadors Programme** takes sport directly into local primary schools, building relationships with Oxford student volunteers, to help children develop confidence, teamwork, and adaptability as well as their physical abilities.

Launched as a pilot in **2026**, the programme worked with two **Year 6** cohorts at St John Fisher Catholic and Orchard Meadow primary schools. Small teams of trained University student Sports Ambassadors visited each school once a week for three weeks, working consistently with the same pupils and progressively developing their athletics skills through throwing, jumping, and running. Sessions encouraged children to persevere when something was difficult, adapt their approach, recognise their own progress, support their classmates, and work effectively as a team. The programme culminated in a shared athletics festival at the University's Iffley Road Sports Centre, bringing the two schools together to put their new skills into practice and celebrate what they had achieved.

The programme is deliberately designed around a **character-based skills development framework**, with a particular focus on teamwork and adaptability. Oxford students receive training in sports delivery, character-based coaching, safeguarding, and inclusive practice, before working in schools, including how to adapt sessions for children with different abilities, SEND, and English as

an additional language. The Ambassadors themselves benefit too, developing coaching, leadership, and communication skills, as well as gaining practical experience working with children and schools.

*"It was a great pleasure to be part of the first cohort of Sports Ambassadors, extending the successes of OYSLP to local primary schools, and evidencing the power of sport in the local community. Seeing the impact on the primary school pupils as their behaviour and readiness to engage, learn, and interact with each other increased week on week was incredibly rewarding, both on a personal level, but also witnessing how powerful sport can be in learning."*

– Naomi Kingston, VC's Sports Ambassador, Vincent's Club Officer, and DPhil student, Department of Experimental Psychology

Following the 2026 pilot, the programme is being evaluated to understand its impact on children's skills and experiences and help shape its future development. For 2026/27, the programme will be focusing on schools in Blackbird Leys, Littlemore, and Rose Hill. If your school is interested in taking part in this or a similar programme in future, please contact the programme team.

### FIND OUT MORE

To find out more, visit the **University's Local Engagement website**:



CONTACT: [zoe.pugh@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:zoe.pugh@admin.ox.ac.uk).



## Developing wider life and future skills

### Vaccine Design Workshop

The **Pandemic Sciences Institute** houses a number of researchers specialising in the development of vaccines targeting diseases of pandemic potential. Our **Vaccine Design Workshops** offer practical sessions combining group based critical thinking, and hands on activities, to raise awareness of the scientific process by which new vaccines are designed. We also offer custom workshops around topics of pandemic preparation, both historical and contemporary. Typically aimed at **Years 4-6**, we can adjust the content and delivery appropriately for other age groups. Please contact us to discuss your needs.

CONTACT: [sean.elias@ndm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:sean.elias@ndm.ox.ac.uk)  
Public Engagement with Research Lead.



For teachers wanting **more information on vaccines**, and to build confidence in having classroom conversations, visit the **Oxford Vaccine Group's Vaccine Knowledge webpages**:



# Secondary

YEAR 7–YEAR 13, KEY STAGES 3-5



Key Stage



In person



Online resources



On demand



Open to all



Open to Oxfordshire State schools



Free



Small fee (bursaries available)



Annual programme



Applications/nominations



Prioritised or targeted places



Currently partnered schools

## CURRICULUM

### Biology

From ecology and evolution to infectious diseases and genetics, biology helps us understand the living world and the challenges it faces. **The Department of Biology** supports secondary students through its contributions to school workshops at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the Oxford Botanic Garden, while also offering a growing collection of **free online resources** that bring contemporary biological research into the classroom.

Explore our series of online learning videos, curated with Oxford Sparks (read more about Oxford Sparks on page 26), demonstrating the breadth of biological research taking place at Oxford, with strong links back to the curriculum. Departmental researcher Lindsay Turnbull has also created a series of learning and revising videos covering many aspects of biology for **GCSE** and **A Level** learners:

Learn and revise biology – YouTube:



**FIND OUT MORE**



CONTACT: [comms@biology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:comms@biology.ox.ac.uk)



### Chemistry

Our secondary programmes help pupils explore chemistry beyond the curriculum by connecting schools with contemporary research, researchers and practical science. Through curriculum enrichment, laboratory experiences, and opportunities to engage with current research, we aim to support informed decisions about further study and careers in the chemical sciences.

Our **website** hosts a collection of free chemistry resources, including practical investigations, chemistry enrichment materials and activities to support teaching and independent learning:



Our hybrid **Autumn Chemistry Conference**, open to all schools, showcases contemporary chemistry research, giving students and teachers the opportunity to hear directly from Oxford researchers and explore current developments in the chemical sciences. Held annually in September, the conference is aimed at Chemistry students in **Years 11-13**, with priority for in-person places given to UK state schools.

For **KS5** pupils wanting to explore beyond the curriculum, we run a programme of researcher-led online curriculum enrichment, connecting students and teachers with contemporary chemistry research and the researchers behind it through online talks, workshops, discussions and supporting resources. Please check our 'What's On' webpages to view upcoming opportunities.

Where offered by their Oxford link college, UK state schools can request our **Puzzle Boxes**, interactive chemistry challenge activities for **Years 9-12** that develop teamwork, communication and scientific problem-solving. Additionally, where departmental capacity allows, we offer a limited number of research-led school-based workshops for **Years 10-11**, and Oxford-based study days for **Year 12** that bring contemporary chemistry to life through practical activities, opportunities to meet researchers and, where appropriate, laboratory experiences. UK State Schools in Oxford and Oxfordshire wishing to explore opportunities should contact Trinity College, the University's link college for the county, in the first instance.

#### FIND OUT MORE:

Current opportunities, eligibility criteria and booking arrangements are advertised through our '**What's On?**' page and monthly newsletter:



Conferences, workshops and lectures:



Free teaching and learning resources:



CONTACT: For queries about advertised opportunities, please contact [outreach@chem.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@chem.ox.ac.uk); for enquiries through Trinity College please email [access.officer@trinity.ox.ac.uk](mailto:access.officer@trinity.ox.ac.uk).



## Computer Science

The **Department of Computer Science** helps young people explore computer science beyond the school curriculum, through sustained programmes that encourage curiosity, problem-solving, and deeper understanding. Whether pupils are just beginning to discover the subject, or are thinking about studying it further, our programmes provide opportunities to learn from researchers, educators and industry specialists while working alongside other students who share their enthusiasm for computing.

Our **Masterclass in Computer Science** is a series of workshops for **Year 9** pupils, exploring aspects that are not usually covered in school. Topics include the history of computer science, turtle graphics, logic problems, programming robots, and Enigma machines. The programme runs over six Saturday morning sessions at the Department of Computer Science, and, subject to funding, participants are invited to return in Years 10 and 11 for further masterclasses. To **apply**, schools may nominate **up to two pupils each year** from state-funded schools in Oxfordshire and surrounding counties. Students should be academically strong, enthusiastic about mathematics and computer science, and schools are encouraged to nominate at least one female student where appropriate. Teacher nominations usually open during the **autumn term**.



We also partner with Christ Church College to offer **Discover Computer Science**, a sustained engagement programme for **Year 11 students of Black African, Black Caribbean or mixed Black heritage who identify as female**. The programme combines four online sessions with an in-person graduation day in Oxford, exploring areas of computer science beyond the school curriculum through interactive activities and discussion.

Alongside the academic programme, participants meet current students and alumnae, hear about related careers and receive guidance to support future study, including A Level subject choices. The programme is open to academically strong students attending UK state-funded schools who are planning to study A Level Mathematics and Further Mathematics (or equivalent). Schools nominate students **each autumn** before applications open.

### FIND OUT MORE

Masterclasses in Computer Science:



Discover Computer Science:



CONTACT: [masterclasses@cs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:masterclasses@cs.ox.ac.uk);  
[discovercomputerscience@cs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:discovercomputerscience@cs.ox.ac.uk)



Photo below:  
Department of Computer Science Masterclass.

## Earth Sciences

From volcanoes and earthquakes to climate change, fossils and the origins of our planet, what better way to explore the Earth than with the scientists who study it every day? The **Department of Earth Sciences** works with secondary schools through **interactive workshops** to encourage students to investigate the processes shaping our world, learn about our planet, and to consider how science can help us to tackle some of our biggest global challenges.

Led by researchers and outreach specialists, workshops are designed to complement the secondary curriculum, while introducing students to ideas and careers that go beyond it. Sessions cover topics including planetary compositions, fossils, ancient life and Earth's changing environments, volcanoes, earthquakes, and climate change, using interactive activities and discussion to develop scientific thinking and curiosity. All sessions are tailored to the age group of the participants, from **Years 7-13**. The team has also created a collection of **free online videos and worksheets** for pupils studying GCSEs and A Levels, through the **Your Science Out There** series.

Since 2023, the department has delivered more than **200 workshops**, reaching over **5,300 pupils** in schools across Oxfordshire. Committed to widening participation in the geosciences, and actively encouraging enquiries from state schools that have had fewer opportunities to engage with the University, workshops are free for Oxfordshire state schools. Register your interest in a visiting workshop **from August** for the following academic year.

*"The quality of the resources... was absolutely excellent. The enthusiasm of the academics and their ability to connect with our students was second to none."*

– Teacher, King Alfred's School, Wantage

### FIND OUT MORE

Department of Earth Sciences and Your Science Out There online resources:



CONTACT: [outreach@earth.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@earth.ox.ac.uk)



## English

Great literature shapes how we understand the world, allowing us access to different lives, places and times. Research has also associated reading with positive improvements in cognitive development<sup>1</sup>. The **Faculty of English** recognises the value that well-supported access to literature can bring, and has created and curated an exceptional **collection of free online resources**. Giving secondary pupils and teachers access to Oxford research, lectures, writers, texts and critical perspectives, the resources can be used to enrich classroom teaching, explore a particular author or text in greater depth, discover something completely new, or simply encourage reading for pleasure.

For pupils wanting to discover something new, **LitHits** brings short bursts of brilliant literature to your inbox every week. Created by Professor Kirsten Shepherd, with Dr Daniel Abdalla and Dr Alexandra Paddock, the project began as an idea to help connect young people with inspiring literature, in a format that fits easily into busy lives. Weekly newsletters provide short unabridged extracts from writing across different periods, places and genres, accompanied by light-touch, insightful commentary that provides context, and encourages further exploration. The emphasis is as much on enjoyment as analysis: helping readers encounter writing they might not ordinarily come across, or which might otherwise feel difficult to access. It's an easy way for pupils – and teachers – to discover new writers and texts without committing to an entire book, and perhaps be inspired to read on.

*“Even snatched moments of reading are worthwhile, serious, and a source of important joy in busy lives.”*

– Professor Kirsten Shepherd,  
Professor of English and Theatre  
Studies, Faculty of English

**Writers Make Worlds** explores contemporary Black and Asian British writing, giving us dynamic new ways of thinking about Britain and British identity. Through author profiles, videos, extracts, and essays, introducing

writers including Bernardine Evaristo, Andrea Levy, Kamila Shamsie, Benjamin Zephaniah, and Kazuo Ishiguro, we are asked to revisit our assumptions about how we as readers relate to the wider world. This resource explores writing shaped by different and multiple identities, cultures and experiences, including voices that have been historically overlooked within curricula, demonstrating how our understanding of literature becomes richer when a wider range of experiences is represented and valued. **Some resources explore mature themes and may not be suitable for younger readers.**

The **Ten-Minute Book Club**, which grew out of LitHits, provides quick, accessible introductions to extraordinary writing from different backgrounds and periods, pairing **10-minute** extracts with questions for discussion, and links to further information and resources for those who want to explore in greater depth. Readers can also use these materials to form their own mini book clubs around each text.

There is also plenty for pupils studying particular periods and writers. Shakespeare students can explore the **Oxford World's Classics Shakespeare Webinar Series**, where Professor Emma Smith and fellow scholars revisit individual plays and consider how they might be approached differently in the twenty-first century. **WillPlay** is an innovative reimagining of Shakespeare through an interactive, AI-powered social-media-style chat experience that allows pupils to engage creatively with characters, language, and stories. For older students, **Great Writers Inspire** offers lectures, eBooks and contextual essays covering writers and themes from across literary history, with collections on subjects including Modernism, feminist approaches to literature, life-writing and First World War poetry. Resources created by the Diseases of Modern Life research project provide **nineteenth-century non-fiction extracts** prepared in a format similar to AQA examination texts, complete with contextual introductions and vocabulary support.

And there is much more to explore. The Faculty's podcast collection contains more than **300 episodes** from Oxford academics, ranging from Medieval English and modern fairies to poetry, war and representation. Whether supporting GCSE or A Level study, finding material for an extended project, or simply for personal interest, these resources offer pupils the opportunity to encounter English as a living academic discipline, continually being researched, interpreted and debated.

Explore all English Faculty resources:



Featured resources:

**Writers Make Worlds:**



**LitHits:**



**Shakespeare Webinar Series:**



**Ten-Minute Book Club:**



**Great Writers Inspire:**



**WillPlay:**



**Nineteenth-century non-fiction resources:**



**English Faculty podcasts:**



KS  
3-5



FREE

<sup>1</sup> Gottfredson, 1997

## GLAM Spotlight

### Ashmolean Museum

Although the primary school offer including the world-famous Egyptian collection, is extremely popular, the **Ashmolean Museum** uses its collections of art and archaeology to support its secondary school learning offer across history, art and design, religious education, English, science, and classical civilisation. Pupils handle original artefacts and replicas, developing skills in observation, interpretation, discussion, and critical thinking. In the **Creative Writing** session, students use paintings and objects as inspiration for characters, plots, settings, and poetry, supported by structured activities and guided writing. Other taught sessions offer explorations of Art, including comparing and contrasting pieces from the collections – including J.M.W. Turner's painting, *The High Street, Oxford*, bringing the subject particularly close to home. In **Learning from Objects**, pupils consider why museums collect objects, and develop their own questions about a specific object to deepen their understanding of its connections to the wider world. As well as these and many more taught gallery sessions, there are self-directed trails, pre-visit films sketchbook guidance, and SEND resources. The Ashmolean welcomes around **35,000 child visitors each year**.

**Cost:** Between £60 – £150 per session

#### FIND OUT MORE



**CONTACT:** [learning@ashmus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:learning@ashmus.ox.ac.uk)

### Oxford University Museum of Natural History

At the **Oxford University Museum of Natural History**, older pupils can explore how scientific knowledge is built from evidence. **Ideas and Evidence in Science and Nature** asks questions such as *What did dinosaurs really look like? How will human activity affect climate and biodiversity?* The **Age of the Earth** uses museum displays and objects to explore the history of the Earth over the last 4.5 billion years, and **Museum Maths** explores the museum using the language of maths. At sixth form, **A Question of Taste** makes laboratory research personal: during this five-hour workshop, students use research-grade equipment and molecular biology techniques to analyse their own DNA, investigating genetic differences associated with taste. The workshop is **free for state schools**.

**Cost:** £125 per standard taught session; other costs vary. *A Question of Taste* is free for state schools. SEND sessions are free.

#### FIND OUT MORE



**Learning Zone:**



**CONTACT:** [education@oum.ox.ac.uk](mailto:education@oum.ox.ac.uk)



### History of Science Museum

The **History of Science Museum** offers hands-on, object-based learning across science, mathematics, and history, for Key Stages 3–5. Taught workshops include **Medicine Through Time**, and in their **Maths in the Real World** series, pupils can learn about mathematical instrument development, and how past geometers developed intricate tools for maritime navigation. Its **KS4** and **KS5 Study Days** combine museum collections with expertise from University academic departments and other GLAM institutions, giving pupils an in-depth exploration of subjects from different perspectives. Study Days may include talks from academics, practical sessions with researchers or museum staff object handling, guided tours, and opportunities to meet PhD students and researchers. Previous themes have included **Women and Astrophysics**, **Developing Vaccines** and **Frankenstein Revisited**. Forthcoming Study Days and booking information are published on the Museum's website.

**Cost:** Between £50-£125; Study Day costs and availability vary – check the current programme.

#### FIND OUT MORE



**CONTACT:** [learning@hsm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:learning@hsm.ox.ac.uk)



Photos, left to right:

History Trip to Ashmolean Museum.

Credit: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford; History of Science school visit. Credit: Ian Wallman



## History

Studying history develops our critical thinking skills, helps us to understand and interpret evidence from multiple and sometimes conflicting sources, and gives us a lens through which we can contextualise current events in our societies. The **Researchers in Residence** programme supports this important building block of education, and creates lasting and collaborative partnerships between the **Faculty of History** and local secondary schools. The programme places Oxford DPhil historians alongside teachers for an academic year, bringing current historical research directly into the classroom.

Since launching in **2021**, the programme has worked with eight local state secondary schools, developing sustained relationships that benefit students, teachers and early-career researchers alike. Each partnership is unique, being tailored to the needs of the school, and the expertise of the researcher. Researchers support history teaching through activities such as classroom workshops, source analysis, research skills, curriculum enrichment, and collaborative projects, while also giving pupils the opportunity to meet practising historians and explore how historical research is carried out. The programme concludes each summer with a visit to Oxford, where pupils work together on a historical project and experience the University's museums and colleges.

*"It has been deeply enriching working with the researchers in residence over the last three years. They have provided students with a range of rewarding opportunities that are linked to their areas of research including workshops, seminars and lectures as well as collaborative research projects with international schools!"*

– Toby Dove, Teacher at Bartholomew School

*"Our work with Julie resulted in a brand new unit on South Africa being added to our KS3 curriculum which our Y9 students really enjoyed"*

– David Hibbert, Teacher at The Cherwell School

To register your interest in the Researchers in Residence History programme, contact the History Outreach team.

The Faculty of History delivers a year-round programme of subject specific outreach for secondary school students and teachers. Highlights include free online history skills workshops and the **Historia Lectures**, our annual super curricular lecture series. To find out more visit the History Faculty website.

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: outreach@history.ox.ac.uk



## Historical Association Schools Talks

Through the **Oxford Branch** of the **Historical Association**, **Oxford Lifelong Learning's** Professor of Local and Social History, Andrew Hopper, hosts a programme of **free talks** for secondary and sixth-form students, delivered by academic historians from Oxford and neighbouring universities. Talks are arranged in partnership with local schools and can be tailored to deepen understanding of an A Level topic, or broaden students' historical interests beyond the curriculum. Recent lectures have explored subjects including Napoleon, the French Revolution and the British Civil Wars. If your school is interested in hosting a talk, please get in touch with us. Students do not need to attend the host school or be studying History to take part—anyone with an interest is welcome to email to request a place. Places are £2 individually, and £10 for school groups to attend the talks.

