



A busy Hilary Term for Access

It's been a busy spring term for the Access and Outreach team here at St John's. Since January, we have hosted nineteen Subject Exploration Days for schools and colleges in our link regions of the London Boroughs of Ealing and Harrow, as well as East Sussex, West Sussex, and Brighton and Hove. Aimed primarily at high-achieving pupils in Years 10-12, these visits aim to provide learners and teachers with up-to-date information and guidance on post-16 options, including advice on how to prepare competitive applications to top universities. Pupils also have the opportunity to meet and speak with current St John's undergraduates and to experience an academic taster session either at the College, an academic department or one of the University's museums. These visits provide young people with an invaluable opportunity to find out more about the University and to have a taste of life as an Oxford student. The feedback following these visits has been absolutely fantastic – as one Year 10 put it:

“I loved the atmosphere at Oxford, it was calm and tranquil, and looking around Oxford I could see the care that went into making this university a great place”

In addition, we have continued with our usual programme of outbound visits to schools and colleges in our link regions, speaking to pupils, teachers and parents about the benefits of a university education (and an Oxford degree more specifically), as well as providing practical support and guidance on the UCAS application process. We have also attended a number of higher education fairs, including the London Higher Education Exhibition which was attended by almost 20,000 prospective university applicants over two days. This was such a fantastic opportunity to speak to thousands of young people interested in applying to the University and the event also involved a joint presentation with the University of Cambridge on Oxbridge applications.





“I’ve always wanted to know what Oxford’s like. The Inspire Programme is the perfect opportunity for me to learn more about the University”

St John’s Inspire Programme

Building on last year’s success, the St John’s Inspire Programme is bigger and better than ever!

In 2018/19, the Year 12 Inspire Programme expanded to include 132 pupils and 25 schools (an increase in engagement by 67% and 88% respectively compared to 2017/18). Pupils enjoyed four twilight taster sessions on a range of STEM and Humanities topics, including Philosophy, French Literature, Biology and Engineering. Students also attended workshops on how to engage with their favourite subjects outside of the classroom and how to write effective personal statements. We are looking forward to hosting our final twilight sessions later on in the summer, as well as welcoming around 100 of the Year 12s to our free summer school in August where they will have the opportunity to experience life as an Oxford undergraduate.

“The St John’s Inspire Programme is an exciting opportunity for me to explore my passion for mathematics in an environment that will challenge me”

As part of the Inspire Programme, we are also excited to be working more extensively with Year 11s through Inspire Digital, the College’s online magazine for secondary school students (sjcinspire.com). We currently have around 200 Year 11s from our link regions of the London Boroughs of Ealing

and Harrow, as well as Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex signed up to the programme – an increase in engagement by 21% and 80% respectively compared to last academic year. The Year 11 programme involves a series of termly newsletters each based around a different theme.

This term, we asked pupils to think about ‘What makes a successful video game’ from a variety of different perspectives: Psychology - ‘Are video games addictive?’; History - ‘What can we learn about the past from playing video games?’; Economics - ‘How can we make money from video games?’. In June 2019, we will be thinking about ‘What is the power of a volcano?’, which will include contributions from geographers, classicists and biologists to name but a few. Year 11 pupils will also be joining us for their own summer school in August, which will give them the chance to attend exciting talks and workshops by Oxford academics, as well as take part in fun trips and cultural activities.

