

Propeller Trust Hosts Groundbreaking In-Reach Clinic for Oxfordshire Schools

18 staff from 10 Oxfordshire schools attended the Trust's **In-Reach Clinic** this term, and had the opportunity to tour the school, meet teachers and experience the Sensory Theatre. This was part of the Special School Outreach offer, funded by Oxfordshire County Council, and led by Jenny Jura; Outreach Lead for Propeller Academy Trust. The whole teaching team from Fitzwaryn School gave up their time to open their classrooms, discuss how they support pupils and answer questions.



The attendees visited classes across all Key Stages from Early Years to Post-16, to see how the environment is adapted through visual supports, adaptive teaching and tailored resources. Teachers spent time answering individual questions and followed up with a pack of information and resources that was sent to the schools after the event.

Special thanks to Jess Cox who coordinated the event and led a tour, Hannah Gordon who also led a tour and to Lisa Talbot who set up the Sensory Theatre with a range of ideas and resources. Lisa demonstrated how to create sensory opportunities within a mainstream setting and answered questions about how to implement interventions such as Sensory Stories and TACPAC.

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees praising the opportunity to learn from specialist educators and take away actionable ideas for supporting SEND pupils in their own settings.

This clinic embodies Propeller Academy Trust's commitment to sharing expertise and driving positive change in education across the county.

It was really useful to see the sensory activities that we could use in Mainstream, and we will introduce Sensory Stories and Waking up the senses back in school.

Thank you so much for your time. Your staff are knowledgeable and so kind to give up their time. Many thanks.

We were able to reflect on things that are going well such as the visuals that we use to support our pupils, and learn about areas where we can improve.



Web Directory

Here are the links to all our sites, for your convenience

- [Propeller Academy Trust](#)
- [Bishopswood School](#)
- [Fitzwaryn School](#)
- [Kingfisher School](#)

Parent Survey Coming Soon!

In January, we are starting the process of producing The Propeller Academy Trust Strategic Plan 2025-28. We will be sharing a parent survey to gather your views on what is working well across the Trust and to help shape our work moving forward.

Keep an eye out for the survey link after the new year, and thank you in advance for taking the time to share your perspective – **your voice matters to us!**

Like & Follow

Follow us on social media



Propeller on LinkedIn



Propeller on Facebook

Registered Address

The Propeller Academy Trust
Fitzwaryn School
Denchworth Road
Wantage
Oxfordshire
OX12 9ET

Email: office@propellertrust.org
Tel: 01235 764504



NEW
UPDATE

from Fitzwaryn School
by Mrs Coneboy, Headteacher



A Season of Growth & Achievement

As 2024 draws to a close, Fitzwaryn School celebrates an Autumn Term filled with learning, creativity, and remarkable achievements.

From engaging topics like “All at Sea” in the Lower School to exploring the Viking Age in Upper School, pupils have been immersed in experiences that inspire curiosity and confidence. Highlights include innovative cookery lessons, where students boldly explored new tastes, and the ongoing success of swimming sessions, with pupils reaching incredible milestones in water confidence and safety.

The school choir dazzled at the Mayor’s Carols, spreading festive cheer with their heartfelt singing, while offsite activities like hydrotherapy and *Riding for the Disabled* sessions offered transformative opportunities for growth and independence.

Senior students embraced leadership and enterprise through events like Children in Need and the Present Palace, showcasing teamwork and problem-solving skills.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of Fitzwaryn’s staff, whose unwavering commitment continues to make the school a vibrant and nurturing environment for all.

Here’s to more successes in the year ahead!



Sensory Pathway Improvements

We are thrilled to announce that we’ve been awarded a grant from Wooden Spoon (Oxfordshire), a charity founded in the 80s who support children with disabilities as one of their main priorities. The grant will be used to update and totally refresh the sensory pathway area towards the rear of the school.



We are just looking at possible designs and deciding which aligns most to our needs here at Fitzwaryn, before we embark on the works, this academic year. We are considering a ‘waterwall’ as part of the planned works (*similar to pic shown below*).