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: vivienne.larminie@history.ox.ac.uk or andrew.hopper@conted.ox.ac.uk



## The World Turned Upside Down Podcast and Civil War Educators Hub

For teachers and students with a particular interest in the British Civil Wars, Andrew co-edits the free *World Turned Upside Down* podcast and the Civil War Educators' Hub. These nationally recognised online resources support A Level teaching, focusing on British Civil Wars, with podcasts, teaching materials and events designed for both students and teachers. These resources were a finalist for the Learning Programme of the Year for the Museum and Heritage Awards in summer 2026.

### FIND OUT MORE



### Educators Hub:



## Languages

The **Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages** provides resources designed to enrich language learning, and encourage pupils to think creatively about translation, storytelling and multilingualism. As well as that, we offer a series of fiction and language competitions each year.

The **Flash Fiction Competition** invites secondary pupils to write a complete story in 100 words or fewer in French, German or Spanish. Entries are judged on imagination, narrative flair and linguistic accuracy, with separate categories recognising different stages of language learning, with prizes of up to £100. Entries close in March each year; visit the competition website for details.

The **Oxford German Olympiad**, organised by the Oxford German Network, is an annual competition that combines language learning with creative challenges and puzzle-solving to encourage pupils of all ages to explore German language and culture. It launches each Autumn, with entries submitted during the Spring and winners announced in early Summer.

### FIND OUT MORE



Language Competitions:



### Creative Multilingualism:



Oxford German Olympiad:



In a typical year, the Faculty also runs two annual events for local state secondary schools.

The **Literary Masterclass** in January supports local Sixth Formers studying A Level French, German and/or Spanish with analysing literature in the target language. Through a short lecture and close-reading workshop led by Faculty academics, Sixth Formers learn about key tools for literary analysis and are able to apply them to short texts in their chosen language.

The **Year 9 Languages Day** for students studying French, German or Spanish, aims to broaden pupils' views of language learning at school and university, and subsequently encouraging progression to GCSE and beyond. Through a series of workshops in the language they study and in new languages they may never have seen, pupils are exposed to the multi-faceted journeys that languages can take them on.

More broadly, most years the Faculty runs an in-person **Conference for MFL Teachers** from across the education sector. Through a series of workshops, roundtable discussions, and networking opportunities, the Conference aims to connect like-minded teachers, increase collaboration between individual schools as well as between schools and the University, and to share information about Oxford's admissions process.

**CONTACT:** [schools.liaison@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:schools.liaison@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk) to join the MFL Teachers' mailing list



## Mathematics

For those students who are invested in mathematics, the **Mathematical Institute** offers several programmes aimed at stretching and expanding mathematical knowledge and ability, and extending students' mathematical education.

**Oxford Unbounded** is our major new programme for **Year 10 and 11** pupils with a strong interest in mathematics. Teachers at selected schools across the UK, with a high proportion of students from backgrounds underrepresented at Oxford, will be invited to nominate students currently on track for 7s at GCSE. The programme aims to deepen participants' understanding of mathematics, and extending grade targets to 8s or 9s. Through **regular online mentoring** from March to July, and a residential in April at an Oxford college, students explore mathematical ideas beyond the GCSE syllabus while developing confidence in problem-solving. Undergraduate students share their enthusiasm for mathematics and demonstrate the collaborative way mathematicians learn and work together. Following a successful pilot involving **50 students** in 2026/27, Oxford Unbounded is expanding to support around **300 young people** each year. **For more information please email [outreach@maths.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@maths.ox.ac.uk).**

### FIND OUT MORE



Photos, opposite page:  
Future Development Goals Challenge.  
Credit: John Cairns.  
Right: It All Adds Up



## SPOTLIGHT ON...

## Queen's College Translation Exchange



The Queen's College Translation Exchange (QTE) works in a sustainable and collaborative way with primary and secondary schools, to enrich and transform the teaching and learning of languages across the UK. Inherent in the programme is a focus on resourcing teachers to deliver this content, supporting them to develop more creative content, and encouraging them to raise the profile of languages in their schools. The approach values pupils' existing multilingualism, recognising that speakers' knowledge and experience in home languages are a hugely undervalued and untapped skill.

Based at The Queen's College and working closely with the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages, and the Department of Education, this ground-breaking programme supports language teaching in schools through workshops, teaching resources, and national competitions. Every year, around 25 Oxford University undergraduates and postgraduates are trained as **Creative Translation Ambassadors**, where they are supported to develop Creative Translation workshops based on texts that they love in a language they choose. They are matched with schools across Oxfordshire, where they deliver the interactive workshops to young people aged 8-18 – sharing their love of language and literature, encouraging pupils to think creatively about translation, grow skills in public speaking, presenting, teamwork, leadership and negotiation, and most importantly, inspiring the next generation of linguists. In 2024-25, the Ambassadors worked with more than 700 pupils across 16 Oxfordshire state schools, helping teachers introduce new approaches to language learning that encourage curiosity and creativity.

Schools across the UK can also take part in the **Anthea Bell Prize for Young Translators**, an annual competition for pupils aged 11-18. The national Prize encourages students to translate poetry, fiction, and non-fiction from six languages. In 2024-25, around 3,000 pupils from 18 Oxfordshire schools participated in the competition, with several becoming national and regional winners.

*"The Anthea Bell Prize left me wanting to delve further into the world of translation and the possibilities that come with it."*  
– Year 12 Student Feedback, 2024

*"We have had a brilliant time delivering these resources. Year 7 all the way through to Year 13 have engaged brilliantly and students have responded really well to the challenge. The resources were so well thought through, so easy to use and an absolute joy to teach."*  
– State Academy MFL Teacher, 2022

Through registering to take part in the competition, teachers can also access a fantastic collection of over 120 free classroom resources, including a guide for teachers and sixth formers on running an International book club, and more. In 2024/25, more than 22,000 young people across the UK took part in Translation Exchange activities, making it one of the University's largest and most influential school engagement programmes. It was recognised as a joint winner of the University's VC Award for Local Community Engagement in 2026.

### FIND OUT MORE

Queen's College  
Translation Exchange:



Opportunities  
for schools:



Creative Translation  
Ambassadors: Creative  
Translation Ambassadors –  
The Queen's College, Oxford:



Anthea Bell Prize for Young  
Translators: Anthea Bell  
Prize for Young Translators –  
The Queen's College, Oxford:



**CONTACT:** [translation.exchange@queens.ox.ac.uk](mailto:translation.exchange@queens.ox.ac.uk)  
– email to apply to host Ambassadors, or with any other queries about the QTE programme.

## Mathematics cont'd

For many years, we've worked in partnership with Oxfordshire state schools to identify young people who would enjoy an extra mathematical challenge. Teachers at local state secondary schools receive packs directly from us in October, to nominate **Year 9** pupils to join our **Mathematics Masterclasses**. These in-person sessions are held on Saturdays from January – March, exploring areas of mathematics that extend **beyond the school curriculum**. These highly interactive sessions encourage students to think creatively, tackle unfamiliar problems and experience mathematics as a living, evolving subject. Around **60 Year 9 pupils** join the programme each year, with almost all participants reporting that the experience has strengthened both their enjoyment of mathematics and their intention to continue studying the subject beyond GCSE. Participants are invited to return in **Years 10 and 11** for further study.

### FIND OUT MORE



If you are a local teacher and would like to be the named contact for your school, please contact [outreach@maths.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@maths.ox.ac.uk).



Every January, **It All Adds Up** brings together **700–800 female and non-binary students** studying maths from schools across the UK, for **three one-day conferences** here in our **Mathematical Institute**. Exploring mathematical concepts, and the breadth of careers and opportunities that continuing with mathematics education can open up, participants attend plenary sessions, tutorials and workshops. Just as importantly, participants meet other young people who share their enthusiasm for the subject, creating a sense of belonging. Almost 60% of participants reported wanting to work in a job related to maths after attending our 2026 conferences.

*"I loved the day of learning and the varied experiences within each section of the day. As someone who has struggled through maths in various forms, I found the day to be inclusive and opened my eyes to maths."*

### FIND OUT MORE



### It All Adds Up:



CONTACT: [outreach@maths.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@maths.ox.ac.uk)



## Materials Science

The **Department of Materials** regularly run workshops of around 60-90 minutes for schools, either at your school or at the department on Parks Road, Oxford. Topics for secondary schools include **Solar Cells**, **Investigating Materials using Chocolate**, and **An Electrifying Experience**.

### FIND OUT MORE



Sign up to receive a **newsletter** specifically for teachers, detailing our upcoming events:



You can also find a host of **online learning resources** relating to Materials topics, for you to use in your own classrooms:



CONTACT: [schools.liaison@materials.ox.ac.uk](mailto:schools.liaison@materials.ox.ac.uk)



## Music

Discover music through one of Britain's finest collections of musical instruments. At the **Faculty of Music**, home to the **Bate Collection**, we care for 1,000 musical instruments from across the world, spanning from the Renaissance to the present day, and use them to bring music and history to life for learners of all ages.

Our **Music Through the Ages** workshop is aimed at pupils in **Years 10-13** and explores the musical, historical and social context of the development of instruments and ensembles, from Renaissance to modern period, along with handling of some of the historical instruments in the collection. Alternatively, in the Javanese Gamelan workshop, pupils build a traditional Javanese musical piece by ear, learning about the roles of different instrument families, using team-working and listening skills. Or a **Bate Collection Tour and Handling Session** explores the themes of the collection's Resonance exhibition, and includes hands-on experience of some of the unique instruments.

The sessions can accommodate up to **20 pupils**, and while particularly suited to GCSE and A Level students, can be adapted for younger year groups. Taking place at the Bate Collection in Oxford, a small fee of £150 is payable for one workshop (for 90-120 minutes), £250 for two in one day, and £120 for the Tour and Handling session (45-60 minutes). We are pleased to offer discounts for groups with Pupil Premium – please enquire. The sessions can also be adapted for pupils in different cohorts. A recent A Level student commented, *"Lots of hands-on practical experience with historical instruments. Highly relevant to my A Level."*

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: [bookings@music.ox.ac.uk](mailto:bookings@music.ox.ac.uk)



## Crescendo Programme

For students studying Music who are curious about where it could take them, the **Crescendo Programme** offers an opportunity to explore university-level music from home. Delivered by **Oriel College** in partnership with the **Faculty of Music**, this national, annual **online** programme explores a wide range of musical ideas beyond the school curriculum, and offers a taste of studying music at university.

Open to **Year 10–13** students attending UK state schools, the series of online sessions take place annually from **September to November**, and students are welcome to join after the start of the programme as sign-up for each online session closes at 9am the day prior. Students are not expected to have prior knowledge in the topics – curiosity about the study of Music is all they need! Sessions include topics such as Film Music, Listening to Lost Voices, and 20th Century Authoritarianism and Classical Music. Eligible **Year 12 students** are also invited to apply for a **tutorial component** of the programme starting in **December**. Successful participants will experience Oxford's distinctive tutorial teaching and develop confidence in discussing music at university level.

The Crescendo Programme is free to join and takes place entirely online.

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: [outreach@oriel.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@oriel.ox.ac.uk)



## Neuroscience

### Oxford Centre for Integrative Neuroimaging (OxCIN) & Department of Experimental Psychology

**Brains are fascinating! Come find out why!** We work with schools to help young people explore how the brain shapes the way we think, learn, feel and move, through interactive workshops, exhibitions, and classroom resources. Working closely with researchers from the **Department of Experimental Psychology**, we create engaging activities that connect current research with the school curriculum and everyday life.

Schools can book interactive sessions including **Escape the Lab: Rogue Brain Takeover**, an escape-room challenge where pupils work together to solve brain-themed puzzles. The workshops encourage teamwork, critical thinking and scientific enquiry, while introducing students to contemporary neuroscience. We also offer scanner demo sessions for secondary school aged groups through UNIQ and A-level groups with an interest in neuroscience and psychology.

For teachers, we also offer a growing collection of **free classroom resources**. **BReal – Building Stress Resilience in Early Adolescents' Lives (Years 7–9)** provides three **ready-to-use lesson plans** and videos exploring brain development, resilience and mental wellbeing. **Football on the Brain (KS3–5)** explores how neuroscience relates to physical health, sport and

injury recovery, and how the brain adapts through learning and physical activity. View the printable resources and explainers for sports coaches on how to embed neuroscience theory into sports training.

Beyond the classroom, OxCIN developed **Your Amazing Brain**, an interactive exhibition created with Banbury Museum & Gallery and now on long-term loan to The Rumble Museum at Cheney School. Through hands-on exhibits and public events, the exhibition has introduced thousands of visitors to the science of the brain,

while more than **75 Oxford researchers** were able to develop their public engagement skills.

If your school would like to discuss hosting a workshop or learning more about these resources, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

### FIND OUT MORE



BReal:



Football on the Brain:



### CONTACT:

[carinne.piekema@ndcn.ox.ac.uk](mailto:carinne.piekema@ndcn.ox.ac.uk) or  
[barbara.robinson@ndcn.ox.ac.uk](mailto:barbara.robinson@ndcn.ox.ac.uk)



## Physics

Throughout the year, the Department of Physics works with secondary schools to show that physics is exciting and relevant, and that it opens up a wide range of future opportunities.

We work with **selected schools** to provide sustained engagement through research-themed projects. Previous projects have included recreating parts of the ATLAS detector in Minecraft, designing space-themed carnival structures, and building a classroom interferometer.

We run a **Key Stage 3 Physics Roadshow** for state-funded secondary schools across Oxfordshire, featuring science shows and interactive workshops. Activities include investigating infrared radiation through planetary science.

**For other schools**, we run a series of **Impact Days for Year 10 students**, exploring the impact of physics in areas such as quantum technology, biophysics and the environment. These events give students insights into future careers and expose them to cutting-edge-research.

We support the **British Physics Olympiad**, which provides physics challenges and competitions for young people from Year 7 to Year 13, and we are always happy to talk to schools about how they can get involved.

Where capacity allows, we can send a **researcher to your school** to talk about their work with students in **Years 10–13** who have an interest in physics. Talks cover a wide range of current research topics, including cosmology and dark matter, the Large Hadron Collider, climate change, space exploration, quantum physics and more. Schools can request a speaker by completing the booking form on the department's website. Requests are shared with researchers across the department, and visits are arranged where availability allows. Researcher availability is generally greatest at the beginning and end of school terms.

To hear about opportunities to work with the Department of Physics, please **join the department's schools mailing list** or contact the outreach team. Activities outside our targeted schools programme are offered subject to departmental capacity and are prioritised according to where our outreach can have the greatest impact.

**mailing list** or contact the outreach team. Activities outside our targeted schools programme are offered subject to departmental capacity and are prioritised according to where our outreach can have the greatest impact.

### FIND OUT MORE



#### CONTACT:

[engage@physics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:engage@physics.ox.ac.uk)



We are also the host department for **Marie Curious**, the University's annual, free **one-day event for girls** and young people who identify as **non-binary** from **Years 7-9** to explore **science, technology, engineering and mathematics**. The day brings together several STEM departments including Physics, Chemistry and Engineering, who welcome students from different schools to discover new areas of STEM, meet inspiring role models and build confidence through practical, hands-on activities.

Participants take part in three interactive workshops led by scientists and engineers, followed by a lively panel discussion and opportunities to speak with researchers about their work and career journeys. The day concludes with an interactive science show.

Schools apply for places each year, with priority given to state, mixed-gender schools and to students who would particularly benefit from meeting successful women working in science. No previous knowledge of physics is required. Applications open before Christmas; the event is held in March.

### FIND OUT MORE



We also run **EMPower Oxford**, a free two-year programme for **Year 10** and **Year 11** students of **Black heritage**, designed to build confidence, develop skills and introduce students to opportunities in Physics, Materials Science and Engineering.

The programme combines online workshops with academic mentoring, and the chance to take part in a three day residential in Oxford, for Years 10 and 11.

The programme is open to students of Black African, Black Caribbean, mixed Black or other Black heritage attending UK schools, with priority for state school students from under-represented backgrounds. Participation is completely free, including accommodation and meals for residential participants, with some support available for travel costs.

### FIND OUT MORE



**CONTACT:** [engage@physics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:engage@physics.ox.ac.uk)



## Science and Technology

### Oxford Sparks

Science is a huge and constantly evolving field as researchers ask new questions on all kinds of subjects from psychology, to sociology, physics, earth sciences, and penguins. Researchers gather evidence and make new discoveries, so our knowledge is continually evolving. **Oxford Sparks** provides a window into scientific research happening across the University of Oxford, making new ideas and discoveries accessible for everyone, through engaging videos, podcasts, news stories, and opportunities to meet the scientists behind the research.

Created in 2011 by the **Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division** in partnership with **Medical Sciences Division** and **Oxford Lifelong Learning**, Oxford Sparks brings together science from across the University in one free, searchable resource. Its content spans diverse disciplines; exploring questions such as *Could chocolate go extinct?* and, *When did dogs become our best friends?*, as well as covering climate change, economics, Saturn's moons, and how we can balance the country's need for more homes with the impact on nature. The site also explores the ethics and history of science, and how scientific research itself works. Through an engaging, interactive format, users can watch short videos and longer documentaries,

follow news updates from Oxford and the wider scientific world, and be inspired by the **Meet the Scientists**, discovering the people and careers behind the research. Episodes of the **Oxford Sparks Big Questions Podcast** can be found on the website, or via all the main podcasting apps (e.g. Apple Podcasts and Spotify). Each episode is 12-15 minutes long, and addresses – as the name suggests – a 'big question' in science.

For secondary teachers, Oxford Sparks provides an excellent source of contemporary material for enriching curriculum teaching or encouraging independent exploration beyond it. Content can be searched by topic or format, making it easy to find a video, podcast, researcher or news story relevant to a subject being studied. For young people considering where an interest in science might lead, the breadth of researchers and research topics also provides a glimpse of just how varied science – and scientific careers – can be.

