

Prep Headlines

Autumn 2 2025

It strikes me again and again how often we ask the children in the Prep School to just do things that adults fret about or shy away from. Many of us grown-ups get sweaty palms and a frog in the throat at the very thought of public speaking. But day after day in our school assemblies children stand up, unscripted and unprepared, to talk fluently and engagingly in front of the whole school. I love inviting children up to the Hall lectern to share key moments and achievements from their lives outside school. Without very much prompting at all, every one of them manages the challenges of public speaking quite brilliantly. Then there is performing in public, as at our Christmas Concert, whether playing an instrument or singing in a choir. Believe me, the stage lights in the Great Hall are absolutely dazzling and it is very daunting indeed to look out at hundreds of expectant faces in the stalls and up on the balcony. I could not have been prouder of the children. All gained confidence, felt the joy of performing and had fun - an experience they can take strength from as they go on through their lives. You'll no doubt have seen plenty of smiles from them too, which I know will have touched you as we enter this holiday period. I wish you all a safe and restful time, and look forward to seeing you again in 2026!

Joe Lyth

Children in Need

On Friday 14th of November, we raised money for Children in Need. Everybody dressed up in their spotty clothes, and in assembly we saw some fantastic face paints and lots of Pudsey ears! We raise money to help children who are less fortunate than we are and to remind us to think about those who don't have as much as we do. The Prep School raised just under £500!

Harry ITB



Alpha Superstars!

This year's Alpha Nativity, Superstar, brought sparkle, laughter and plenty of smiles to the Prep Hall on the evening of Monday 1st December. The musical re-tells the traditional Nativity story through an audition, where members of the Celestial Choir compete for the chance to guide everyone to Bethlehem, determined to dazzle the ever-demanding Mr Marrz. Hopes were high for a 'superstar' role, but it was Stella - who sometimes gets things wrong but always tries her very best - who was chosen to be the Star of Bethlehem. Her quiet understanding of the true Christmas message made her shine the brightest of all. The Alphas and their teachers worked so hard to bring this production to life, and their efforts shone through in every moment. From confident narrators and travellers making their way to Bethlehem, to our enthusiastic choir, lively shepherds (not washing their socks), and traditional Nativity characters, the children performed with magic and energy. The three wise men - accompanied by apprentices who were not entirely convinced by their masters' directions - raised plenty of smiles, as did the grumpy donkey, Gerald, most indignant that someone had taken his bed! For our Alphas, this was their very first performance at Bancroft's Prep, and they were brilliant. They sang with joy, remembered their lines beautifully, and filled the hall with excitement. It was a pleasure to watch them shine on stage, and we look forward to many more performances from them in the years ahead. A huge well done to all involved - you truly were superstars!

Tina Biston



A Very Special Visitor



I had the great joy this half term of welcoming a very special guest to Bancroft's Prep: Teddy, the Bernese Mountain Dog who belongs to my brother, Mr Alex Silk, Head of Connaught School for Girls in Leytonstone. Many of the children already know how much I adore Teddy, so it was a real treat to be able to share him with the whole school! Alex led our assembly and spoke about the role of therapy and assistance dogs in schools. He explained that dogs can be far more than pets – they can have an extraordinary impact on wellbeing. He talked the children through the science behind it too: how stroking a calm, friendly dog can increase oxytocin and serotonin, reduce cortisol levels, and help children regulate their emotions. This can be especially powerful for pupils with autism or ASD, or anyone who finds school life a little overwhelming at times. Teddy, of course, demonstrated all of this simply by being himself. After assembly, Teddy and Alex toured the school, and it was lovely to watch how naturally Teddy settled into our environment. Our bright, spacious classrooms suited him perfectly. In several rooms he became so comfortable that he lay down and let the children stroke him. In one Alpha classroom he was so content that the children ended up reading to him while he rested happily on the carpet. I honestly think he would have stayed there all day if he'd been allowed! It was a genuinely heart-warming morning, and I was so proud to see how gentle, respectful and excited the pupils were around Teddy. Thank you to Alex for giving our children such a memorable experience. Teddy is welcome back any time... and if he had his way, I suspect he'd already be curled up in the Alpha classrooms waiting for story time!