We are also looking forward to welcoming Steve Murphy, the chair of the Oxfordshire branch of Wooden Spoon, to show him how the money is going to transform the area for our pupils. We really look forward to showing you the work once it’s complete.



NEW
UPDATE

from **Bishopswood School**
by Mrs Bhagrath, Headteacher



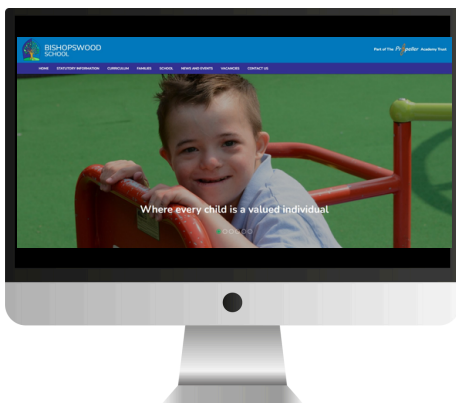
Bishopswood
School

Website Refresh!

We are delighted to announce the launch of our new school website! The updated site has a sleek, modern design that reflects the recent improvements and positive changes within the school. It is designed to serve as a valuable resource for families, offering easy access to essential information.

You'll find everything from curriculum maps and school updates to details on "Evidence for Learning"—all in one user-friendly place.

We encourage you to explore the site and make use of the resources to stay connected and informed about your child's education at our school.



In this issue, I'm excited to share insights into Waldon Therapy, a practical, activity-based approach to developmental therapy. Designed to support children, particularly those with autism, developmental delays, or sensory processing difficulties, it nurtures foundational skills like motor development, concentration, and problem-solving. By emphasising learning through doing, Waldon Therapy creates an environment where children can explore, experiment, and build confidence in their abilities.

The method involves structured, repetitive activities that are tailored to a child's developmental stage. For example:

- **Stacking objects** to develop hand-eye coordination and focus.
- **Rolling and placing balls** to build spatial awareness and control.
- **Sorting and sequencing tasks** to encourage logical thinking and organisation.

How does it help children in school?

In school, Waldon Therapy helps children:

- **Improve attention and focus:** By mastering structured activities, children become better at sustaining their attention, which translates into improved engagement in lessons.
- **Develop motor skills:** Tasks like sorting, stacking, and balancing help with fine and gross motor skills, which support handwriting, drawing, and physical activities.
- **Build confidence:** Completing tasks successfully fosters a sense of achievement, which encourages children to tackle challenges in other areas of their learning.
- **Encourage independence:** By learning through repetition, children develop skills they can apply independently, boosting their self-reliance.

How does it help children at home?

Waldon Therapy is not just for the classroom, it offers skills and strategies that children can use in their everyday lives. Here are some examples:

- **At home:** Children can apply sorting and organising skills to tasks like tidying their toys or helping set the table.
- **In the community:** Improved spatial awareness and motor control help with activities like walking safely in crowded places or using public transport.
- **Socially:** The therapy builds confidence and emotional regulation, making children more comfortable in social interactions.
- **Life skills:** Repetition of daily tasks, such as putting on shoes, brushing teeth, or zipping up a coat, becomes easier as they master coordination and independence.

How to complement the therapy at home:

Sorting laundry



Ask your child to separate socks by colour or match pairs.

Cooking together



Let your child help with stirring, measuring, or placing ingredients in a bowl.

Building with blocks or Lego



Encourage stacking, balancing, and creating patterns.

Outdoor play



Rolling balls, using slides, or navigating simple obstacle courses can reinforce movement skills.



NEW UPDATE

from Kingfisher School
by Lorraine Wilson, Headteacher



Swinging Towards Inclusion: Fundraising Success for Kingfisher School

Exciting news from Kingfisher School! Thanks to dedicated fundraising efforts and incredible community support, the school is on its way to installing a state-of-the-art wheelchair-accessible swing. This fantastic addition to the playing field will provide students with mobility challenges the opportunity to experience the joy and freedom of the swing in a way that suits their individual needs.

The project, which has been a longstanding dream for the school, was made possible through the generosity of a number of donors who championed the cause. The swing will enhance the school's commitment to inclusivity and play, creating a space where every child can laugh, play, and thrive.