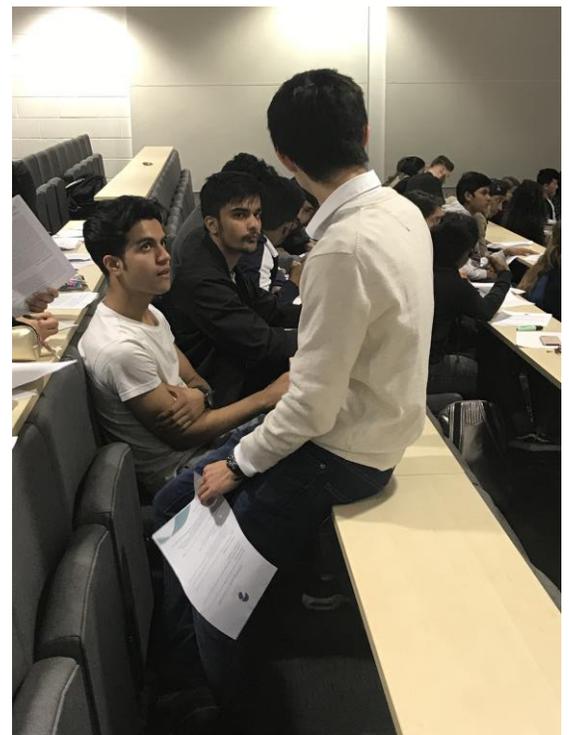
Collaboration

On top of all this, the team have continued to support the outreach work of the wider University and third-sector organizations. In February, St John's supported the Physics Department in the delivery of Marie Curious, a free one-day science event for girls aged 11-14 which aims to promote an interest in STEM subjects. The event included a range of hands-on workshops and different activities, as well as providing attendees with the opportunity to meet women working in different scientific fields.

We also continue to support the work of The Brilliant Club, a charity which works to increase the number of pupils from underrepresented backgrounds progressing on to university. To this end, PhD and postdoctoral researchers are engaged to design and deliver bespoke programmes of learning based on their areas of expertise for disadvantaged pupils attending non-selective state schools across the UK. Last term, St John's hosted two trips involving 84 pupils in Years 5-7 from non-selective state schools. Pupils had the opportunity to explore the College and participate in a number of different academic activities.

"A really well-organized day which has really fired up the children's excitement about university"

We would very much encourage any member of the College – staff or student – to take part in our outreach work. Please email access@sjc.ox.ac.uk to find out how you can get involved!





Working with Teachers

We are delighted to announce that 2018/19 has seen an expansion in our support for teachers as part of our Inspire Programme in Ealing and Harrow. Since January 2019, we have offered a series of after-school workshops with a view to providing up-to-date advice and guidance on Oxford admissions. Moreover, in April 2019 St John's hosted its annual Residential Programme for Teachers and Educational Professionals during the first week of the Easter holidays. Attended by over 20 teachers from all over the country, the programme included a range of cultural and professional development activities, including opportunities to visit the Oxford Museum of Natural History and the Ashmolean Museum, engage in talks and workshops on Oxford admissions and UCAS applications, meet subject tutors and attend academic lectures on topics including Theology and Astrophysics. Attendees were also inducted into the Bodleian and were able to use the University's library facilities to conduct research on their subject areas to enhance their teaching in schools.

"This was the second St. John's Teachers' Residential Programme I attended and, as in my previous experience, it has been a thoroughly enriching and thought-provoking experience. As teachers we rarely get the time and space to reflect critically together on our own practice and pursue an independent project. The study programme provides an excellent opportunity to do this with access to the world class resources the university has to offer in its various libraries and exhibitions. I now have a much clearer sense of how best to support my students who are considering, or should be considering, Oxford. The Residential Programme has helped demystify the application process for students, what admissions tutors are looking for in applicants and how the collegiate system works to support students. I would highly recommend the programme to all teachers looking to develop their professional skills and assist students aspiring to attend top universities."

Benedict O'Connell, Strode's College

Looking Ahead

The Access and Outreach Office are looking forward to repeating much of this – and more! – during Trinity Term. We will be running Study Days in a range of subjects, including Classics, English, History, Mathematics, Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, and Modern Languages. These events are free of charge and offer Year 12 pupils a fantastic opportunity to learn more about Oxford's courses, attend talks and workshops on areas of academic interest and meet St John's tutors. We are also thrilled to be working in collaboration with Brasenose College to run a Study Day in Geography, as well as with the Pitt Rivers Museum to host an Open Day in Anthropology. Click [here](#) to find out more.

We are also excited to announce the launch of the next phase of the Inspire Programme, aimed at supporting high-achieving pupils in Years 9 to 11 who attend state schools in Ealing and Harrow. For full details of the programme, click [here](#).