Tina Biston

History 'Off the Page'

Wednesday 19 November 2025 was no ordinary day at Bancroft's Prep, as we experienced what it might have been like to be an ordinary Victorian schoolchild. It was a terrific day, especially since the Prep Is had the opportunity to dress up as – you guessed it – Victorian schoolchildren! A man called Ian came into school for the day and introduced

himself in assembly. He said he would be our Victorian teacher, and he seemed extremely friendly and funny. Then he showed us what the consequences would be if there was even a tiny bit of bad behaviour in the classroom...

However, in the blink of an eye, when we stepped into the classroom, he became Master Ian. His personality completely changed. He became firm and strict with anyone who was being cheeky. The moment we stepped in, the girls had to curtsy and show their hands, and the boys had to do the same – except they also had to take off their hats as a sign of respect. We all thought it was extremely different to a modern-day school! As he called the register, we had to stand behind our chairs until we were given permission to sit. Straight after registration we were told to recite and memorise the morning prayer, following very strict instructions and writing on slate boards with slate pens. Master Ian told us it was the day of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, so we learned all about her life leading up to her 60th anniversary on the throne and wrote using proper dip pens and ink. Our geography lesson was next, where he read out a super-long list of all the countries in the British Empire, and then we practised each and every letter on our slates. After breaktime, two pupils were accused of holding hands in the garden and were sent to fetch the cane (which was actually Miss Bird smacking a coat with a pretend cane!). Then someone else was "caught" urinating on a tree and was told to get the cane too. It was all part of the fun, but it did make us realise how strict Victorian schools could be. After lunch, some parents came in to help show us what Victorian toys looked like. Master Ian told us that one pupil would have been a train supervisor, but several suitcases had been mixed up. We had to work out which suitcase belonged to which "passenger", using clues such as initials, clothing, objects and letters. If we didn't solve it in time, the train supervisor would lose their job – and in one class, someone actually did! We also explored and even made some Victorian toys. We could choose from cup and ball, spinning tops, dip pens (not really a toy!), postcards and lots more. We also looked at old textbooks, a zoetrope, and memory books belonging to royalty. The Victorian toy workshop was fascinating, and the suitcase mystery was my absolute favourite part. I had a lovely day and I really hope we can do something like this again. We all felt like we had a real taste of how hard and strict Victorian schools were, and it made us feel extremely lucky to be at Bancroft's Prep School today.

Amaya and Maryam ITB



School Council

We are delighted to introduce our twelve newly elected School Council representatives - an enthusiastic and thoughtful group ready to voice their opinions, share ideas from their peers, and help make Bancroft's Prep a school we can all be proud of. A School Council is an essential part of a thriving school community. It gives pupils a genuine platform to express their views, influence decisions, and see the impact of their ideas. By listening, debating, and working together, our representatives develop confidence, responsibility, and the belief that they can make meaningful change. The Council also strengthens the connection between pupils and staff, ensuring that school life reflects the needs and experiences of everyone. From new initiatives and wellbeing projects to improvements around the school, their contributions help create a positive, inclusive environment. As we look ahead to the year, our new council members are eager to gather feedback, launch fresh ideas, and represent their classmates with pride. We cannot wait to see all they achieve. Here's to a year of teamwork, creativity, and pupil voice at its best.

Sarah Strong



Bletchley Park

On Thursday 20th November, all of Prep 2 went on a history trip to Bletchley Park. I really enjoyed this visit. One of my favourite parts was getting to use an 80-year-old German Enigma machine and having a go at deciphering secret codes. I learned that Bletchley Park was a top-secret place during the Second World War where thousands of men and women worked in complete secrecy. They listened to enemy messages, tried to break the codes, and passed on the information to help the war effort. Their incredible work helped Britain and its allies to win the war. We also found out that the people who worked there had to keep everything they did a secret - even from their families - and that the buildings, called "huts," were filled with typewriters, machines, and early computers like the famous Bombe and Colossus. It was a brilliant day and we learned so much about history, teamwork and perseverance.

Aariz 2TC



The Great Exhibition

The Great Exhibition took place in 1851 and was a once-in-a-lifetime experience in the Victorian era. We recreated it by getting the whole year group to design and make their own inventions, then bring them into school to show everyone. Our parents came to see our brilliant creations, and later on other people from around the school came to visit too. There were so many different inventions — from radios to dynamite, typewriters and even toilets! Along with our inventions, we made a fact sheet filled with information. We learned that the real Great Exhibition was held in London's Hyde Park from May to October 1851 and had more than 100,000 objects on display. It attracted around six million visitors — about a third of the population at the time — and the displays stretched for over eight miles! People travelled from all over Britain on the new railway lines, and lots of famous people came, including writers like Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë and the scientist Charles Darwin. It was a truly wonderful experience. We learned so much, everybody loved it, and we hope we can do something like this again!