Find out more and explore:  
[www.oxfordsparks.ox.ac.uk](http://www.oxfordsparks.ox.ac.uk)



## ENRICHMENT

### Civic Engagement

#### Practical Ethics and Responsibility Competition

How are individuals responsible for the environment? Should there be limits on how societies punish people who do wrong? If very ill patients want to die, should doctors be held responsible if they help them? **The Practical Ethics and Responsibility Competition (PERC)** invites students to explore questions like these, encouraging thoughtful discussion about the responsibilities we have toward each other, our planet and our future.

Run by the **Uehiro Oxford Institute**, this national, **free, annual competition** opens in September, with submissions accepted in early January. Working in teams of three to five students in **Years 11–13** create a short video exploring an ethical problem and how responsibility is involved. Finalists are invited to Oxford for a day of discussion and debate with philosophers and other finalists from across the country. It offers an excellent opportunity for pupils interested in exploring contemporary ethical issues, whether or not they study Philosophy as a subject. The competition also develops teamwork, communication and presentation skills as students work together to research an issue, create a short film and take on different production roles.

We also encourage teachers and students to bring these discussion topics to the classroom independently, through our curated collection of **free online resources**, including videos, podcasts, articles, and blog posts, exploring **practical ethics and responsibility**. These materials are suitable for any and all students wanting to explore civic engagement, being relevant across subjects and wider themes such as philosophy, citizenship, and contemporary global issues.

As a department, the Uehiro Oxford Institute is also open to delivering **talks at schools** on topics around ethics; we'd love to hear from you to explore how we can work with your school or college.

Photo left: Future Development Goals Challenge.  
Credit John Cairns.



## FIND OUT MORE

### Practical Ethics and Responsibility Competition:



Competition resources  
(suitable for wider use):



### CONTACT:

[gabriel.demarco@uehiro.ox.ac.uk](mailto:gabriel.demarco@uehiro.ox.ac.uk)



### Future Development Goals Challenge, Blavatnik School of Government

This unique event gives **Year 12 students** the opportunity to step into the shoes of policymakers, tackling some of the world's biggest challenges through debate, negotiation and creative problem-solving. Hosted by the **Blavatnik School of Government**, the Future Development Goals Challenge explores the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**, and extends the concept to six fictional nations. How will the students to work together to design a new set of Sustainable Development Goals entirely from scratch, negotiating across borders and building coalitions to get their ideas adopted?

This programme was designed and delivered by students studying the **School's Master of Public Policy (MPP)** programme. Working in cross-school teams, **38 students** from **five schools** across Oxfordshire

and Berkshire, assess their nation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Each team designs three Future Development Goals suited to their country's circumstances and priorities, and ends the day with a diplomatic exercise in coalition-building, revising their goals based on other teams' pitches in order to win support. The cohort's Future Development Goals ranged across issues of green technology sharing, measures to increase social cohesion, improved access to technical education, stronger indigenous knowledge transfer, equitable tax redistribution, infrastructure, and more.

Following this successful pilot, the Blavatnik School of Government hopes to continue this initiative to engage more students from the community. Secondary schools interested in future iterations are welcome to approach the School ([mpp@bsg.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mpp@bsg.ox.ac.uk)) to express their interest.

## FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: [mpp@bsg.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mpp@bsg.ox.ac.uk)



## Arts and Culture

### Classical Conversations

Whether your students already study Classics or are encountering the subject for the first time, the **Faculty of Classics** offers opportunities to explore the ancient world through conversations with experts, sustained language programmes, and creative challenges.

Our **Classical Conversations** programme invites students to explore Classics through discussion rather than lectures. Oxford Classicists can visit your school – or welcome students to the University – for interactive talks, question-and-answer sessions, and conversations on topics linked to the curriculum, or wider classical civilisation. Schools can also arrange visits that include object handling at the Ashmolean Museum, sessions with ancient manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, Greek theatre workshops, and other activities across the University's collections. Each school may arrange up to two Classical Conversations each year, and whole-day visits can be tailored to your interests.

## FIND OUT MORE



Photos, below: PERC Competition 2025.  
Top right: Classical Conversation: Alison Pollard at Queen Mary's College, Basingstoke.  
Bottom right: Future Development Goals Challenge. Credit: John Cairns.



## CASE STUDY: St John's College

St John's College has a long-standing commitment to supporting education beyond the bounds of its walls, using its people, places, and resources. Through partnerships with schools and cultural organisations, grants, academic enrichment, and its flagship **Inspire Programme**, the College works with children and young people from primary school all the way through to sixth form. The college's work has a particular focus on communities where opportunities may be more limited, and on ensuring children feel welcome and that they belong in this environment. It aims to encourage curiosity, confidence, and ambition, helping children to make the most of their academic potential.

**Inspire** brings much of this educational work together for schools within its linked region of the South East (specifically East and West Sussex, Southampton and Brighton, and the London borough of Ealing and Harrow). Offering activities and engagement from **primary school to sixth form**, the programme provides free events, visits, workshops, online learning, and sustained academic enrichment. For **Years 9–11**, the **Inspire Scholars Programme** works collaboratively with schools in our link region to help pupils explore their interests and develop their academic skills through opportunities including **Inspire Clubs**, summer schools and activities involving teachers and families. For **Years 12–13**, the emphasis shifts towards academic extension: online academic taster sessions, skills development, research opportunities, study and subject exploration days, summer schools, and guidance to help students make informed choices about higher education and, where appropriate, competitive university applications. This sustained approach reaches thousands of pupils each year, and evaluation shows that **76%** of participating pupils from areas with the lowest progression to higher education go on to attend a top-third ranked university. A recent addition to our suite of programmes is the Inspire Hub, an online resource that makes our programmes more readily available and accessible to students.

At primary level, **Inspire Primary** works particularly closely with local schools to encourage a love of learning, reading, and creativity, while helping children feel confident and welcome in Oxford from an early age. St John's focuses much of this work on schools serving communities experiencing higher levels of disadvantage, offering grants, in-school support and College-based enrichment opportunities. During 2024/25, more than **300 primary pupils** and their teachers visited the College.

Long-term partnerships are at the heart of the programme. At **Bayards Hill Primary School**, Oxford, the College helped establish a new school library, before undergraduate Student Ambassadors began running a weekly lunchtime library club. Volunteers read one-to-one with pupils, help children choose books, encourage discussion and lead creative activities designed to nurture reading for pleasure.



**St John's College**  
Oxford



The College is also developing new enrichment opportunities on site. A recent **Primary Literacy Day** invited **Year 5 and 6 pupils** to explore St John's historic libraries through creative workshops inspired by storytelling, literature and communication across cultures and throughout history. Pupils acted out scenes from *The Hobbit*, solved hieroglyphic puzzles and celebrated their own creative writing in the College's Old Library. Following the success of the pilot, St John's hopes to make the event an annual opportunity for more local schools.

Alongside literacy, St John's hosts an annual **Primary Science Festival**, supports school visits to Oxford's museums through its partnership with **GLAM**, providing spaces for lunch, rest, and activities, helping make educational visits into the city easier for younger pupils. One of St John's other priorities is to support theatre and creativity, and it has partnered with the **Oxford Playhouse** to widen access to theatre and creative learning for children. Projects have included **Primary Playmaker**, giving children opportunities to write plays, work with professional theatre-makers, and experience live performances. The College also continues to explore new ways of supporting local schools through reading initiatives, community partnerships and enrichment opportunities. For example, St John's staff volunteer with local charity **ARCh** (Assisted Reading for Children). These programmes reflect the College's commitment to building long-term relationships with local schools, and helping children see Oxford as a place where they belong.

### FIND OUT MORE



### Inspire Programme:



CONTACT: [access@sjc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:access@sjc.ox.ac.uk)

## Enrichment cont'd

For schools that do not offer GCSE Latin, OXLAT provides a unique opportunity for students in **Years 8-9** to study Latin through **Saturday morning classes** at the University, through a two-year programme. Running on a two-year cycle, this stretching programme offers around 44 places, through a competitive application process, to students from state schools where GCSE Latin is not available. The Faculty is also developing **OXLAT Next Steps**, providing online resources and support to help modern language teachers introduce Latin through extracurricular clubs in their own schools.

### FIND OUT MORE



Each Spring, we invite young people **aged 7-18** to take part in our **national Classics competitions**. With separate creative writing and art competitions, themes change every year and have included graphic novels, mythology, drama, movie posters and classical memes. They're a fun and imaginative way for students to engage with the ancient world beyond the classroom, whether or not they already study Classics. **Check our website for details:**



### FIND OUT MORE



**CONTACT:** [outreach@classics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@classics.ox.ac.uk)



## Invisible East School taster sessions

The vast region stretching from Iran and Afghanistan to Central Asia is often viewed through the lens of modern conflict. Yet in medieval times it was a vibrant crossroads of cultures, religions and ideas whose influence reached far beyond its borders. **Invisible East** is run by **Oxford Lifelong Learning** to share the rich history of this fascinating, and often overlooked, region with new audiences, including schools.

Through **90-minute sessions** for secondary schools in the UK and Afghanistan, pupils work closely with original historical sources, explore the ethical questions involved in interpreting the past, discover the day-to-day work of historians, and curate their own museum exhibition. The sessions introduce students to a region rarely encountered in the school curriculum but one that is deeply connected to the history and diversity of modern Britain, encouraging a broader understanding of the cultures, faiths and communities that continue to shape society today.

**Free lesson plans**, classroom slides and teaching resources are also available for schools wishing to explore the topic independently.

### FIND OUT MORE



**CONTACT:**  
[invisible\\_east@conted.ox.ac.uk](mailto:invisible_east@conted.ox.ac.uk)



## Nature and Sustainability

### Biodiversity and Nature Recovery

If you're looking to develop your school grounds for learning, strengthen your geography or biology field work, or to develop more in the area of sustainability, the **Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery** would be pleased to work with you. We support Oxfordshire secondary schools to make more of the natural environment—both in your school grounds and at our dedicated research and outdoor spaces.

### Developing nature on your school site

Many schools would like to make more use of their outdoor spaces but are unsure where to begin. We support secondary schools to develop nature-rich school grounds and build opportunities for learning in and about nature. This can include a **'walk and talk' site visit**, practical advice tailored to your school, and a short report with suggested next steps and links to resources. The support is designed to help schools engage with initiatives such as the **National Education Nature Park**, develop extracurricular activities such as ecology clubs, and prepare for emerging opportunities including the proposed GCSE in Natural History. Schools can express an interest at any time during the year through the website below, with support offered according to capacity.



Photos below, from left to right:  
Invisible East Taster Sessions;  
Vase handling session with Dr Thomas Mannack.  
Credit: Ian Wallman



## Enrichment cont'd

### Supporting geography and biology field work

Fieldwork is one of the most memorable ways for young people to learn about the natural world, yet schools often face practical barriers to taking students outside. We work with teachers to plan and support geography and biology field work, helping schools make use of **Wytham Woods**, local nature reserves, regenerative farms or even their own school grounds. Support is tailored to each school's needs and usually involves one or two sessions each year, with an emphasis on building teachers' confidence to lead future field work independently. Alongside curriculum learning, these experiences encourage teamwork, observation and problem-solving while helping students develop a stronger connection with nature. Schools are welcome to enquire throughout the year.



### Oxfordshire Schools Sustainability Network

The **Oxfordshire Schools Sustainability Network** brings together teachers and students who are passionate about sustainability and environmental education. Teachers meet regularly to share ideas, resources and practical approaches to embedding sustainability across school life, while students **aged 15–18** have opportunities to meet peers from other schools, explore environmental issues together and build networks with like-minded young people. Schools can join the network throughout the year by contacting the team via the website below.

Find out more and express your interest:



CONTACT:

[kim.polgreen@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:kim.polgreen@education.ox.ac.uk)



## Sports

### Oxford Young Sport Leaders Programme

The Oxford Young Sport Leaders Programme (OYSLP) is an award-winning initiative demonstrating how sport can build confidence, curiosity, friendship, and a sense of belonging alongside physical skills. Since launching as a pilot in 2023, it has become one of the University's flagship local engagement programmes, bringing together local schools, academics, students, colleges, and community partners, to create a meaningful impact on young people in Oxford.

Each year, **12 Year 8 pupils** from six local secondary schools take part in the four-week programme, spending one day each week at the University. Accompanied by current Oxford students, they learn a different sport with University sports clubs members, enjoy lunch and visits to colleges, and take part in an interactive academic workshop exploring sport through a different intellectual lens. Vincent's Club athletes volunteer their time to support the programme, helping to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all participants. At the end of the programme, all six schools come together for the PowerHouse Games, a festival delivered with inclusive sports charity Power2Inspire, where pupils participate in inclusive sports alongside young people with different abilities. Pupils from John Watson School also attend the event.

Throughout the programme, participants are encouraged to push their boundaries: navigating new environments, meeting new people, and trying new sports, including basketball, rowing, athletics and American football. Underpinning everything is the programme's Head, Hand & Heart philosophy. "Head" explores aspects of sport through academic perspectives such as biomechanics, mathematics, psychology, and leadership, deepening the connections between sports and the classroom. "Hand" focuses on physical skills, teamwork, and coordination, developed through

practical participation. "Heart" is the thread running through the whole programme, fostering confidence, friendship and personal growth, and a sense of belonging and shared experience.

The programme is a collaborative partnership, involving schools, University departments, colleges, the Vincent's Club, which supports Oxford student sport, student volunteers, and community organisations. Around **180** pupils have now taken part, and the relationships created through OYSLP have generated further opportunities, including school-based rowing and American football activities. In 2025, OYSLP received the University of Oxford Vice-Chancellor's Award for Local Community Engagement, recognising its contribution to schools' enrichment, educational opportunity, and community connections.

*"The delivery of the programme has been excellent with engaging theoretical sessions and fun and challenging practical sessions. Working closely with University students has helped the students to gain more confidence and to come out of their shell more...I think that the opportunity for my staff to spend the day with them outside of the normal school environment has also helped to build and strengthen relationships."*  
– PE Teacher, Oxford Spire, 2025-6 programme

### FIND OUT MORE

To find out more, visit the **University's Local Engagement website**:



OYSLP currently works with six partner secondary schools in Oxford, with two cohorts running each year. Schools interested in future opportunities are welcome to contact the programme team to find out more.

CONTACT: [Zoe.Pugh@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Zoe.Pugh@admin.ox.ac.uk)



## SPOTLIGHT ON...

**COMPOS****Comprehensive Oxford Maths and Physics  
Online School****Advanced maths and physics for curious minds**

For pupils who can't get enough of maths or physics, COMPOS offers the chance to go far beyond the school curriculum. This free online programme from the University's Department of Physics gives motivated Year 10–13 students the opportunity to challenge themselves with demanding problems, explore new ideas and work with tutors in a supportive learning community.

COMPOS is designed to develop the kind of mathematical thinking and scientific problem-solving used by researchers in the field, going far wider than preparing pupils for exams. Applicants don't have to be top of the class or exceptional to apply – the programme is looking for those who are exceptionally interested and motivated to learn more about physics and maths. Participants in the programme complete regular assignments, receive detailed personal feedback, and take part in weekly small-group tutorials and live webinars. They hear from Oxford researchers and current students, gaining an insight into university study and STEM careers.

Since launching as a pilot in 2021, COMPOS has grown rapidly to support more than 1,000 students across the UK. The programme is designed to be accessible wherever students live, with fully funded places for state-school pupils and targeted support for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The impact of COMPOS is told in the numbers. More than 90% of GCSE and A Level participants report improved ability and confidence in maths and physics, while 97% said they enjoyed the programme, and 98% would recommend it to others. Among students completing A Levels in 2023, 100% progressed to STEM degrees, with half securing places at Oxford or Cambridge.

Schools can also become involved through a developing network of COMPOS school groups, enabling pupils to work together locally while accessing the online programme. Individuals must register for the programme individually, and have up until September to register their interest each academic year. Applications are completed including an entrance assessment during August and September, with the programmes starting in October, running until Spring (for Years 11–13), and Summer (for Years 10–12) the following year.

**FIND OUT MORE**KS  
4-5

12



FREE

## Enrichment cont'd

### Developing Wider Life and Future Skills

#### Explore: The Home of Big Questions

Wider life skills are vital, not only for those who may be thinking of going on to study at university, but for all young people as they navigate an increasingly complex and demanding world. Schools are a brilliant place to develop the confidence to question, reason, explore ideas and reach informed conclusions.

**Explore** was developed by the University of Oxford as a **free online resource**, designed to spark curiosity, build critical thinking skills, and raise educational aspirations among young people. Based around a growing catalogue of 'Big Questions' – *Is a robot a person? Could we live on another planet? Does prison work? Does it matter who you love?* – **Explore** invites young people to investigate questions that don't have one right answer. Through videos, articles and suggested further research, they encounter different arguments and perspectives, before reaching their own conclusions, and seeing how their views compare with others'.

**Explore** encourages young people to think independently, explore subjects beyond the curriculum and develop their confidence in questioning, reasoning and discussion. Intended for use both independently, at home or school or as part of classroom learning, each Big Question draws together ideas from different academic disciplines, introducing young people to research and differing perspectives through interactive content. This makes it a particularly useful resource for enrichment and supercurricular learning, or teachers can use individual questions as starting points for classroom discussion. The online platform also enables access to two additional elements of confidence and curiosity building; **Explore Competitions** are accessible monthly online competitions designed to help secondary students build confidence in entering academic challenges without fear of the result; and **Explore Livestreams**, which are interactive live events connecting secondary pupils with Oxford students to tackle big questions together.

For teachers wanting to take the resource even further, **Explore Teach** turns Big Questions into ready-to-use **classroom experiences**, as well as **CPDL modules** to support teachers' own professional advancement. Free teaching materials include structured **Explore Challenges**, slides, worksheets and guidance to support discussion and mixed-ability learning. The **professional development modules** explore topics such as academic self-concept, critical thinking and supporting pupils to remain high attainers. One teacher reported that pupils who were often hesitant to contribute in ordinary lessons felt able to speak up during an **Explore Challenge**.

*"I had a lightbulb moment ...I thought 'this is fantastic' – what a great resource to use with younger students to widen their thinking, develop their critical [thinking] skills, the debating, the research, [to] share their own ideas and opinions..."*

– Shameem Azam, Vice-Principal, Feversham Girls Secondary Academy, Bradford.