The installation process is set to begin during this academic year, and excitement is building among staff, students, and families. Watch this space for updates as Kingfisher takes another step towards making their playground truly accessible for all!

“Above and Beyond” Ofsted

Following an interim inspection of Kingfisher School last term, the Ofsted report was published at the end of the summer term and offered praise and a great insight into the achievements and ongoing good practice found throughout the school.

“ Staff show enormous care and kindness to every pupil. ”

We were delighted to see that the inspectors acknowledged our ambition, and our commitment to community engagement. The report reflected on the input from parents too, in one case quoting one as saying, **‘You walk down the corridor and look in the classes and all have a smile on their faces. The teachers go above and beyond with the children. I am so lucky to have found a school where my SEN child is happy, relaxed and improving every single day.’**

We are looking forward to continuing to build on this success, and we thank all the staff for everything they do, to keep our pupils safe and engaged in learning.



Skills Builder awarded to Fitzwaryn School



Skills Builder Gold Award

Fitzwaryn School has been honoured with the Gold Skills Builder award, recognising its remarkable integration of essential skills into the school curriculum. The award celebrates Fitzwaryn’s commitment to developing the key skills that support students’ career and personal success, aligning closely with the school’s vision: “through learning to learn, pupils will access society.”

At Fitzwaryn, essential skills are embedded across every stage of education, from early years to post-16. Each term, a skill from the Skills Builder Framework is selected as the focus across the school, allowing both teachers and students to engage with it actively. Staff ensure that lesson content is linked to the selected skill, and termly curriculum maps—shared with parents—help families follow their children’s progress. These skills are then celebrated in weekly assemblies, where pupils receive certificates for achievements in areas like teamwork, creativity, and resilience.

Fitzwaryn’s holistic approach extends beyond classroom teaching, with opportunities for students to practise essential skills in real-world scenarios. For younger children, this might mean practising independence and communication on a school trip, while older pupils participate in work experiences, community visits, or fundraising initiatives. Recently, sixth formers undertook an Escape Room challenge, which encouraged teamwork, communication, and problem-solving—all key Skills Builder skills.

The school’s careers programme has been recognised as outstanding within the county, and Fitzwaryn’s Careers Lead was awarded the Careers Champion Award in 2024 by the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards. This careers provision begins early, even in EYFS, and progresses through each key stage with enterprise days, employer encounters, and internships. Skills Builder icons are displayed around the school to reinforce the language and ideas behind the skills, and termly goals are visible in each classroom to support a consistent focus.

Fitzwaryn’s recent achievement of meeting 100% of the Gatsby Benchmarks exemplifies the strength of its careers and skills provision. The school has also developed a tailored tracking system, which staff use to monitor pupils’ progress towards these skills. Evidence of development is recorded and shared with parents through online platforms, which makes the progress visible and accessible.

Looking forward, Fitzwaryn plans to enhance the integration of these essential skills beyond the school environment. A key goal is to review home learning resources and work with families to embed skills practice into daily life, further empowering pupils and their parents.



Skills Builder Partnership is a global movement of employers, educators, and impact organisations working together to ensure that one day, everyone builds the essential skills to succeed.

Our not-for-profit social enterprise began in 2009 with two employers and a single classroom. Today, the Skills Builder Partnership is international in its reach and supported more than 2.6 million individuals to build their essential skills in the last year alone. Visit the Skills Builder Case Study section to read the full Fitzwaryn School Case Study. www.skillsbuilder.org/case-study/fitzwaryn-school

Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity

by **Priya Bhagrath**, Headteacher
Bishopswood School

As the national co-founder and lead of BAME Education SEND, I am privileged to work at the intersection of education, special needs, and cultural inclusion. A recent highlight of this journey was presenting at the Wellington College Festival of Education, where I led a talk on how Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are viewed across different cultures and how schools can better engage parents from all community groups, including those whose first language is not English.

SEND Across Cultures

SEND is approached differently across cultures. In some communities, there may be stigma or misconceptions about disabilities, while in others, there may be differing expectations of how schools should support children with SEND. Recognising and respecting these differences is essential to building trust with families.