Neil, Eashar and Arjun IZR



Prep Christmas Concert



On Tuesday 9th December, the Prep community gathered for one of the most eagerly anticipated events of the year: our annual Christmas Concert. As always, it proved to be a truly magical evening and a triumphant celebration of the children's hard work, talent and joy in music-making. The concert marked the culmination of a whole term's dedication across every ensemble, choir and instrumental group in the school. Lines were learned, harmonies rehearsed, and countless early mornings and lunchtimes were spent practising - and it showed. From the very first notes played by the Junior Orchestra in *Little Rocking Donkey*, the hall was filled with that unmistakable Bancroft's buzz, building towards the breath taking 'wall of sound' created when the whole school eventually sang together. Across the evening, pupils from every year group took to the stage with confidence and pride. Audiences were treated to performances from the Guitar Ensemble, Toot Group, Cello Ensemble, Brass Ensemble, School of Rock's premier performance, the String Ensemble and both the Junior and Senior Orchestras. The variety was delightful: traditional carols like *Silent Night*, *Good King Wenceslas*, and *Jingle Bells* blended beautifully with upbeat Christmas favourites such as *Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree*, along with cinematic highlights including *Troika* and *Carol of the Bells* from *Home Alone* and *The Snowman*. The choirs provided some of the most memorable moments. The Junior Choir's *Christmas Calypso* was full of energy and smiles, while the Alpha and Beta Choir delivered a particularly enchanting performance of *Walking in the Air*, one of the standout highlights of the night. The Prep Singers captivated the audience with their atmospheric rendition of *So Many Stars* before their dazzling *Carol of the Bells*. The Senior Choir brought real poise and musicianship to *O Holy Night* and *Ding Dong!*

The evening ended in the most heart-warming way, with the entire school joining together for *Frosty the Snowman* followed by a joyful *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*. Hearing hundreds of voices singing in unison was truly unforgettable and sent families out into the winter night full of festive cheer. It was, once again, a wonderful occasion that brought our whole community together under one roof. We are incredibly proud of every performer for their hard work and courage, and grateful to our dedicated music staff for guiding the children to such a special moment. What a perfect way to begin the festive season.

Kati Kinnair

Lunchtime Concerts

Over the past half term, pupils from across the Prep have delighted audiences with two wonderful lunchtime concerts. These informal recitals give our young musicians a chance to share the pieces they have been working on in their lessons, and they continue to be a real highlight of the school week. Both concerts featured an impressive range of performances - from confident singers to expressive pianists, poised flautists, bold brass players, and even some skilled percussionists. The variety of styles on show was equally broad, with pupils performing everything from classical favourites to film themes, folk tunes and musical theatre. Highlights included Victoria's charming rendition of *My Favourite Things*, Kush's atmospheric performance of *Hedwig's Theme*, and Veera's expressive interpretation of *The Minstrel Boy*. We were also treated to lively ensemble playing from Toko and Diya in *Balmy Days*, while Arjun brought real flair to *Sparkling Splashes* and *Smooth Water*. The concerts ended on a beautifully moving note with Shivam's *Can't Help Falling in Love*. Congratulations to all our performers for their hard work, courage and musicianship. A huge thank you also goes to our peripatetic teachers for preparing the pupils so well. We look forward to many more magical lunchtime concerts throughout the year.

Kati Kinnair

Prep Singers Perform!

In early December, the Prep singers were invited to perform a selection of choir songs and carols for the residents at Hart's House in Woodford. They sang beautifully, sharing pieces such as *Carol of the Bells*, *The Twelve Days of Christmas* - which the residents happily joined in with - and *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. Many students also showcased their instrumental talents, including Lana, Victoria, Zoey, Ruein, Ayla, Amaya, Ishika, Isabelle, Shivam, Eknoor, and others. A huge thank you and congratulations to all the performers. It was a wonderful opportunity to perform to the community - we look forward to returning in the New Year!