*"Explore (Teach) is an excellent resource to get students thinking critically and preparing them for higher education studies."*

– Teacher, Dixons City Academy, Bradford

All resources are free. **Explore** celebrates its **10th anniversary in 2026/27**, with the platform being refreshed and relaunched with new content, features and ways to explore Big Questions. In the meantime, the existing **Explore** and **Explore Teach** resources remain freely available to use and explore.

Explore more for pupils and independent learners, and teachers:



#### Vaccine Design and Pandemic Preparation Workshops

The **Pandemic Sciences Institute** is dedicated to preparing solutions to the challenges of epidemic and pandemic infectious diseases. Our **Vaccine Design and Pandemic Preparation Workshops** offer practical sessions combining group based critical thinking and hands on activities to raise awareness and understanding of vaccines, and pandemic preparedness. Sessions also embrace the multidisciplinary and collaborative nature of research at the Pandemic Sciences Institute, exploring the roles of scientists, social scientists, historians, ethicists and policy makers in combination. Typically aimed at **Years 10-13**, we can adjust the content and delivery appropriately for other age groups. We also partner with the Oxford International Biomedical Centre's **Scientists in Schools** programmes to offer broader Biomedical and Biology Workshops and Events. Please contact us to discuss your needs. You can also see us at the annual Vaccine Study Days held at the History of Science Museum (currently aimed at KS 5, check HSM website for annual dates in February).

Contact: [sean.elias@ndm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:sean.elias@ndm.ox.ac.uk)  
Public Engagement with Research Lead.



For teachers wanting more information on vaccines, and to build confidence in having classroom conversations, visit the Oxford Vaccine Group's Vaccine Knowledge webpages:





TRINITY COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY of OXFORD

## CASE STUDY:

# Trinity College: Investing in Oxfordshire's children and teachers

As the University of Oxford's link college for Oxfordshire, Trinity College leads the regional programme of access and outreach and takes a long-term approach to supporting schools across the county. Working in partnership with schools, the College aims not only to raise awareness of higher education but also to ensure that local communities benefit from the University's people, places and expertise.

While much of Trinity's work focuses on schools where progression to higher education, Russell Group universities and Oxford is lower than average, its approach extends beyond student recruitment. By creating opportunities for school communities to engage with the wider University, the College helps young people develop confidence, curiosity and ambition, whatever their future educational pathway.

A central feature of this approach is building long-term relationships with schools. Trinity was instrumental in establishing the Oxford College Twinning Project with the Oxford Hub, creating sustained partnerships between Oxford colleges and local primary schools. Through enrichment visits, academic tutoring, reading support, homework clubs and access to University facilities, the project has now engaged more than 1,600 children from priority schools in the city of Oxford, helping local children feel welcome, valued and connected to the University and their city from an early age. Read more about Oxford Twinning on pages 9 and 32.

Alongside these partnerships, Trinity welcomes primary and secondary schools from across Oxfordshire to visit the College throughout the year. Visits combine opportunities to meet current students, experience college life and participate in academic activities, often alongside visits to museums and other University collections. The College also hopes to help schools navigate the wide range of opportunities available across the University through Oxford for Oxford – a dedicated online hub being developed to bring together events, resources and outreach activities from departments, museums, libraries and gardens.

Trinity's academic support for young people extends beyond the school day. Beyond the Classroom is the College's free live online enrichment programme for students in Years 7–12. Running once a week after school between March and July, the programme offers short taster lectures, discussions and academic skills sessions that encourage young people to explore subjects beyond the curriculum. Since its launch in 2023, more than 3,000 secondary school students have registered to take part, demonstrating growing demand for flexible academic enrichment. Alongside this, resources such as *In Trinity and Beyond* – curated by Trinity undergraduates – and the University's wider digital resource collections, the *Supercurricular hub*, help young people pursue their academic interests independently and discover competitions, lectures and subject-specific opportunities throughout the year.

Teachers are also central to Trinity's support for schools. The College delivers a year-round programme of free live online professional development covering admissions guidance, academic enrichment and support for high-attaining students from under-represented backgrounds to achieve their potential. Participants can also apply for a fully funded residential experience at Trinity, providing time to explore educational research, collaborate with colleagues and access University libraries and academic expertise. In 2024–25, 150 teachers from 112 state schools took part in the programme, with participants reporting increased knowledge and confidence in supporting students of all ages, including those considering Oxford and other competitive universities.

To help schools make the most of opportunities across the collegiate University, Trinity regularly shares information about outreach activities, events and resources as new opportunities arise throughout the year.

The impact of this sustained approach can be seen both in participation and in recognition. During 2024–25, Trinity welcomed more than 2,000 pupils to the College and worked with over 7,300 students in their own schools across its linked regions. In recognition of its long-term commitment to local education, the College received the University of Oxford's Vice-Chancellor's Award for Local Community Engagement in 2025.

## Getting started

Whether you're looking for enrichment activities, teacher development, classroom visits, college experiences or simply want to understand what opportunities might be available across the University, Trinity's Access Team can help you identify the most appropriate starting point for your school. Oxfordshire schools are encouraged to sign up to Trinity's **schools' newsletter**, or **contact the Access team** to discuss their school's interests and priorities. Some activities are open to all schools, while others are prioritised for schools with which Trinity has developed longer-term partnerships.

### FIND OUT MORE



Enrichment  
Resources:



### Trinity College Outreach Programmes:



Oxford for  
Oxford:



Teacher CPD  
Programme:



CONTACT: [access.officer@trinity.ox.ac.uk](mailto:access.officer@trinity.ox.ac.uk)

# Gardens, Libraries and Museums

**Oxford University's Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) bring together collections, research and learning across the Ashmolean Museum, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum, History of Science Museum, Museum of Natural History and Pitt Rivers Museum. Together, they care for more than 21 million objects, specimens and printed items, alongside living plant collections, historic buildings and archives, and offer educational opportunities from Early Years through to post-16.**

As some of the University's most public-facing institutions, each has an established learning programme for schools and colleges. Their particular value is the opportunity to learn directly from collections and places: pupils can handle original artefacts, investigate evidence, observe the natural world, encounter original historical sources, and explore how knowledge itself is developed and interpreted. Sessions can support curriculum learning or offer an entirely different perspective on a familiar subject.

Alongside bookable workshops and taught sessions, GLAM offers free teaching and learning resources, SEND provision, community partnerships, teacher development, apprenticeships and work experience. School visits are often

half-day experiences combining a taught session with time for independent exploration, and can sometimes be combined with a college or department visit. Widening participation is a key focus and GLAM institutions work in partnership with college access officers and other organisations each year to offer free programmes to thousands of school age students from a wide range of backgrounds, particularly those currently under-represented at Oxford.

What follows can only ever be a snapshot: use the QR codes and contact details to explore each institution's current offer in full. Some sessions have a small fee associated to cover costs, and these are clearly marked on the websites, and where they are featured in this guide.

## The Ashmolean Museum

The University's museum of art and archaeology, with collections covering thousands of years across a multitude of cultures and time periods, including Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, Asian and Islamic art, prehistory, European painting, drawings, and landscape and portraiture. Around 35,000 schoolchildren visit the Ashmolean each year, where object-based, curriculum-linked gallery sessions bring subjects to life. Primary pupils can handle original artefacts from these collections in sessions informed by University research, combining investigative thinking, and discussions with hands-on object work. Secondary school sessions and study days deepen subject knowledge and critical thinking, allowing pupils to analyse artefacts as historical sources. The Creative Writing session uses objects as stimuli, while Art and Art History tours support KS4 and KS5 to develop skills through art-making and visual analysis.

### FIND OUT MORE

Schools:



Learning Resources:



CONTACT: [learning@ashmus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:learning@ashmus.ox.ac.uk)

## The Bodleian Libraries

'The Bod' forms the University's main library system, comprising several individual libraries and collections. They hold books, manuscripts, archives, maps, photographs, and other special collections, across subjects ranging from literature and history to science, politics and medicine. The Bodleian is both a working academic library and a legal depository, having been entitled to a copy of every book published in the UK since 1610. Its collections support taught sessions on subjects including the Civil War, the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain, Political Protest Writing, Trade and the British Empire, and Vaccine Hesitancy. As well as these 'collections up-close', school visits include exhibitions, a tour of the Weston Library, printing workshops, study days, and teaching resources for KS3 to post-16. Almost 5,000 school pupils visited during 2025/26. As well as welcoming schools and students into the libraries, the Bodleian offers outreach to Oxford City and Oxfordshire Primary schools, including a school assembly.

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: [education@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:education@bodleian.ox.ac.uk)

Photos, left to right:

Pupils exploring Egypt galleries at the Ashmolean Museum.

Credit: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

School visit to exhibition. Credit John Cairns.



## The Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum

The OBGa holds the University's living collection of plants, spread over two sites, which are used for research, teaching, conservation, and public learning. Founded in 1621 in the centre of the city, the botanic garden is the oldest in the UK. Its sister site, Harcourt Arboretum, five miles south of the city, is 130 acres of woodland, meadow and remarkable tree collections. Together they are home to more than 5,000 plant species. Curriculum-linked activities for Early Years through to post-16 explore plant science, ecology, biodiversity, evolution, climate change, sustainability and fieldwork, drawing on University research. Forest School sessions give children the freedom to explore woodland and meadows, develop practical outdoor skills, build confidence and deepen their connection with nature. OBGa supports many of the wider University's community partnership programmes, such as those with the Iffley Academy and Cheney School, teacher CPD, adult education sessions, Home Learners' Days and family-friendly activities during school holidays.

### FIND OUT MORE



#### CONTACT:

Primary and Early Years: [primaryeducation@obg.ox.ac.uk](mailto:primaryeducation@obg.ox.ac.uk)

Secondary and Further Education:  
[secondaryeducation@obg.ox.ac.uk](mailto:secondaryeducation@obg.ox.ac.uk)



Photo: School visit to Oxford Botanical Garden and Arboretum.

## The History of Science Museum

Housed in the world's oldest surviving purpose-built public museum building, the original museum was designed to showcase Elias Ashmole's natural history and rarity collection, one of the earliest collections to be publicly studied and displayed. Built in 1683, the building later became a centre for scientific teaching, including chemistry and anatomy, sometimes even hosting public dissections. Today, it houses collections exploring the history and development of science through scientific instruments and objects, particularly astronomy, time-keeping, medicine, navigation, mathematics, with many early scientific instruments from Europe and the Islamic world. Pupils can explore items and exhibitions from different times and cultures, including Einstein's famous blackboard with equations still intact, as well as workshops that combine object-based learning with activities, discussion and enquiry. Primary workshops cover both history and science topics. Our most popular KS2 sessions include Earth and Space, Shadows and Sundials and the history of Electricity. The Museum also offers GCSE and A Level Study Days, in collaboration with other GLAM institutions and Oxford University academic departments. These include the popular Women and Astrophysics, Frankenstein, and Vaccine Study Days. (Read more about the Vaccine Study day, supported by the Pandemic Sciences Institute, on page 32.)

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: [learning@hsm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:learning@hsm.ox.ac.uk)



History of Science Museum school visit.

## The Museum of Natural History

The University's museum of the **natural world**, housing internationally important zoological, entomological, palaeontological, and geological collections: animals, insects, fossils, rocks, and minerals, including the fossilised jaw of *Megalosaurus*, discovered in Oxfordshire and used in 1824 for the world's first scientific description of a dinosaur. Here, pupils handle authentic museum specimens, from meeting live minibeasts and investigating dinosaurs, to evolution, biodiversity, and the evidence scientists use to understand the natural world. After learning how Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace developed the theory of evolution, primary school children can follow a digital trail to **uncover evidence for evolution for themselves**. At sixth form, students can even use research-grade laboratory equipment to **analyse their own DNA**. **SEND sessions are provided free of charge**, and most workshops can be adapted to meet a wide range of learning needs. The museum also hosts a wide range of online learning resources and activities for teachers and pupils.

### FIND OUT MORE

Schools and Learning:



Learning zone:



CONTACT: [education@oum.ox.ac.uk](mailto:education@oum.ox.ac.uk)

## The Pitt Rivers Museum

The University's museum of **anthropology and archaeology**, with objects, photographs, and manuscripts relating to human societies and cultures from around the world, and throughout human history. Its collections allow pupils to explore creativity, identity, belief, and technology, and seeks to nurture empathy and deeper engagement with diverse cultures and perspectives. As well as offering free online resources, films, and self-guided tours, taught sessions for primary school children include Puppets and Stories, Masks, and Materials. Explorations of the lives, societies and cultures of peoples include the Inuit, Ancient Maya, and Benin City. In addition to sessions in these topics, older-student sessions bring in a focus on art creation. Students can follow thematic trails – such as pattern, identity, structures and fragments – and engage with objects in taught sketchbook sessions. This age group can examine themes such as identity, representation, empire, and the ways museums themselves interpret and represent the past and other cultures, including the Pitt Rivers' own ongoing work in decolonising their collections.

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: [education@prm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:education@prm.ox.ac.uk)



There are many ways to engage with GLAM beyond a taught school visit. Across the six institutions, schools can also find self-guided visits, extensive collections of free online and downloadable resources, study days, outreach, teacher development, and longer-term partnerships. GLAM also provides opportunities for young people to explore careers through apprenticeships and work experience, while its long-standing partnerships with organisations such as The Iffley Academy demonstrate how collections and cultural spaces can be shaped collaboratively with young people with SEND.

You'll find selected GLAM opportunities throughout the Primary and Secondary sections of this guide, with further information on SEND, teacher development, careers and work experience in Wider Opportunities and Career Choices. The individual websites listed here provide the full and most up-to-date picture of what each institution offers, including current costs, availability, booking information and contact details.

# Wider Opportunities



There is a huge amount happening across Oxford beyond individual subjects and curriculum programmes. Across the University, our staff students, and academic departments are contributing their time and expertise through volunteering, community projects, and opportunities for schools and young people to get involved. We support teachers by making current research accessible, creating and sharing teaching resources, and providing practical opportunities for professional development. We also work closely with local organisations, bringing together their expertise and ours to create programmes and activities that neither could offer alone. This section highlights some of these wider connections, and some of the many ways schools, teachers, and young people can get involved.

## Student-run holiday camps

For more than 40 years, University of Oxford students have volunteered their time to provide **week-long residential holidays** for local children who would benefit from a break from the challenges they may face in their home lives. Run by student volunteers, VacProj (Lincoln College) and ExVac (Exeter College) offer fun, friendship, and new experiences for **children facing challenging circumstances**. Created with the ethos that opportunities for children to be completely carefree, try new things, and make friends, these holidays can have a lasting impact.

VacProj has run every **summer** since 1972, taking children **aged 7–9, and 9–12** on two week-long holidays during the first two weeks of August. Staying at a countryside manor house (“surely we cannot be staying in a mansion this big!”), the setting itself plays an important role in supporting the change of routine and sense of adventure. ExVac has provided **Easter** holidays since 1982, running two week-long residential breaks for children **aged 7–11** in the New Forest. Fun activities are high on the priority list, including canoeing, laser tag and archery. Both student organising teams set aside their college rivalry and share ideas for the holidays, and for fundraising events.

Each holiday offers 18 children this unique opportunity, meaning the two programmes provide residential holidays for 72 children each year. Student leader-to-child ratios are 1:2, so children receive dedicated attention. Student volunteers undergo a careful selection process and commit significant time to planning, fundraising and delivering each holiday. Many remain involved throughout their time at Oxford and often describe it as the ‘best part of their time at university’. Activities include outdoor adventures, team games, creative activities, and day trips to theme parks.

Places are offered following referrals or nominations from professionals such as social workers, support workers and

sometimes from schools, ensuring that children who would benefit most are able to take part. Both projects are provided free of charge to participating families. If you would like to find out more or discuss referrals, please contact the programme organisers directly.

### FIND OUT MORE

VacProj (Lincoln College):



ExVac (Exeter College):



CONTACT: VacProj – [vacation.project@lincoln.ox.ac.uk](mailto:vacation.project@lincoln.ox.ac.uk);  
ExVac – [info@exvac.org](mailto:info@exvac.org)



## Staff and student volunteering

University of Oxford **staff and students volunteer across Oxford**, sharing their time, skills, and expertise with local schools, charities, and community groups. Opportunities range from tutoring and mentoring children and young people, to becoming a Sports Ambassador, or sports coaching with the Oxford Young Sports Leader Programme. Volunteers might support wider community projects, educational activities, and local events; some opportunities are one-off such as helping at the Oxford Half Marathon or University Open Days, and others are undertaken on a more regular basis, supporting a particular organisation, cause, or individual. The University recognises the value that volunteering brings to a community, as well as the positive impacts it can have on the volunteer, enabling skills development and an enhanced connection to their city. Staff are entitled to take volunteering leave each year to enable participation.

Staff and students can find opportunities and contact details via a volunteering hub on the Intranet, and the **Oxford Hub** provides another route into local volunteering, connecting University volunteers with organisations across the city. Schools and community organisations can also discover opportunities to work with University volunteers through their own local partnerships. **If your organisation has an opportunity where University staff or students could make a difference, we'd be pleased to hear from you.**

### FIND OUT MORE

University Staff and Students (internal website access only):



Oxford Hub:



Have a volunteering opportunity that could be supported by University staff or students?

CONTACT: [localengagement@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:localengagement@admin.ox.ac.uk).

## Beyond Boundaries Art Competition

### Breaking down boundaries between art, science and identity

Scientists come from all different backgrounds, each with important stories and research to share. While art and science are often seen as separate disciplines, they are intimately linked, both requiring curiosity, creativity, and the ability to make connections. The **Beyond Boundaries competition** invites pupils in **Years 5–8** to explore the lives and research of Oxford scientists, and create artworks inspired by them.

Led by the **Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences (MPLS) Division**, in partnership with colleagues from the **Medical Sciences Division**, this biennial competition celebrates the work of Black, Asian and racially minoritised researchers. Its aim is to challenge stereotypes about who scientists are, and encourage pupils to discover the creativity behind scientific research. Pupils use online profiles introducing each researcher and their work as inspiration making artwork in any creative medium. Entries are judged by a panel including University staff and representatives from Modern Art Oxford, and exhibited in a prominent Oxford location.