Research by Gillborn et al. (2018) underscores how cultural barriers can impact engagement with schools, showing that a lack of cultural sensitivity can lead to disengagement from school workshops or communication. These families can be labelled as "hard to reach". This understanding was a key focus of my talk, where I emphasised the importance of cultural awareness and adapting school practices to meet families where they are.

From "Hard to Reach" to "How You Reach"

A key focus is shifting the perspective from labeling families as "hard to reach" to reflecting on "how we reach" them. Adapting school approaches to connect with families in culturally, linguistically, and geographically relevant ways can significantly improve relationships.

Successful strategies implemented include:

- Translating surveys into home languages
- Hosting remote coffee mornings - both virtually, and within the community.
- Meeting families in their communities
- Seeking feedback on curriculum and support

These efforts have resulted in increased trust and stronger relationships with families, enabling more effective collaboration to support children with SEND.

Practical Steps for Inclusive Engagement

Research from DfE (2020) and our own experiences highlight key strategies schools can use to build meaningful engagement:

- **Accessible Communication:** Translate materials, provide interpreters, and use plain language to ensure parents can fully engage with school communications.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Train staff in cultural sensitivity to understand and respect the unique needs of diverse communities.
- **Parent Advocacy:** Work with parent volunteers or advocates to bridge gaps and make school processes feel more approachable.
- **Action-Oriented Feedback:** Act on parents' feedback and clearly communicate how their input has shaped school decisions, reinforcing trust and collaboration.

Transforming Lives Together

One of the most rewarding outcomes of these efforts is the positive impact on our students. When families feel connected, understood, and supported, their children thrive both academically and socially.

We are committed to ensuring that every family feels part of our school community. This partnership between school, families, and communities is what makes it possible for all children to succeed, regardless of their background or abilities.



Exciting News

A publisher was present in one of my talks and offered me a book deal to write about the topic in more depth. I am thrilled to share that my will be released next Spring!!! The book explores themes of SEND, cultural inclusion, and building effective parent partnerships. I will provide more details closer to the release date and look forward to sharing this journey with you.

Driving towards our goal!

Help us reach the finish line

As a Trust, we are dedicated to providing the best possible experiences for our students, and a new minibus for Bishopswood School - which currently has no permanent transport - will play a crucial role in this mission. It will enable the school to offer students greater access to community-based learning, extracurricular activities, and opportunities to engage with the wider world.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our supporters, we've already raised an impressive 50% of our £51,000 target! This progress reflects the strength of our school community and the priority placed on enriching our students' lives.

However, we still have some way to go before we get the keys to this essential resource. That's where you come in! Whether you're an individual donor, a business looking to make an impact in the name of corporate social responsibility, or part of a community group, trust or charity eager to support a local SEN school, we'd love to hear from you.

Every contribution brings us closer to giving our students the freedom and opportunities they deserve. Your support can help us make this dream a reality, enabling children to participate in field trips, sports fixtures, and other enriching activities that enhance their education. To join us on this journey, please get in touch at Helen@Propellertrust.org today. Together, we can ensure our students enjoy a brighter and more mobile future.

There is a Just Giving fundraising page called "[Help Bishopswood School get a School Minibus! £50k Appeal!](#)" where you can make individual donations. We'd love to talk to any local businesses who would like to make a tax deductible charitable donation to the Bishopswood Schools charity, The Bishopswood School Association.

Thank you for being part of our story—we're halfway there and with your help, we'll reach the finish line soon!



How **you** can help fundraise for Bishopswood School every time you shop online...

Easyfundraising is a service that turns your everyday online shopping into free donations for Bishopswood School Association.

Here's how it works:

- Sign up with [Easyfundraising](#) to create an account and **pick a charity** to donate to (*search for Bishopswood Special School to donate to the BSA*).
- Search for your retailer through the *Easyfundraising* site to access the website you're going to shop with, and then carry on as normal.
- Visit partner brands, like eBay, from the *easyfundraising* site or app, and spend with them as usual.

When you make a purchase, the partner brand will donate part of what you spend to your chosen charity.