Kati Kinnair

Beta Hindu Workshop

Last week, my friends and I took part in a Hindu workshop, and it was lots of fun. We learned about what religious life is like for Hindus and about some of the things they believe in. Some people already knew a bit about the religion (or are Hindu themselves), but it was a great reminder for all of us. The workshop was led by a lovely lady called Krishna, named after the Hindu deity Krishna. We took part in many activities, including a traditional stick dance called Dandiya. We even had the chance to dress up in Indian clothing — the boys wore turbans and prayer shawls, and the girls wore sarees. One of the highlights was being given our own Indian prince and princess names! As well as all the fun activities, we made time for learning. We learned about Atman, the soul, and about karma, which influences what happens in a person's next life. Hindus believe that if you live a good life, you may be reborn as a human baby, but if you behave badly, you might be reborn as an animal or even a plant. We also learned about some Hindu gods and goddesses — my favourites are Durga and Shiva, who are husband and wife. I really enjoyed the workshop and loved sharing some of my family's culture with my friends!

Quentin BLW



Poppy Appeal 2025

Remembrance Day is held every year on November 11th to mark the end of World War I at 11 a.m. in 1918. We wear a poppy to commemorate those who have died in conflict, as the flower grew on the battlefields of World War I and became a symbol of both remembrance and hope. It is also worn to show support for the Armed Forces, and purchasing poppies raises funds for veterans and their families. Bancroft's students volunteer every year to raise money on behalf of the Royal British Legion. This year, we sold paper poppies, wristbands and stickers.

Anika IZR

Quiz Masters

Our school took part in the National Quiz Competition, and it was such an exciting experience. We were up against schools from all over the country, so the pressure felt real, but our teams stayed confident and worked brilliantly together. Some of the questions were really tricky! We had to think fast about things like:

Which of these countries is in Central America?

A Somalia, B Azerbaijan, C Panama, D Uruguay

Where is the most plentiful supply of hydrogen on Earth?

A Seawater, B Plants, C The atmosphere, D Soil

Which country is directly north of Iceland?

A Norway, B Russia, C Greenland, D Canada

What is the brightest star in the night sky?

A Sirius, B Polaris, C Vega, D Betelgeuse

The Red Sea is connected to what by the Suez Canal?

A Caspian Sea, B Atlantic Ocean, C Pacific Ocean, D Mediterranean Sea

Even when we weren't sure, we kept trying our best and stayed positive. In some early rounds we did really well and earned points for accurate answers and quick thinking.

Although we didn't make it to the finals, we were proud of how well we worked as a team. We stayed focused, encouraged each other, and didn't give up when a question caught us out. Taking part in the quiz was a great opportunity, and it showed how much we enjoy learning new things. We're all proud of our teams, and we hope to come back even stronger next year!

Michael IZR

OpenView Workshops

This half-term, the Betas took part in an OpenView Education Anti-Bullying workshop, designed to build empathy, confidence, and positive behaviour across the year group. Through lively, interactive activities, pupils explored what bullying can look like, how it affects others, and the role they play in creating a kinder school environment. The children took part in role-play scenarios that helped them consider different perspectives and think about how their actions influence others. They acted out friendship challenges, sparking thoughtful discussions about how small actions - positive or negative - can make a big difference. Alongside practical activities, pupils completed short reflection tasks about feeling included or excluded, learning to recognise the emotions behind these experiences. They also learned strategies for responding to unkind behaviour, speaking up safely, and offering support to peers. Group discussions helped pupils understand how they can apply these ideas in real-life situations and highlighted the importance of kindness in daily interactions. The workshop was engaging, and age-appropriate, giving the Betas a deeper understanding of empathy and positive behaviour. It was a valuable experience for all involved.

Sarah Strong

The Autumn term has continued to build momentum, and it marks an exciting change in our Games lessons as pupils transition from hockey and rugby to football. Having practised different tackling techniques and a variety of positional plays, all pupils are now embracing the chance to develop a new set of skills on the football pitch. Enthusiasm for football is running high, and the fields have become a lively hub during our Games afternoons. There has been real excitement around the move to football, and pupils have confidently switched from the physical contact and structures of rugby, and the precision and stick-work of hockey, to the footwork, spacing, and quick transitions required in football.

Girls' Football

The girls have thrown themselves into their lessons and fixtures this term, with football taking centre stage. Despite the unpredictable weather, they have shown real energy, enthusiasm, and determination each week. Their commitment to improving their skills - whether dribbling, passing, shooting, or working as a team - has been fantastic to see. Rain or shine, their energy on the pitch never dips, and it's clear they're genuinely loving every moment of football. Their skill and determination have shown across all fixtures, with the majority of year groups winning their matches against Brentwood, Chigwell and St Aubyn's.