Since beginning in 2018, there have been four competitions in which **48** Oxfordshire state schools have taken part, with **748 children** creating **675** artworks inspired by University research. The 2025 competition had the strongest engagement yet, with 277 pupils from 18 schools submitting 252 pieces of artwork. Teacher feedback has highlighted the value of expanding perceptions of scientists, and of the opportunity it affords pupils to creatively engage with complex scientific ideas. One teacher reflected,

*"Beyond Boundaries is such a fantastic project. Hugely inspiring to our increasingly diverse school – challenging stereotypes and encouraging creative freedom. I was enormously impressed with... the thought and creativity packed into [the children's] responses."*

The biennial competition is open to Oxfordshire state school pupils, with invitations sent directly to schools and local organisations – full details, researcher profiles and galleries of previous winning entries available online. Schools interested in taking part in the 2027 competition are encouraged to contact the organisers or explore previous competitions through the Oxford Sparks website. Look out for your school's invitation from the Beyond Boundaries team!

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: [diversity@mpls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:diversity@mpls.ox.ac.uk)



Photo left: Beyond Boundaries awardees and researchers 2025.

Opposite page, top to bottom: Beyond Boundaries 2025: Tanya's Life by Harriet, St Swithun's Primary School; Participant researcher viewing exhibition entries 2025.



## Teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

### The Department of Education

The **Department of Education** is one of the world's leading centres for educational research and teacher education, combining direct and impactful research with classroom practice. Alongside its internationally recognised teacher education programmes, including the Oxford PGCE (with subjects including English, mathematics, modern languages, Mandarin, history, geography, and the sciences), the Department researches how children learn, how teachers teach, and how to improve education policy and practice. Our global research offering has consistently achieved top ratings in the Research Excellence Framework.

Here, teaching is viewed as an intellectual endeavour and a socially impactful vocation – one requiring curiosity, critical thinking, and commitment to continued professional development.

One of the Department's defining principles is that educational research is strongest when developed with schools rather than simply shared with them. Many research projects are created in **partnership with teachers**, who help shape research questions, trial new approaches and refine resources before they are shared more widely. In this way, schools become active partners in improving education, rather than simply recipients of research findings. Recent examples include collaborative projects with mathematics teachers to develop approaches to mathematical communication and oracy; and initiatives exploring visual literacy, language learning and community engagement.

Through research, and the dissemination of the resulting evidence, the Department supports teachers to be the best teachers they can, and to contribute to the wider educational professional community. Collaboration is embedded in our practice, working in partnership with over **40 secondary comprehensive schools**, primarily across Oxfordshire and neighbouring counties who are jointly responsible for the planning, delivery, and assessment of the programme. The Department also supports programmes featured elsewhere in this guide, including **Researchers in Residence** which demonstrate how research can enrich teaching and learning in schools.

### The Oxford Education Deanery

Much of the Department's collaborative work is brought together through the **Oxford Education Deanery**. The Deanery aims to empower teachers to shape, co-produce, use and understand research evidence in education, helping professionals engage with current evidence while creating opportunities for researchers to learn directly from schools.

Throughout the year, the Deanery offers an extensive programme of conferences, workshops, webinars and seminars covering topics shaped by the Department's current educational research. Recent events have explored artificial intelligence in education, sustainability, multilingual classrooms, assessment, belonging, and supporting children and young people with diverse learning needs. Many events are free or available at modest cost, often available during twilight sessions, enabling schools to engage with new ideas as they emerge.

Teachers can also access a growing collection of professional learning resources online. These include **Deanery Digests**, short, plain-language summaries of Department research, making current findings accessible and practical for translation into classrooms, and a podcast series, which translates that research for teachers, parents and policy-makers. They also share blogs, videos and classroom resources, alongside self-paced online learning. The Deanery's wider resource library includes materials on oral language development, neurodivergence, formative assessment, climate and sustainability, and argumentation in science and religious education, allowing teachers to engage with current research whenever it is most relevant to their own practice.

The breadth of the Deanery's work continues to grow. To the present day, it has supported more than **1,000** participants through events, published **32 Deanery Digests**, produced **17 resource packs** and **17 podcast episodes**, and supported a growing community of teachers engaging with research through online resources and professional networks.

Schools and individual teachers can join the mailing list or contact the Deanery directly to ask about tailor-made courses.

## FIND OUT MORE

Department of Education: **Oxford Education Deanery:**



Deanery Digests:



Education Explored (Department of Education Podcast):



Deanery Podcasts:



Department of Education external newsletter:



Deanery newsletter:



**CONTACT:**  
deanery@education.ox.ac.uk

*"The Oxford Education Deanery is the gateway to the Department of Education's professional learning, research partnerships and classroom resources—helping teachers turn educational research into everyday practice."*



The Deanery holds an array of webinars across a range of subjects for practitioners



Read the Deanery's 2025 Progress Report:



Photos below, left to right: Practising playful pedagogies with Early Years and primary classroom teachers at a Deanery-supported workshop; A Deanery-supported workshop exploring findings from a three-year national study on how the British Empire, migration and belonging are taught in schools, aligned with TRACTION, a free online course for secondary teachers.



## English Teachers' Conference

The **Faculty of English's** annual online English Teachers' Conference gives teachers the opportunity to step beyond the texts they teach every day, engaging with current Oxford research while discovering new resources, perspectives, and conversations to take back to the classroom. Designed primarily for **English teachers of Years 7–13**, the conference offers an accessible way to engage with Oxford's latest research and rekindle a love for the subject.

The programme combines short academic lectures, panel discussions and practical resource showcases led by Oxford and other institutions' academics. Recent conferences have explored topics ranging from medieval literature and literary archives, to the role of artificial intelligence in English education.

Taking place in **February** each year, in the half term holiday, the conference has become an annual fixture for around **70–100 teachers** each year. It is free to attend, with recordings shared afterwards so that resources remain available beyond the event itself. Teachers interested in attending future conferences are encouraged to register through the Faculty of English website or contact the Outreach Team to express their interest.

*"So many great resources and lectures that inspires me to incorporate them into my lessons. Thank you!"*

### FIND OUT MORE



CONTACT: [outreach@ell.ox.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@ell.ox.ac.uk)



### Faculty of English resources

There are also a host of resources around language and literature available through the Faculty website. **Great Writers Inspire** is a collection of literary resources suitable from sixth form, containing lectures, eBooks and contextual essays and is searchable by writer or by theme, such as Feminist Approaches, Modernism, and First World War poetry. **The Prismatic Jane Eyre** teaching resources draw on translation as an educational tool to explore how Charlotte Brontë's classic novel has been translated since its publication, and how its plots and themes can be used as a springboard for new creative works. Writer Kate Clancy created a series of **filmed poetry activities** to support creative poetry writing in schools, especially suitable for multicultural schools, as themes explore how using different languages can support creativity. There is also a **collection of nineteenth-century non-fiction texts** taken from primary sources, which can support exam preparation.

### FIND OUT MORE



## Getting involved in University Research

Research is about asking questions, and gathering evidence to forge new areas of knowledge. As one of the world's leading institutions carrying out groundbreaking research, we recognise the huge importance of **public involvement in research**, and this doesn't just apply to adult populations. Getting involved in a research project can go beyond being a 'participant'; many departments here at the University actively look for co-researchers, advisors with lived experience of the topic they are studying, or panellists who can test questions used in surveys or questionnaires. This is usually known as **Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)** groups, although the terminology can vary. Taking part as a PPI member or as part of a **YPAG** (Young People's Advisory Group) can mean children and young people could be trained in research, digital, and communication skills, so that they are supported to contribute meaningfully to the design, evaluation, and governance of research that will directly affect them. This ensures that studies reflect the experiences and perspectives of the people they are designed to benefit. This becomes increasingly important when these young people are from groups, and always keeping in mind that children and young people generally are underrepresented in research.

**SHIFT-AI** (Safeguarding Human-AI Interaction via Feedback from Teens) demonstrated just how important this involvement is by revealing gaps which directly affect young people in current AI Safety frameworks. This research, undertaken by the **Department of Psychiatry**, explored how young people use generative artificial intelligence, and highlighted where adolescent perspectives diverged from current safety assumptions, where user pathways were not captured by existing frameworks, and showed how protections might function differently than intended under real-world conditions. Co-produced with members of the **NeurOx Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG)**, researchers and adolescents, aged 16-24, collaborated to identify and evaluate AI risks and mitigation strategies. YPAG participants were trained to become co-researchers of the project, helping to identify potential risks, design safety measures, test new ideas, and produce guidance for technology developers and policymakers. Their contributions demonstrated that young people's perspectives revealed important issues that adult researchers alone had not identified highlighting the value of involving young people as an integral part of the research process, where it is appropriate and relevant. The outputs of this project influenced recommendations for technology developers and policymakers.

Opportunities to contribute to research continue across the University. Many departments recruit participants for research studies, while others invite children, young people, families and schools to join advisory groups or collaborate on projects. The **Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences** (also known as Primary Care), YPAG group is active and recruits members aged 16-20 who are interested in sharing experiences and opinions on research projects around the topic of health. The YPAG have given input on projects as varied as ultra-processed foods, physical activity, childhood vaccines, and period pain.

Because opportunities change as new research begins, the best way to discover current projects is through individual departmental websites or by contacting research teams directly.

### FIND OUT MORE

Explore the Department of Psychiatry's Young People's Advisory Group and current research opportunities.

Visit University department websites to discover current research projects recruiting schools, families, and young people.

SHIFT-AI:



Dept of Primary Health Sciences YPAG:



**CONTACT:** To register an interest in joining the Nuffie Department of Primary Care Health Sciences YPAG, email [polly.kerr@phc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:polly.kerr@phc.ox.ac.uk).

### Research Partnerships: Working with schools as key partners in young people's mental health

Children's mental health and wellbeing have become some of the most important challenges facing schools today. More than one million children were referred to mental health services across England during 2024–25<sup>1</sup>, placing increasing importance on schools' role in supporting wellbeing and identifying need. By working with schools, the University of Oxford is helping build the evidence that informs better support for children and young people, while ensuring that schools themselves benefit directly from the knowledge they help create.

There are many opportunities for schools to become involved in, and benefit from, research into mental health and wellbeing through the University. Two excellent examples are the **WISDOM Research Network** and **OxWell Student Survey**. These programmes enable schools to contribute to nationally important research while receiving practical evidence about their own pupils' experiences, helping school leaders make informed decisions about wellbeing provision.

The **WISDOM Research Network** (Working In Schools to Deliver On Mental Health) is a national network that connects schools and colleges across England with high-quality mental health and wellbeing research. It supports schools to engage with research opportunities, take part in a wide range of research activities, helps researchers work with schools in feasible and meaningful ways, and supports schools to put the findings of the research into practice.

Membership is free for primary schools, secondary schools and colleges across England. Schools receive a termly newsletter highlighting current research engagement opportunities, invitations to seminars, access to evidence-backed resources

through the members' area, and the flexibility to choose only those projects that best match their interests, priorities and capacity. Participating schools receive tailored feedback from each activity or study they participate in, and practical resources from research teams, helping translate research findings directly into school practice. Feedback from schools describes WISDOM as a "trusted link to universities", with research that feels "relevant, not abstract" and "flexible and respectful of school pressures".

Another example is the **OxWell Student Survey**, a large-scale study conducted in waves, starting in 2019, and scheduled for another data collection wave from February to March 2027. Coordinated by the Department of Psychiatry, and in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and the NIHR ARC Oxford and Thames Valley among others, the programme of research enables the large-scale data collection needed to provide robust evidence to understand the mental health of children and adolescents as well as their preferences for mental health services and support. Since its first wave of data collection, more than 130,000 responses have been collected across surveys, including over 35,000 children and young people from 95 schools and colleges in 2025 alone. Participating schools receive their own confidential reports and access to OxHub, an interactive platform allowing school leaders to explore their results, compare patterns and use evidence to strengthen wellbeing support. Findings from OxWell have resulted in **35 research outputs**, including **30 peer reviewed publications**, informing NHS England, local authorities, the Department for Education and national policy discussions, and were cited in a House of Lords debate on the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill in January 2026, while helping individual schools better understand issues such as belonging, bullying, attendance, neurodivergence, self-harm, and mental health. Because the survey is repeated over time, OxWell is also able to identify emerging issues and changing patterns in young people's wellbeing, enabling schools, local authorities and researchers to respond to new challenges as they arise.

*"When young people's voices are heard, and when data are returned in a timely and meaningful way, there is a real opportunity to translate insight into action; strengthening prevention, improving inclusion, and supporting better outcomes for children and young people."*

### OxWell 2025: Summary Report:



Schools and colleges interested in taking part in the next OxWell Student Survey, running between **February and March 2027**, are encouraged to complete the online Expression of Interest form. The survey itself takes approximately **15 minutes** for pupils to complete and provides participating schools with valuable evidence to inform school mental health and wellbeing.

<sup>1</sup> Children's Commissioner, Children's and Young People's Mental Health Services: 2024–25, June 2026 (<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/childrens-and-young-peoples-mental-health-services-2024-25/>)

Expression of interest form here:



Together, WISDOM and OxWell demonstrate how schools can play an active role in improving young people's mental health, not only by contributing to nationally important research, but by using that evidence to strengthen support for their own pupils and communities.

#### FIND OUT MORE

OxWell Student Survey:



Find out about the OxWell Data Platform: OxHub

Watch a video explainer for school leaders and commissioners on how the OxWell Data Platform can provide important information on their pupils:



Findings on OxWell 2025 School Belonging Results

– a video featuring Oxfordshire students, an Oxfordshire headteacher, and members of the OxWell team. They discuss what the findings tell us about belonging and how schools can use the results to strengthen connection, community, and a sense of being valued. Other findings on how harmful online exposures that adolescents are being exposed to and the role that algorithms are playing can be seen here and highlight an area where schools can actively help students learn about the drivers of this content and what can be done to minimise these exposures.



CONTACT: [oxwell@psych.ox.ac.uk](mailto:oxwell@psych.ox.ac.uk)

WISDOM Research Network:



Join the network:



CONTACT:

[wisdom.network@psy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:wisdom.network@psy.ox.ac.uk)



## Partner Organisations in the Community

### Hill End Outdoor Education Centre

Just four miles from Oxford city centre, Hill End offers children the chance to step outside the classroom and learn through nature. Set within **67 acres of meadows, woodland and ponds**, and forming part of the **University of Oxford's Green Estate**, Hill End has welcomed generations of Oxfordshire children since the 1920s. Today it is managed by the independent **Hill End Charitable Trust**, continuing the original vision that this special place should benefit young people through outdoor learning.

Schools, colleges, pre-schools, nurseries, and families can participate in a wide range of curriculum-linked **day visits, overnight stays** and **bespoke outdoor learning experiences**. Educational programmes include tutor-led sessions on living history, nature, outdoor skills, team-building, and science and technology. Whether exploring habitats, stepping back into the Stone Age, investigating World War I trenches, or bushcraft and team challenges, every visit is grounded in the natural world, while extending their classroom learning. Outdoor tutors work closely with teachers to tailor programmes to each school's learning objectives, with wellbeing and nature at the heart of everything we do.

Being part of the University's Green Estate gives Hill End access to an exceptional **network of researchers, academics and specialist sites**. School groups regularly learn alongside experts from Wytham Woods, the **Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology**, the **Department of Biology** and other University partners, bringing contemporary research and real scientific expertise into outdoor learning. Visits may also include access to the historic First World War practice trenches in Wytham Woods, offering memorable hands-on history experiences.

Around **22,000** people visit Hill End each year, including more than **14,000** children. 94% of visiting groups reported feeling more connected to nature following their visit, and 92% of children taking part in a recent sustainability programme with Wytham Woods said they wanted to do more to protect nature afterwards.

Photo: Co-developing resources with students to share OxWell findings.



## SPOTLIGHT ON...

## SEND: Inclusive Opportunities

Every child should have the opportunity to take part in enriching educational experiences. Across the University, departments, museums, and partner organisations work with schools to ensure activities are accessible, adaptable, and inclusive. Many programmes can be tailored to meet individual needs, while others have been developed in partnership with specialist schools to ensure that all young people can learn, contribute and belong.

These partnerships take many forms. GLAM has worked with Oxfordshire Hospital School for over 25 years, bringing objects and creative learning to pupils in hospital, specialist and outreach settings. More recently, partnerships with The Swan School and The Cherwell School have extended GLAM's Discover and Create programme to support young people whose mental health needs may make it difficult to access a full school timetable.

Long-term partnerships such as our work with The Iffley Academy demonstrate how sustained collaboration can create opportunities for young people while also helping us make Oxford's museums, libraries and gardens more accessible and inclusive.

### The Iffley Academy Partnership

Since 2016, the University's Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) have worked in long-term partnership with The Iffley Academy, an Oxfordshire specialist school for young people aged 11–18 with complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This partnership has created a continuous programme of cultural learning, enabling pupils to develop confidence, creativity and independence, and helping to shape the University's museums, libraries and gardens themselves. Built on the principles of relational practice and radical inclusion, the partnership removes physical, intellectual, and social barriers so that every young person can participate meaningfully.

Activities evolve as pupils progress through school. Young people work alongside GLAM staff to curate exhibitions using museum collections, gain nationally recognised Arts Award qualifications, explore careers through SEND-adapted work experience and careers events, and contribute directly to making Oxford's cultural spaces more welcoming for everyone. Pupils have helped develop Easy Read guides, sensory maps and other accessible resources, tested exhibitions and public spaces, and advised staff on how visitors with SEND experience the University's collections. Their ideas have led to lasting changes that benefit thousands of future visitors. Since 2024, pupils have completed 55 Arts Awards, co-curated a series of public exhibitions and helped create new accessibility resources across several GLAM venues.

The partnership also supports young people's transition into adulthood. Annual careers events introduce pupils to the wide range of roles within museums and cultural organisations. Supported work experience placements help develop the skills needed to succeed in the work environment. One pupil described his placement as having *"turned my life around"*, reflecting the transformative impact that these opportunities can have. The benefits extend beyond individual pupils: in 2025, Iffley Academy achieved Artsmark Platinum—the highest national recognition for arts education—with the partnership recognised as central to that success. At the same time, GLAM staff have transformed the way they think about accessibility, ensuring that pupils with SEND are recognised not simply as visitors, but as collaborators, consultants and valued members of Oxford's cultural community.

Harry was an Iffley Academy Sixth Form student who took on a Visitor Services placement at the Museum.

*"I've learned so many new skills and the placement has given me independence and confidence – especially when talking to people. I'm more comfortable with flexibility within a routine. New things aren't my speciality, but now I'm prepared to give things a go. Working at the museum has turned my life around and given me a purpose. The best decision I've ever made."*

Harry went on to study at college after the summer.



Harry

*"Working with GLAM ... has been one of the most rewarding and inspiring partnerships we have. The support, creativity, and professionalism shown in every interaction make a tangible difference to our students, our staff, and our wider school community. The opportunities GLAM provides help our learners see themselves as artists, historians, and valued members of Oxford's cultural world."*

– Teacher, Iffley Academy

## Learning together through sport

The Oxford Young Sport Leaders Programme (OYSLP, covered on page 30) brings together pupils from schools across Oxford for four weeks of shared learning, combining academic workshops, sport and mentoring from Oxford students. It culminates in the Oxford PowerHouse Games, delivered with the inclusive sport charity Power2Inspire, where participants come together with pupils from John Watson School, a co-educational community special educational needs school for children from age 2-19. This festival celebrates inclusive sport and teamwork where young people with different experiences and abilities learn and participate alongside one another.

*"One of the highlights for me was seeing both cohorts of the Oxford Young Sports Leaders come together at our PowerHouse Games event at Iffley Road Sports Centre. The event celebrated inclusivity, with schools mixing together and taking part in sports that many of the students had not experienced before. It was fantastic to see everyone encouraging one another, building new friendships, and enjoying the opportunity to be active in such a positive and supportive environment"*

– Zoe Pugh, Sport and Community Engagement Officer, University of Oxford



## Outdoor learning for everyone

At Hill End Outdoor Education Centre, schools can work with experienced educators to adapt activities so that pupils with a wide range of needs can participate in archaeology, environmental learning and outdoor exploration. Flexible approaches, practical activities, and supportive environments, enable children to learn through doing, building confidence, independence, and teamwork alongside their classmates.

Whether through culture, sport or outdoor learning, these partnerships show that inclusive enrichment is not simply about adapting an existing activity. It is about creating opportunities where every young person can participate, contribute and belong. When children and young people with SEND are involved as participants, collaborators and advisers, the benefits extend far beyond the individual: their experiences and perspectives can help us create better programmes, more accessible spaces and richer experiences for everyone.



Photos right, top to bottom:

PowerHouse Games, part of OYSL Programme. Credit Andrew Bailey;  
Children enjoying experiences through GLAM partnerships.

As an independent charity, Hill End charges modest fees to cover the cost of activities, although funding may sometimes be available to support schools facing financial barriers. Schools are encouraged to get in touch to discuss their needs and explore the options available.

### FIND OUT MORE

For specific session information and availability, costs, and to book online.



Enquiries and discussions of schools' needs are welcome at the details below.

CONTACT: [admin@hill-end.org](mailto:admin@hill-end.org) | 01865 863520

### Oxford Hub

**Oxford Hub** is an independent, place-based charity that brings people and organisations together to tackle inequalities in health, education and opportunity across Oxford, with a particular focus on communities where need is greatest. Founded by Oxford students in 2007, it has grown from coordinating student volunteering into a community organisation working alongside residents, schools, charities, and the University, to create sustained local change.

Education remains an important part of that relationship. Through **Schools Plus**, Oxford Hub matches children and young people with trained volunteer tutors, providing free supplementary academic support for pupils from **Year 3 to Year 13**. University students and graduates, alongside qualified teachers, receive training and safeguarding checks before becoming tutors, providing free, regular online one-to-one and small-group support to local children, predominantly in neighbourhoods experiencing disadvantage. Young learners receive weekly support over three months in subjects such as English, Maths and Science, and this regular tutoring provides individual academic support, and builds confidence and relationships over time. The impact is tangible: **100%** of participating pupils said tutoring improved their academic attainment, and **100%** of parents surveyed reported an increase in their child's confidence. Teachers, social workers and youth workers can refer children directly to the programme; around 65 tutor-pupil pairings are currently active across Oxfordshire.

*"It is so rewarding to feel I am truly making an impact on a young person's life"*

– Schools Plus tutor

Oxford Hub is also a key University community partner in the **Oxford College Twinning Project**, working alongside Trinity College and participating Oxford colleges to build long-term partnerships with local primary schools experiencing some of the greatest educational disadvantage. Building on more than a decade of Schools Plus tutoring, Oxford Hub coordinates relationships between schools and colleges, and helps partners develop enrichment opportunities as well as training and supporting student volunteers, to deliver in-

person tutoring to pupils within the twinned primary schools. Since the Twinning Project began in 2022, it has grown from five pilot partnerships to ten college-school partnerships; in 2024/25 alone, more than 1,670 local pupils engaged with the programme through tutoring college visits, museum trips, subject enrichment and other activities. Read more on Oxford Twinning on page 9.

Underlying these programmes is a wider ambition to connect University students and staff with the community in which they live and study. Oxford Hub supports student and staff volunteers with training, safeguarding, and guidance, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to their local community while they are at university. Opportunities are available in 31 organisations across Oxford, 18 of which run programmes that support children and/or families.

### Schools: how to get involved

Teachers, social workers and youth workers can refer an individual child or young person for Schools Plus tutoring through the Oxford Hub website. The College Twinning Project works with identified partner primary schools rather than through open application, but schools can contact Oxford Hub with questions about educational support and current opportunities.

### FIND OUT MORE

Oxford Hub:



Schools Plus:



CONTACT:

Oxford Hub: [hello@oxfordhub.org](mailto:hello@oxfordhub.org)

Schools Plus: [schoolsplus@oxfordhub.org](mailto:schoolsplus@oxfordhub.org)



## The Story Museum

Based in the centre of Oxford, **The Story Museum** is an independent charity and museum dedicated to recreating the magic of stories – how they connect us, inspire us, and spark our imaginations. Its mission is to build a collection that reflects every child, and that showcases stories in all their marvellous forms and genres, using storytelling to support literacy, wellbeing, and creativity in children and young people. Its relationship with the University brings together the Museum's expertise in engaging children with stories and Oxford's research expertise and resources.

A recent collaboration is **Bookness: Understanding children's learning through books, audiobooks and storytelling**, a research partnership between The Story Museum and the **ReadOxford** research group. Led by Professor Kate Nation and colleagues in the University's **Department of Experimental Psychology**, and funded by **St John's College**, this partnership investigates how and what children learn from stories, and whether their learning differs depending on whether they encounter a story through a book, audiobook, or oral storytelling. Building on observations and work with children through the Museum, community settings, and schools, researchers developed experimental methods to compare children's experiences and learning across these different formats. More than **200 primary-aged children** participated in the research between 2024 and 2026, establishing a continuing research and engagement partnership between the Museum and University. Research findings are still being analysed and will be shared through ReadOxford when available.

These collaborations extend into Oxford's cultural life too. Each summer, The Story Museum coordinates **Alice's Day**, an annual, city-wide celebration of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Oxford's literary heritage. Held on the first Saturday in July, University partners in 2026 included **Christ Church**, the **Bodleian Libraries**, **History of Science Museum** and **Oxford Botanic Garden**, opening up places, collections

and stories associated with Lewis Carroll and Alice. Activities included a Magic Lantern talk and croquet at Christ Church, and family events across University museums, libraries and gardens; much of the wider festival programme is free.

The Story Museum also hosts **1001 Stories**, its free online collection created to help parents, teachers, and children to discover stories of all forms. 1001 Stories brings together reviews, videos, activities, school resources, articles, and more for children from pre-school to Key Stage 4, searchable by age, genre and theme. The collection aims to help every child encounter stories that reflect their own experiences, and open doors into other lives and worlds.

These collaborations demonstrate the value of bringing together a community cultural organisation and a research university. Researchers are able to benefit from The Story Museum's deep understanding of how children experience stories, and from the relationships and trust it has built with schools, families, and communities; in turn, rigorous academic research can help deepen our understanding of how storytelling supports children's learning. The Story Museum and University are keen to continue exploring opportunities to work together in the future.

### FIND OUT MORE

The Story Museum:



Bookness research partnership:



1001 Stories:



CONTACT: [hello@storymuseum.org.uk](mailto:hello@storymuseum.org.uk);  
ReadOxford: [kate.nation@psy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:kate.nation@psy.ox.ac.uk)

## Did you know?

The University hosts hundreds of free podcasts exploring research, ideas and discoveries across an extraordinary range of subjects – from history and literature to immunity, climate science and AI ethics. Search or browse by series, speaker, department, or college to hear Oxford academics and researchers discussing their work. Some episodes make excellent enrichment resources for older pupils, while teachers can use the collection to explore unfamiliar subjects, deepen their own knowledge or keep up with current research and thinking.

Explore Oxford Podcasts:



# Career Choices

As pupils come to the end of school or college, there are lots of different choices about what comes next. They might be considering continuing their studies, starting an apprenticeship, or perhaps they are ready to enter the workplace – or may still be exploring what feels right. As one of Oxfordshire's largest employers, as well as a university, Oxford offers opportunities to gain experience, develop skills, start a career or, for those who want to study here, explore routes into an Oxford degree.

## Work Experience at the University

Work experience gives young people the opportunity to step inside real workplaces, discover careers they may never previously have considered, and begin to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed for working life. As schools are being encouraged to expand workplace experiences across more years of secondary education, the departments, colleges, museums, libraries and professional teams across Oxford University offer a fascinating range of opportunities to try these workplaces and roles.

Because Oxford is a large and decentralised organisation, **there is currently no single University-wide work experience programme or application route.** Opportunities are organised by individual departments, colleges, museums, libraries, and professional teams, and vary considerably in length, capacity, and format. Some are established annual programmes with open applications; others prioritise particular groups of young people or work through existing partnerships with local schools; and some smaller teams may be able to respond to individual enquiries when capacity allows. Most of the opportunities are available to students in **Years 10-13**. The examples below therefore offer a flavour of what is possible rather than a complete list, and opportunities may change from year to year.

Experiences can also look very different. A young person interested in medical research might spend time in laboratories, learning about clinical trials or shadowing researchers and clinicians; another could discover how museum collections are cared for and interpreted for the public. Elsewhere, students have explored careers in IT, communications, administration, libraries, catering, and event management. At **Hertford College**, for example, around eight pupils each year undertake placements across teams including the library, kitchen, maintenance, conferences and communications, demonstrating the range of people and skills needed to make a college thrive.

Some of Oxford's larger programmes offer particularly immersive experiences. The **Oxford Neuroscience Experience** is a five-day annual programme for Year 12 pupils at Oxfordshire schools, offering neuroscience and psychiatry streams, and opportunities to learn from practising researchers through projects and talks. The **Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences** offers 12 annual places for students aged 16+, combining laboratory work with

opportunities to shadow clinicians and research nurses and understand how medical research and clinical trials work. Applications for its summer 2027 programme open in autumn 2026. Other Medical Sciences departments offer programmes too: **Nuffield Department of Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences (NDORMS)** takes around 12 students each year for experiences ranging from motion-capture technology and ultrasound to coding and laboratory experiments.

**Where should I start?** Because opportunities change, check the websites of departments, colleges or areas of the University that interest you, particularly their schools, outreach, public engagement, and careers pages. Teachers and careers' leads may also wish to contact teams directly to ask whether placements are available. We'd encourage you to: **look early** – established summer programmes can recruit several months in advance and places are often limited; **be proactive** – use the list of departments and colleges in this guide to find areas of interest, or think about professional services roles you would find here; and **reach out** – you might just land an amazing opportunity.

## Explore brain research

**Year 12** pupils attending Oxfordshire schools can apply for the **Oxford Neuroscience Experience** annual five-day programme in July, choosing between neuroscience and psychiatry. Activities can include talks, and undertaking short projects in areas such as brain scanning, sleep, ophthalmology, and cellular neuroscience. The 2027 programme is expected to open for applications around February–March 2027.

## FIND OUT MORE



## Experience biomedical research

Several departments offer competitive placements for older secondary pupils. Alongside the NDS and NDORMS programmes described above, **Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine** runs a two-week **Year 12** programme during July/August, placing young people with research groups to learn about different aspects of the research

carried out in the Institute, discover new experimental techniques, and experience group sessions on research careers, immunology, haematology and other related topics. **Find out more: Work Experience Programme – MRC Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine:**



### Discover what makes a college work

Colleges vary in what they are currently able to offer and we are developing a more uniform and joined-up experience across the colleges. Some colleges, like Hertford College, already have well-established opportunities, offering placements to pupils from four local schools in **Years 10-12**. The placements vary depending on the hosting team, and can include experience in the library, maintenance, kitchen

and catering, conference administration or communications. Around eight places are offered each year, usually through relationships with school careers teams, with dates arranged around school and College availability. **Schools contact: hr@hertford.ox.ac.uk**

### Explore careers behind the scenes

Some placements introduce pupils to the professional teams that keep a large organisation working. A **Year 11 IT work experience programme**, developed through Humanities IT and central digital services, introduces pupils to different roles and areas of work across IT. Elsewhere in the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences **Executive Assistant taster days** have given Year 10 pupils practical experience of professional communication, diary and inbox management, finance, meetings and event organisation – including planning an event and visiting a college to assess the venue.

### Meet Grace: a week behind the scenes at Oxford



When **Grace Tatlock, a student at Activate Learning**, approached the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar's Office to ask about work experience, the team had never hosted a placement before. Rather than simply shadowing one member of staff the team developed a week that would give Grace a taste of the breadth of work taking place across the office, combining practical tasks with meetings, events and opportunities to experience different parts of the University.

Grace's week began with a real project: supporting the development of this very guide by researching the opportunities that University departments and colleges offer local schools. She worked alongside communications colleagues on University websites, sat in on team meetings, and helped deliver the **Sports Ambassadors Festival** at Iffley Road. She explored the Divinity School, Duke Humfrey's Library and Radcliffe Camera, joined a working lunch with Professor Alex Betts, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for External Engagement, and spent a day supporting the **Oxford Young Sport Leaders Programme**, moving from Football on the Brain at the John Radcliffe Hospital to lunch at Trinity College and a basketball session at Iffley Road. Her final day included completing her research, creating a photo journal of the week and meeting the Vice-Chancellor.

*"I had a great week with the team, getting the opportunity to interact with a wide range of people in a variety of roles while completing interesting work and learning a lot. It was an amazing week and obviously very thoughtfully planned so that I was able to get the most out of it. This has been the best placement I could have had and have thoroughly enjoyed it. I definitely think I had the best week out of everyone doing work experience at college."*



Grace's experience demonstrates the many members of staff working across departments, projects and places, collaborating with people from a huge variety of professional backgrounds. Work experience can be as much about discovering the kinds of work you didn't know existed as gaining experience in a career you already have in mind.

### Apprenticeships at the University of Oxford

Earn while you learn, gain a nationally recognised qualification and start building your career at one of Oxfordshire's largest employers. **Apprenticeships** offer a different route into the University: rather than coming here to study for an Oxford degree, you'll be **employed by the University**, learning alongside experienced colleagues, in the course of learning practical skills and working towards a **professional qualification**.

And the opportunities are much broader than you might expect. Across the University, apprentices work in areas including engineering, laboratory science, horticulture,

finance, HR, business administration, digital support, catering, facilities, and property maintenance, with new vacancies advertised throughout the year. Apprenticeships range from Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) through to higher and degree-level qualifications and there is no upper age limit: you need to be **aged 16 or over** when you start.

Apprentices are paid employees, combining their day-to-day role with structured training delivered by an approved training provider. Full-time apprentices typically spend around six hours of their paid working week developing the knowledge and skills needed for their qualification.

Alongside this, the University provides tailored development and mentoring, with apprentices joining a wider network of people starting and developing their careers across Oxford.

The award-winning programme has been running for eight years, and its impact extends beyond the apprenticeship itself: **80%** of Oxford apprentices secure a permanent position or progress to a higher qualification when they complete their apprenticeship. The University's commitment to apprenticeships was also recognised when it was named Apprenticeship Employer of the Year 2025 at the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards and more recently climbed 21 places in the Department for Work and Pensions' 2026 Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers.

**For students:** New apprenticeship vacancies are advertised individually throughout the year, so check the University's apprenticeship webpages or vacancies pages regularly to see what's available.

**For teachers and careers leads:** The Apprenticeships Team can provide information about opportunities and the recruitment process, and has previously run information sessions specifically for school careers leads, prospective applicants, and parents.

### FIND OUT MORE

Apprenticeships at the University of Oxford:



University of Oxford Jobs:



### CONTACT:

apprenticeships@admin.ox.ac.uk



## Meet Emilia – Apprentice Ambassador

After completing A Levels in Biology, Chemistry and Physics, Emilia Reyes Pabon knew she wanted to continue with science, and work experience in laboratories had shown her that she particularly enjoyed practical learning.

She joined the University of Oxford as a Laboratory Technician apprentice, combining paid employment with study towards recognised qualifications. During her apprenticeship she gained practical laboratory experience, developed skills including communication and time management, and qualified as a Laboratory Technician.

Her apprenticeship also placed her at the heart of Oxford research. In 2020, Emilia was part of the team that produced the first clinical trial batch of what became the Oxford–AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine – an achievement she describes as one of her proudest moments.

After completing her initial apprenticeship, Emilia progressed to higher-level apprenticeship training in Applied Bioscience. Emilia became an Apprentice Ambassador, and has now won several awards, including Advanced Apprentice of the Year and Overall Apprentice of the Year at the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards in 2021, and Apprenticeship Ambassador Award at the 2025 Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards.

**Emilia says:** “Seeing firsthand how apprenticeships can have an impact has reinforced my passion for promoting them. The most rewarding part of being an apprenticeship ambassador for me has been hearing from students, parents and event organisers that my talks have encouraged people to seriously consider apprenticeships. Knowing I’ve inspired others to explore the apprenticeship route, just as I did, makes all the extra effort completely worth it. Knowing I’ve helped shape career decisions and inspired the next generation is something I’m truly proud of and the impact has been incredibly rewarding.”



Photo: The Apprenticeship team winning the Apprenticeship Employer Award 2025.

## Meet Kieran Thomas – From Level 3 Assistant Accountant Apprentice to Level 7 Professional Accountant

After completing his A Levels, Kieran decided not to go to university and instead pursued an apprenticeship in accountancy. The opportunity allowed him to gain hands-on experience while studying toward his professional qualifications. Over two and a half years, Kieran developed a wide range of skills – from communication and organisation to technical knowledge – but most importantly, he learned how to build strong professional relationships. His apprenticeship has enabled him to progress quickly in

his career, moving from an Assistant Accountant to Level 7 Chartered Accountant. A highlight for Kieran has been working with different teams across the University, giving him a holistic understanding of how finance supports the wider organisation.

*“I highly recommend the University apprenticeship programme, praising the support, opportunities, and sense of belonging it provides to every apprentice.”*

## Work Experience at Oxford's Gardens, Libraries and Museums

The University's **Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM)** work experience opportunities can introduce young people to careers including horticulture, collections and conservation, research, education, public engagement, visitor services, and administration. Many of the GLAM institutions run structured placements for state secondary pupils, although some are arranged through existing partnerships with particular Oxfordshire schools rather than open application.

There are opportunities young people can apply for directly. At **Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum**, **week-long placements** offer two routes: **horticulture**, in which students work with glasshouse and outdoor collections, propagate plants, and help care for the living collections; or **public engagement, education, and science communication**, covering opportunities to create resources such as trails, games, or activities, and support the delivery of learning sessions, or communicate directly with visitors. Applications normally open in October, and placements are offered at different times of the year.

At the **Oxford University Museum of Natural History**, opportunities range from **two-week STEM research placements** for **Year 12 and 13** students from underrepresented backgrounds, working with scientific collections, to the **Natural Science and Heritage Scheme**, a paid three-week summer placement for **Year 12 and 13** pupils at Oxfordshire state schools. Participants go behind the scenes to discover how museum collections support research, teaching and public learning, before working together to devise, deliver and evaluate activities for museum visitors. The 2026 cohort even helped create a public display, *Oxford: Then, Now, Future*.

**How to get involved:** Availability, age requirements and application routes vary. Some GLAM placements are offered directly to partner schools, while others are advertised for individual application. Check the individual institutions' careers and work-experience pages for current opportunities and eligibility.

### FIND OUT MORE

**Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum:**



**Oxford University Museum of Natural History:**



## Careers at the University of Oxford

As well as being home to more than 26,000 students, the University of Oxford is the working life of over **18,000 staff<sup>2</sup>**, and **thousands more** employed by Oxford's colleges. Together, they carry out an extraordinary range of jobs that keep the University working every day. From laboratories and libraries to gardens, kitchens, IT, finance, museums, communications, and student support, working at Oxford can mean many different things, and bring you into many different teams. Here, we want to give you a flavour of the kinds of roles young people might take on, either straight from school or college, or after further education.

*"The University is full of opportunities and so I have looked for the ones that have allowed me to develop and made them work for me."*

– Anne Harkness, Head of Administration & Finance, Department of Biochemistry

The University of Oxford itself employs staff working across academic and research roles, clinical academia, and a huge range of professional services. Professional services roles support almost every aspect of University life, including estates, finance, IT, human resources, communications, legal services, research support and student services. Many of these careers do not involve teaching or research, and experience from other sectors can be valuable.

Then there are Oxford's 43 colleges and halls, which are independent organisations and employ their own staff. College teams help make Oxford's distinctive communities work, with roles including chefs, gardeners, librarians, porters, housekeepers, IT specialists, finance and HR professionals, communications and events teams, access and outreach staff and many more. Each college has its own vacancies, alongside the jobs advertised centrally by the University.

There are different ways into these careers. Some roles require a degree or professional qualification; others value practical experience, vocational qualifications or transferable skills. Apprenticeships offer one route into the University, while temporary work can provide another way to gain experience and understand what it is like to work here. University and college vacancies are advertised throughout the year, so there is no single recruitment season to wait for.

*"At the heart of Oxford is our core mission, a commitment to advancing knowledge through research and education, and to making a meaningful difference in the world. It is a place where scholarship and community sit side by side. It is a place where centuries of tradition meet world-changing innovation...tackling global challenges, from advancing sustainability to pioneering healthcare solutions, in a diverse and inclusive community that champions your wellbeing, development and aspirations. Every role at Oxford plays a vital part in delivering our shared mission and purpose in the world."*

– Professor Irene Tracey, CBE, FRS, FMedSci, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford

<sup>2</sup> as at July 2025

## Building your career at Oxford

Joining the University can be the beginning of a career that develops and changes over time. Oxford invests in helping staff build their skills, explore different career paths, and prepare for new opportunities. Staff are supported whether that means progressing in their current area or moving into something completely different

Working here can also give you access to a wide range of learning and development opportunities, from practical toolkits and self-directed online learning to mentoring and free one-to-one coaching. A Careers Club brings professional services colleagues together for workshops, career conversations and practical support, and programmes help new and experienced managers develop their leadership and people-management skills. The University supports movement between roles and departments, including initiatives such as job shadowing, secondments, job swaps and opportunities to use transferable skills in new areas.

For research staff there is additional career and professional development support, including dedicated careers guidance, coaching and an expectation that researchers are enabled to undertake professional development throughout their time at Oxford.

## What could you do at Oxford?

You could work with cutting-edge research without being a researcher; care for historic collections without being an academic; help run a college without ever having studied there; support students, manage buildings, develop digital systems, organise events, cook for hundreds of people, protect Oxford's gardens and heritage, or help make the University more sustainable.

Explore current opportunities through University Jobs, and remember to look at individual college vacancies too. The University's jobs pages allow applicants to search academic, research and professional services vacancies, while the colleges advertise their own roles separately.

## FIND OUT MORE

Explore careers  
at Oxford:



University of  
Oxford Jobs:



College  
vacancies:



## Meet Agustin Munoz Alamos, Head Chef at St Hilda's College



### Where did your passion for food begin?

My love of food started at home – my whole family loves to cook and I cooked with my father and mother from when I was a little kid. I'm from southern Spain where food is really important and I took on those values.

### Did you always want to be a chef?

No, I didn't start off thinking this would be my future. I studied marketing and business after high school, and while I was looking for a job I used to cook for my grandfather who was living with us. He liked my cooking and suggested I studied at our local college – they had some cookery courses and I studied there for a year. I fell in love with professional cooking, and when I completed my certificate I worked in local tapas bars. I thought, 'I could do this for the rest of my life.'

### How did your career develop?

My friend recommended me for a job in a hotel in England. I converted my savings to pounds sterling and walked into the hotel kitchen the day I got off the plane – I started straight away as a Chef de Partie and it was the best feeling! From there I worked in busy hotels and restaurants, working long hours catering for weddings and other big events, making food from scratch. I loved the stress and the adrenaline and I felt like a real chef.

When I decided to start a family I wanted a better work-life balance without losing the pace and standards I loved. I looked at the University and thought, 'this is where I want to be'. I joined Wolfson College, progressed through the ranks, and later came to St Hilda's as Sous Chef. Last month, while I was on holiday, they called and asked me to be the Head Chef - I cried when they made the offer

### What does a typical day look like for you now?

Really busy! I'm balancing cooking with menu planning, rotas, ordering, hygiene, and supporting the team's wellbeing. I'm always here for the big dinners, so it's been busy so far and I'm enjoying the new role.

### What do you value most about working in a university environment?

The community here is like home. The team is amazing, it's like a family run business – we're very close and have fun when we're working together. Becoming Head Chef has been my goal for a long time, and I'm so happy I have reached it with a team I love working with.

Photo right: Football on The Brain session, as part of the OYSL Programme.



## Meet Sarah Langhorne, Laboratory Technician, Ineos Oxford Institute for Antimicrobial Research<sup>3</sup>



### How has your career journey led to you becoming a lab technician?

I completed my BSc in Biology at the University of Portsmouth, and an MSc in Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. I've always been interested in microbiology and infectious diseases. I wasn't sure whether I wanted to stay in academia after my Master's degree, so I took a job with the civil service sequencing COVID-19, which gave me some more lab-based experience.

### What are your responsibilities as a lab technician?

Lab techs are responsible for a myriad of different things. I need to know how all the equipment in the lab works, calibrate them, and troubleshoot any issues. I also keep track of chemicals and other supplies, making sure we have what our researchers need.

As a lab tech, I contribute to lots of different research projects, helping to set up experiments, prepare agar plates and chemicals, and prepare extracted DNA ready for

sequencing. Every day is different so I have to be flexible and ready to help; our research programmes are very busy, and lab techs are crucial to keep the work running smoothly.

### What are some challenges you face in your role?

In one day, I could be working with samples of bacteria, viruses and phages, all part of different projects. While the tasks may be similar, I have to be focused to make sure that I'm following procedures and working on time.

Bacteria don't work to deadlines. Sometimes we have to completely change our plans if a sample hasn't grown as much as we need, or we get unexpected results. We need to have good communication across the team to respond to these kinds of challenges quickly and get back on track!

### What is the best part of working for the IOI?

Everyone is so lovely, that no matter what you're working on that day you know you're going to have a good time! Working as part of a research institute like the IOI, which aims to find solutions for this global health challenge, is really rewarding. It's nice to come into work knowing that you're contributing to research that can have a real-world impact.

## Meet Sandhya Patel, Policy Officer for Student Welfare and Support Services<sup>4</sup>



### What does a Policy Officer actually do?

My role is about helping to develop policies and guidance that support students across the University. There is quite a lot of research, reading and writing, but much of the job is actually about conversations, relationships and bringing people together. Student welfare covers a huge range of areas, so I work with colleagues with different expertise, as well as students themselves, to understand an issue and work out how we can address it.

### How did you get into this kind of work?

I studied for a degree in Politics and International Relations, followed by a Master's in European Studies, but you don't need a particular degree to become a Policy Officer. After university I moved back home to Oxford, and took a temporary job as a Graduate Studies Assistant in the Mathematical Institute while I worked out what I wanted to do. I went on to work in different student-facing academic administration, eventually becoming a Deputy Head of Academic Administration.

I really enjoyed supporting students with their studies and their environment. Seeing how policies work in practice, and understanding their impact on students, eventually led me into policy work. There are qualifications specifically in higher education policy, but experience can be just as important.

### What does a typical day look like?

I'm not sure there really is a normal day, which is one of the things I enjoy about the role. I might be reviewing a policy or piece of guidance, preparing to present my work at meetings,

meeting colleagues about a project, writing a paper or report, or working with students on something we're developing. There can be quite a lot of reading and writing, as you might expect, but there's also a lot of talking to people! A lot of the job involves understanding an issue from different perspectives.

### What skills do you use most?

Logical thinking is probably the skill I use most. Policy requires a step-by-step, methodical approach: thinking through what you're trying to achieve and anticipating the ways something could work – or might not work. So there's some imagination involved too! Communication is also important because you're often bringing together people with very different expertise and perspectives.

### What might surprise people about being a Policy Officer?

Probably how much of the job is about people. I work with people who have expertise that I don't, including the people affected by the policies we're developing, so I'm constantly learning something new. For me, genuine partnership means giving the people affected by a policy the opportunity to influence it while it is still being developed.

### What do you enjoy most about your work here at the University?

The most satisfying thing is knowing that I'm producing something that will help students with their studies and their experience here. Wherever I've worked in the University I've become part of a community, with a common goal that we're all working towards, and I've made strong and lasting friendships. It's not only the work that's rewarding, but the people you work alongside.

<sup>3</sup> Reproduced with permission from Ineos Oxford Institute for antimicrobial research (IOI) website.

<sup>4</sup> With thanks to AAD Communications and Sandhya Patel

## Exploring university-level study

Colleges and departments offer opportunities for older pupils to explore subjects beyond the curriculum and experience university-level study. **St Anne's Super-Curricular Club** offers free online academic tasters for Year 12s, introducing current research and undergraduate-style teaching across a range of subjects. **Bright Matter**, run jointly by seven Oxford colleges, gives women and non-binary students in Years 11–12 opportunities to explore STEM through online subject sessions, meeting academics and current students, with potential follow-up visits to Oxford.

**St Anne's Supercurricular Club:**



**Bright Matter:**



## Physics Summer schools

Our **Year 12 Physics Summer School** and **Year 12 NQCC Quantum Experience Summer School** give local sixth form students the opportunity to spend a week experiencing life in a university physics department. Working alongside researchers, technicians and professional services staff students complete a project, attend talks and tours, explore career pathways and present their work to their peers in a final poster session.

Students interested in quantum technologies can apply for the **NQCC Quantum Experience Summer School**, where they explore theoretical and experimental quantum physics, develop coding skills, visit local quantum technology companies and gain first-hand laboratory experience in this rapidly developing field.

These programmes are offered in place of traditional work experience for local Year 12 students. Full eligibility criteria and application information are published on the Department of Physics website each year.

**FIND OUT MORE**



The **Biomedical Research Career Week** offers the opportunity to work alongside and learn from researchers from the Institute of Developmental & Regenerative Medicine (IDRM), Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research and Centre for Human Genetics. Taking place in July, 20 **Year 12** state school students from around the country come and stay in Oxford at no cost. For the week they experience an immersion in the field of biomedical sciences, offered in several different disciplines and through several different research groups.

**FIND OUT MORE**



## Preparing to apply to Oxford

While most of this guide shares the opportunities young people can access through the University whether or not they ever intend to study here, there is also preparation and support for those who might be interested in studying here in the future. The University and its partners offer a range of free programmes designed to help talented young people from backgrounds currently underrepresented at Oxford explore their options, understand what studying here is really like, make informed choices and, if they decide Oxford is for them, prepare a strong application.

Some programmes are open to prospective students, while others have specific eligibility criteria designed to ensure additional support for young people who may have experienced educational or socioeconomic disadvantage. The programmes below provide support at different stages of the journey, from first exploring Oxford to preparing to begin a degree.

### Start by exploring: Oxford Open Days

One of the best ways to decide whether Oxford might be right for you is simply to come and explore it. The University's undergraduate Open Days allow prospective students to visit colleges and academic departments, explore courses and facilities, attend talks and demonstrations, and speak directly to current students, tutors and admissions staff.

University-wide Open Days are usually held on **two days in the summer** and **one in September**. You don't normally need to register for the overall Open Day and most activities are drop-in, although some individual sessions require advance booking. Colleges and departments publish their own timetables, so it's worth planning your day in advance.

**FIND OUT MORE**



### UNIQ: explore your subject and experience Oxford

UNIQ is Oxford's free access programme for UK state-school students in their first year of further education – Year 12 – with strong academic potential. Places are prioritised for those from educational and socioeconomic backgrounds currently underrepresented at Oxford and other universities.

UNIQ is designed to help young people explore their educational options, including experiencing a week-long residential at the University, to decide whether Oxford might be right for them and, if they choose to apply, prepare a competitive application. It aims to break down myths and barriers which sometimes prevent high performing students from certain backgrounds from applying to Oxford. **More than 1,000 young people take part each year**, and the programme has been running since 2010. Everything is free, including tuition, accommodation, meals and travel.

Applications are normally accepted during mid-December to mid-January. Eligibility takes account of academic attainment

alongside a student's educational and socioeconomic circumstances, so students are encouraged to check the criteria and apply.

#### FIND OUT MORE



### Target Oxbridge

**Target Oxbridge** is a free programme supporting high-attaining **Black African and Caribbean students, and students of mixed Black African and Caribbean heritage**, to make strong applications to Oxford or Cambridge. Delivered in collaboration with both universities and run by Rare Recruitment, the programme works with UK state-school students in **Year 12**, developing subject interest, understanding of the application process, and building confidence.

The in-person programme offers personalised support, with **160 places each year**, and Target Oxbridge Digital offers online support to a further 500 participants. Applications are usually from late September to the end of October. Since the programme launched in 2012, **more than 500 participants have secured offers from Oxford or Cambridge**.

#### FIND OUT MORE



### Astrophoria Foundation Year

The **Astrophoria Foundation Year** is a fully funded, one-year programme for UK state school students with high academic potential who have experienced significant personal disadvantage during their education. The Foundation Year programme enables motivated students to reach their academic potential through a supportive and challenging academic course aimed at developing their skills, self-belief and academic confidence. The academic entry requirements are lower than the standard undergraduate entry requirements. Students apply through UCAS for their chosen degree **with a Foundation Year**. Subjects available with Foundation Year include Law, PPE, Chemistry, Materials Science and Engineering Sciences, plus a range of Humanities subjects. Students who successfully complete the Foundation Year at the required level can progress directly to their Oxford undergraduate course without reapplying.

#### FIND OUT MORE



### Supercurricular study for all

Bringing together a wide range of digital resources, our **Supercurricular Hub** supports academic enrichment, independent thinking and subject exploration. Whether students are discovering a subject for the first time or looking to deepen their understanding, the hub offers lectures, articles, podcasts, videos, interactive challenges and more. Resources are organised for students under 12, aged 12–16 and over 16, helping them explore subjects in greater depth and gain a clearer understanding of what university study is like.

#### Access the Hub:



### Support for offer-holder

Getting into Oxford is only the start of the story; we want students to arrive feeling ready to make the most of being here. **Opportunity Oxford** is an academic transition programme supported by Crankstart, for talented UK offer holders from underrepresented backgrounds. It is designed to bridge differences in previous educational opportunities and prepare students for undergraduate study.

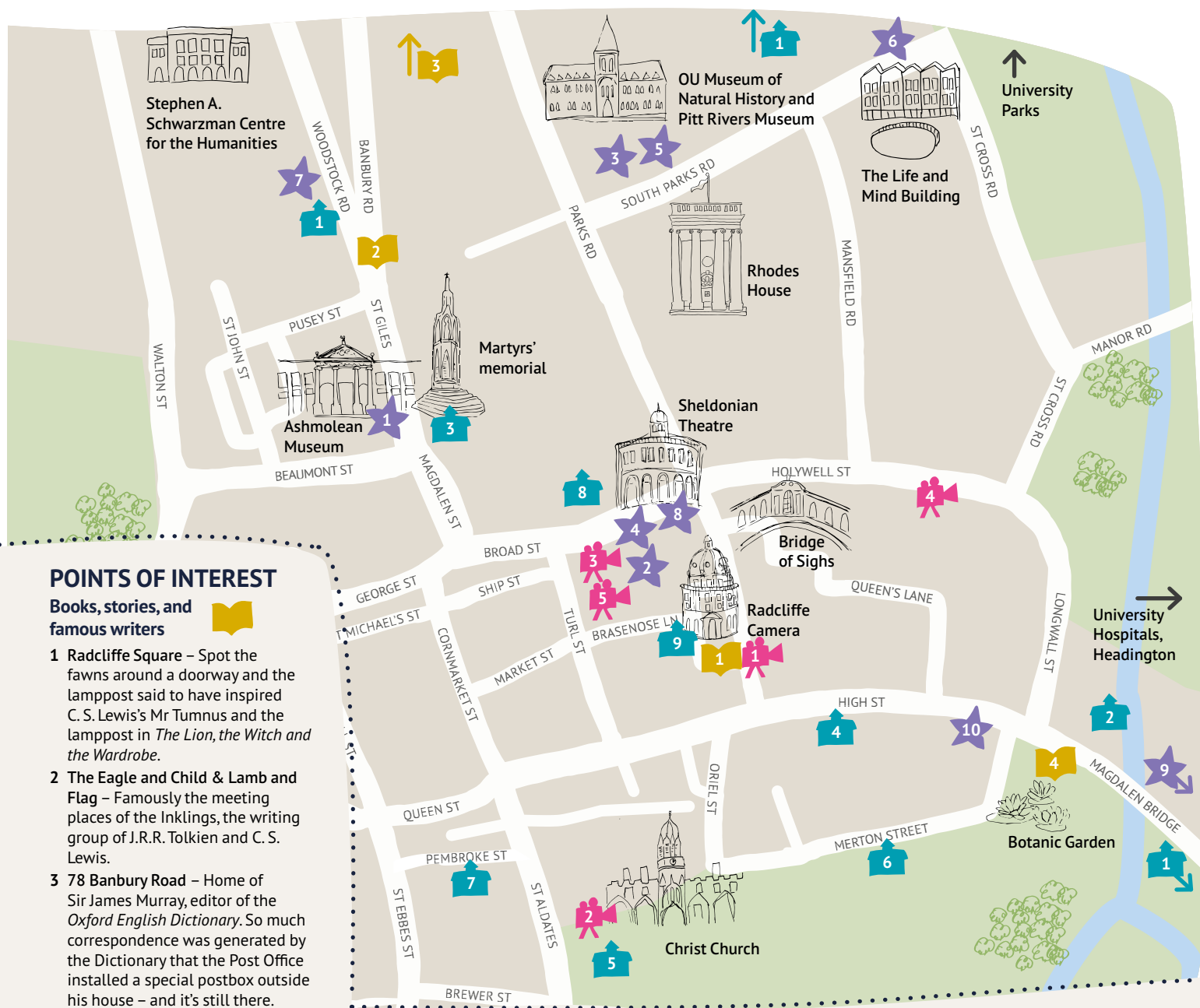
There is **no separate application**; everyone applying to Oxford is automatically considered, and eligible students are selected by tutors and informed when they receive their undergraduate offer. Around **250 offer-holder** take part in the full Opportunity Oxford programme each year, with around another **300 participating through OppOx Digital**. Since 2020, more than 1,000 offers have included a place on Opportunity Oxford, with a further 1,500 offer-holders invited to the online programme.

The full programme combines online preparation with a **two-week residential in Oxford immediately before the academic year begins**. Participants develop academic skills, learn how Oxford teaching and study work, meet tutors and current students and begin building friendships before their first term. As one participant reflected, *"Having two weeks to get used to a new style of studying helps you build the skills needed and you get a fantastic balance of the social life, doing group activities and meeting people, as well as the academics... No one else gets to spend two weeks in a college getting a head start on university."*

#### FIND OUT MORE



# Exploring Oxford Independently



## POINTS OF INTEREST

### Books, stories, and famous writers

- 1 Radcliffe Square** – Spot the fawns around a doorway and the lamppost said to have inspired C. S. Lewis's *Mr Tumnus* and the lamppost in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.
- 2 The Eagle and Child & Lamb and Flag** – Famously the meeting places of the Inklings, the writing group of J.R.R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis.
- 3 78 Banbury Road** – Home of Sir James Murray, editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. So much correspondence was generated by the Dictionary that the Post Office installed a special postbox outside his house – and it's still there.
- 4 Oxford Botanic Garden** – Britain's oldest botanic garden began as a place to grow and study medicinal plants. It features in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* – can you find the bench marking the connection?

### Oxford on screen

- 1 Radcliffe Camera** – Look familiar? Spot it in *Wonka*.
- 2 Christ Church staircase** – A *Harry Potter* filming location; the College's Great Hall also helped inspire Hogwarts' Great Hall.
- 3 Divinity School** – Became Hogwarts' hospital wing in the *Harry Potter* films.
- 4 New College cloisters** – Another *Harry Potter* filming location.
- 5 Duke Humfrey's Library, Bodleian Libraries** – Became Hogwarts' ancient library.

### Discoveries, science, and museums

- 1 Ashmolean Museum**
- 2 Bodleian Libraries**
- 3 Pitt Rivers Museum**
- 4 History of Science Museum** – See the actual blackboard Albert Einstein wrote on during a 1931 Oxford lecture, using equations to explain the size and age of the universe. Two blackboards were saved – but one was accidentally wiped clean!
- 5 Oxford University Museum of Natural History** – Dinosaurs, a dodo, and millions of specimens – but look closely at the building too. Can you spot the tiny pawprint in the brickwork above one of the staircases? How do you think it got there?
- 6 Sir William Dunn School of Pathology** – Here, Oxford scientists helped turn the

discovery of penicillin into a practical medicine. Producing it in sufficient quantities was painstaking work, supported by six laboratory assistants, known as the "Penicillin Girls".

- 7 Radcliffe Infirmary** – In February 1941, policeman Albert Alexander became the first patient treated with the Oxford team's purified penicillin. Initially improving dramatically, sadly he died when supplies ran out.
- 8 Sheldonian Theatre** – The University's ceremonial theatre and the first major architectural commission of Sir Christopher Wren, who later designed St Paul's Cathedral.
- 9 Iffley Road Sports Centre** – Roger Bannister made sporting history here on 6 May 1954, running the world's first sub-four-minute mile. Today the sports centre is used by University sports

clubs and members of the public.

- 10 Examination Schools** – During exam season, look out for students in flowing academic gowns, some wearing colour-coded carnations.

### Some colleges to explore

- 1 Lady Margaret Hall, Somerville & St Hilda's College** – Oxford's pioneering women's colleges, welcoming their first women students from 1879, although women could not receive Oxford degrees until 1920.
- 2 Magdalen College** – Look up at its famous fifteenth-century tower. Oscar Wilde studied here, and C. S. Lewis was a Fellow and Tutor.
- 3 St John's College** – Look closely at Canterbury Quad, where the stone and bronze figures include representations of the liberal arts and virtues.

## A short history of the University of Oxford

### Professor William Whyte, Professor of Social and Architectural History



Although the oldest university in the English-speaking world, **Oxford doesn't have a foundation date**. But we can be pretty sure that people were coming here to teach and be taught by the 1090s, and we know that teaching in Oxford was famous across Europe by the 1200s.

That fame attracted donors, and in **1264 Merton, the first of Oxford's colleges**, was established. As much places for prayer as places of learning, the early colleges were often equipped with impressive chapels as well as stately rooms

in which to live, eat, and read. Indeed, early Oxford was intrinsically linked to religious study: among its early scholars was a local boy, Edmund of Abingdon, who went on to become Archbishop of Canterbury. St Edmund Hall, often known today as 'Teddy Hall', bears his name.

By the end of the fifteenth century, Oxford was a town renowned for its colleges. It acquired important University buildings, not least the ornate **Divinity School**, begun in 1427, with Duke Humfrey's Library above it. Visitors today may recognise the Divinity School as Hogwarts' hospital wing in the *Harry Potter* films. But Oxford's history has not always been peaceful. The religious struggles of the Reformation and Civil War reached directly into the University: Protestant Archbishop Thomas Cranmer was tried and burnt to death in Oxford in 1556; later, in 1642 Charles I made the city the Royalist capital of England.

Despite this turbulence, Oxford continued to grow. From 1602, the impressive **Bodleian Library** was developed; entitled to receive a copy of every book published in the UK, it now holds more than 14 million items. The restoration of the monarchy – and of what the University hoped would be normality – was marked by the building of the **Sheldonian Theatre**, which opened in 1669. The eighteenth century added some of Oxford's most recognisable landmarks, including the deliberately imposing **Radcliffe Camera**.

It was the nineteenth century, however, that really made the modern University. For more than six centuries, Oxford and Cambridge had been England's only universities, enjoying an extraordinary dominance over higher education. That finally began to change when Durham University was established in 1832 and the University of London in 1836. For the first time in centuries, Oxford faced real competition and with it the drive to reform and modernise. Science arrived in spectacular architectural form with the Oxford Museum (now the **Oxford University Museum of Natural History**), which opened in

1860, and new colleges were established for people who had previously been excluded from an Oxford education. In 1873 Christian Frederick Cole, a 21-year-old Sierra Leonean, became the University's **first recorded Black student**, studying Classics. He went on to become a practising barrister. **Lady Margaret Hall** and **Somerville** colleges were established for women in 1879, although women would not be allowed to receive Oxford degrees until 1920. At Somerville, Cornelia Sorabji became the first woman to study law at Oxford and the first Indian woman to study at a British university – among a growing number of students who were beginning, slowly, to change who could feel they belonged here.

Oxford was also beginning to take its teaching beyond the University itself. From **1878**, the Oxford Extension movement sent academics around the country to provide lectures and classes for adult learners, including many women and working people who had little access to higher education. Nearly 150 years after those first extension lectures, the same tradition continues through **Oxford Lifelong Learning**, offering University education to people at different stages of their lives. Alongside academic rigour and serious debate, Oxford students are renowned for their quirky sense of humour and practices. In 1896 Oriel College welcomed its own pet tortoise and other colleges soon followed suit; today college tortoises meet for an annual race at Corpus Christi. In the absence of a tortoise, a human can race on behalf of a college if they have first consumed a whole lettuce. The University even has its own relationship with time. Historically, local Oxford time ran five minutes behind Greenwich, consequently some University lectures and events still begin at **five minutes past the hour**.

Oxford today would be almost unrecognisable to those early scholars. Its colleges welcome people of all genders and its students and researchers come from across the world. Spread far beyond its medieval centre, its departments, laboratories, libraries, museums, gardens, and green spaces, and new buildings stretch across the city. In **Headington**, University medical researchers work closely with clinicians at **Oxford University Hospitals**, helping turn scientific discoveries into new treatments, diagnostics and technologies. One recent example became known around the world: University researchers developed the **Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine**, with the first dose in the UK rollout given at Oxford University Hospitals in January 2021.

**As you explore the map, look up, look through doorways, and venture into the places that welcome visitors. Oxford is shaped by more than nine centuries of people, discoveries, traditions, and change – and its story is still being written today.**

**4 University College** – Christian Cole, Oxford's first recorded Black student, studied here in the 1870s. Although poet Percy Bysshe Shelley was expelled from the College, today you can visit his marble memorial. More recent students include Stephen Hawking and Bill Clinton.

**5 Christ Church** – King Charles I lived here during the Civil War, using the Great Hall as his Parliament. Lewis Carroll taught mathematics here and created *Alice's Adventures*

*in Wonderland*. W.H. Auden was a student, and Einstein stayed here when visiting Oxford. The Dean (Head) of Christ Church is a Crown appointment, formally approved by the monarch.

**6 Merton College** – Founded in 1264 and one of Oxford's oldest colleges. J.R.R. Tolkien was Professor of English Language and Literature here.

**7 Pembroke College** – J.R.R. Tolkien taught here while writing *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Samuel Johnson, creator of one of the most influential early English dictionaries, was also a student here.

**8 Trinity College** – Oxfordshire's link college, working with local schools. Explore its extensive gardens and seventeenth-century Chapel, and look out for the historic Old Library, where books were once chained to the shelves.

**9 Brasenose College** – Once home to *Lord of the Flies* author William Golding, and the first ever England football team captain, Cuthbert Ottaway. Look closely at the external walls which contain fossils, and then look up at the frontage facing the High Street for its extraordinary stone characters – including dragons, angels, an owl, a lion, a bagpiper, a rugby player, a phoenix, monks, squirrels, and even some of the Victorian stonemasons who worked on the building.

## A brief literary history of the University of Oxford

Oxford's mysterious maze of medieval colleges, libraries, chapels, gardens, and narrow streets, has inspired generations of storytellers. World-renowned authors have drawn upon their experiences of studying or teaching at the University to conjure magical worlds, create heroes and villains, and offer insightful and occasionally witty observations about society. Often these works have been adapted for screen or theatre, and reached global audiences.

One of Oxford's earliest literary celebrities was **Geoffrey Chaucer**, author of *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer himself was not an Oxford student, but his stories include an Oxford scholar: the rather impoverished student Nicholas in "The Miller's Tale." Even in the fourteenth century, then, the Oxford student was already a recognisable literary character.

Much later, Oxford became home to **Lewis Carroll**, whose real name was Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. He was a mathematics lecturer at Christ Church. In the 1860s he published *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. The Alice books aren't straightforwardly "about" Oxford, but they grew out of Carroll's Oxford life: the original Alice was Alice Liddell, the daughter of the Dean of Christ Church, and the famous story began during a boating trip from Oxford.



Oxford's literary connections became particularly rich in the twentieth century. **J. R. R. Tolkien**, author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, was an Oxford professor and spent much of his adult life in the city. His friend **C. S. Lewis**, author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, also taught at Oxford. The two belonged to an informal group of writers called **the Inklings**, who met to talk, argue and read aloud from their unfinished work. They famously gathered in Oxford pubs, particularly The Eagle and Child.

Oxford also played an important part in the life of **Oscar Wilde**, who studied at Magdalen College in the 1870s. Wilde, famous for his often witty and satirical plays, novel, and short stories. Another Oxford student, **Aldous Huxley**, attended Balliol College before writing the dystopian classic *Brave New World*. **W. H. Auden**, one of the twentieth century's major poets, studied at Christ Church.

**William Golding**, author of *Lord of the Flies*, studied at Brasenose College. His disturbing story of schoolboys stranded on an island became one of the best-known novels of the twentieth century and remains particularly familiar to generations of teenage readers.

Oxford itself increasingly became a fictional world. **Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*** begins among the privileged students and beautiful college buildings of 1920s Oxford. The novel—and its famous television and film adaptations—helped create a romantic image of undergraduate Oxford: champagne, elaborate rooms, eccentric friendships, and a sense of a vanishing aristocratic world.

A very different Oxford appears in **Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials***. Pullman studied at Exeter College and later lived in Oxford. His heroine Lyra grows up in the fictional Jordan College in an alternative version of the city, where scholars study mysterious substances and humans are accompanied by animal-shaped "dæmons." Real Oxford landmarks sit alongside Pullman's inventions, making the familiar city feel strange and magical.

Oxford is also the setting for some decidedly non-magical crimes. **Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse novels**, and the television series *Inspector Morse*, *Lewis* and *Endeavour*, turned Oxford into one of Britain's most recognisable murder-mystery settings. Colleges, libraries and quiet streets provide beautiful backgrounds for remarkably frequent fictional killings.

Perhaps the Oxford most familiar to younger audiences, however, comes from the **Harry Potter film**. J. K. Rowling did not attend Oxford University and Hogwarts is not actually Oxford, but several university locations were used in the films. Christ Church, the Bodleian Library and New College supplied memorable interiors and cloisters. As a result, visitors sometimes experience real Oxford with the strange feeling that they have accidentally wandered into Hogwarts.

The strong connection between Oxford and literature continues with contemporary writers such as **Katherine Rundell**, who studied at St Catherine's College and is a Fellow of All Souls. She combines academic work with writing for younger readers, and her books—including *Rooftoppers*, *The Explorer* and *Impossible Creatures*—have introduced a new generation to ambitious adventure and fantasy fiction.

What makes Oxford unusual is the way its real and imaginary histories overlap. You can walk past the college where Tolkien worked, through streets transformed by television into Inspector Morse's Oxford, into buildings used for *Harry Potter*, and alongside the river associated with the beginnings of *Alice in Wonderland*. After centuries of writers borrowing from Oxford, the city can sometimes feel like a place invented by literature rather than merely described by it.

# Next Steps



Although there is a lot going on, we are keen to continually improve our work with schools and further education colleges.

Our admissions and outreach work is well established. At the central University level, recent years have seen the development of our highly acclaimed access programmes. Meanwhile, the colleges share responsibility for schools' outreach on a geographical basis, with Trinity College assuming responsibility for Oxfordshire. There is a huge amount happening across departments and colleges that goes beyond admissions and outreach, with a particular focus on Oxfordshire. It covers key aspects of the academic curriculum, enrichment activities, and career pathways.

However, we recognise that these opportunities are not always as visible as they could be. This Guide represents a starting point for improving the transparency of Oxford's local schools' engagement, showcasing many of the great opportunities that are available.

There are three areas that we would like to further strengthen in future.

First, **coordination**. It's vital that we continue to map and regularly update the initiatives offered by our colleges and departments. We'd like to work closely with college and university human resources teams to create case studies of career pathways at Oxford adapted for schools and further education colleges. We can go further to support our staff and students to contribute to enrichment activities across sport, music, drama, and nature. For academic subjects, we might do

more to provide our departments with 'best practice' support and end-user feedback, to ensure that our academic offer to schools across key stages is optimally delivered to support schools' needs.

Second, **communication**. We need to ensure that we continue to find effective ways to explain to schools and further education colleges, and their staff what the University is able to offer. This is likely to include identifying opportunities to regular updating, recognising that initiatives and opportunities will change over time. We would like to develop dedicated webspace that is easy for schools to navigate, and have clearly identifiable contact points for schools' engagement activities.

Third, **connection**. Our ability to strengthen opportunities for young people will ultimately depend on the person-to-person relationships we are able to create, including with senior leaders across schools, education trusts, and further education colleges. We are keen to explore options for how we might convene occasional events that facilitate connection, and build effective networks.

We hope this Guide will help start that process, and we welcome ideas from schools and colleagues about how we can work together to make the University more accessible, relevant and useful to young people across Oxfordshire. To contact us with thoughts and suggestions on this Guide, or suggestions on how we could better support local young people and communities, please email [local.engagement@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:local.engagement@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Photo: School visit to Oxford Botanical Garden and Arboretum.