Football Festival

On a glorious winter's afternoon, the Prep 2s welcomed Avon House, Snaresbrook Prep, St Aubyn's and Woodford Green Prep for the annual Bancroft's Prep Football Festival. The excitement amongst our pupils was palpable as they prepared to play seven matches against visiting schools and other Bancroft's teams. The focus of the festival was on fun and teamwork, and it was wonderful to see all the Prep 2 pupils embracing this spirit. Throughout the afternoon there were fantastic goals, last-gasp defensive blocks, and some big saves from the goalkeepers. It was also lovely to see the Prep 2s supporting their fellow Bancroftians when not playing. A huge well done and thank you to everyone involved!

Boys' Football

The boys have had a fantastic start to the football term, demonstrating enthusiasm, commitment, and focus in their lessons, knowing they would soon have the opportunity to put these skills into practice during fixtures. The Betas, Prep 1s and Prep 2s have so far played matches against St Aubyn's and Chigwell, and have represented the school with pride. They have successfully applied their dribbling, passing, shooting and defending skills in competitive situations, resulting in the majority of matches being won. We look forward to building on this success.

In2Hockey Finals

The Girls' U11 Hockey team travelled to Chelmsford as they continued their impressive run of success this season. It was fantastic to see how far they have come since the Alphas tournament. The day began with a string of strong performances, and with goals shared across the team, the girls continued to dominate throughout. Their hard work was rewarded as they won the tournament without conceding a single goal. We hope this excellent form continues as they progress to the Regional Finals. It was a 7am start at the Tower as the girls set off for the In2Hockey Regional Finals in Ipswich. It took them a game to settle, with a frustrating 2-0 loss in the opener despite several good scoring opportunities for Bancroft's. The second group match brought another narrow defeat, this time 1-0, but after a motivating team talk, the girls came back fighting. A superb 3-0 victory followed, with all goals created from excellent long passes down the wing. A 0-0 draw set up a must-win final group match, and with Mr Harrison's guidance, the girls finished strongly, securing a 1-0 win to complete the group stages. The team was exceptional all day, battling through cold and rain to deliver determined performances. Their efforts earned them a place in the 5th/6th play-off after finishing 3rd in their group. They ended the day proudly as the 6th-ranked U11 hockey team in the entire East of England region!



House Skipping

It was that time of year again when each House trialed, trained and prepared their representatives for the annual House Skipping Assembly. Each year group selected a competitor who took to the stage with determination and pride. The competition required excellent organisation and precision from the House Captains, and every break and lunchtime saw a flurry of eager skippers practising their routines. On the day, the competition was incredibly exciting, coming down to the final “big skip”. With Manor trailing far behind, they made the bold decision to send two skippers into the final round. Their combined total of 104 skips catapulted Manor into a remarkable victory. Knighton, Hereford and Monkams were all close contenders, but could not quite catch the triumphant Manor team.

House Four Square

House Four Square brought together pupils from all year groups for a week of lively, spirited competition. The courts were buzzing with energy as pupils showcased their skills, cheered each other on, and embraced the fun, fast-paced nature of the game. It was a wonderful display of teamwork and House pride, with everyone contributing to a vibrant and enjoyable event. With results tallied, Hereford emerged victorious in three year-group competitions — a decisive lead that secured their overall success.

House Debating

On the penultimate day of term, the Prep School gathered for one of the most entertaining events of the year: the House Debating Competition. With four Houses, festive motions, and our confident Prep 2 pupils hosting and chairing every round, the morning was full of brilliant arguments, quick wit and plenty of Christmas cheer. The first round saw two seasonal motions take centre stage:

This House believes that Scrooge was misunderstood, and This House believes that the Grinch did not deserve forgiveness. Knighton and Manor opened proceedings with lively and thoughtful speeches, while Hereford and Monkams followed with equally impressive points and confident delivery. The standard of debating was excellent, and the rest of the school found the arguments both thought provoking and very funny. For the second round, the remaining teams were given one of two released motions: This House believes that Brussels sprouts should be banned, or This House believes the Naughty List should be abolished. The children rose to the challenge, bringing creativity, humour and reasoning to both topics. Knighton and Monkams won their first-round debates, which meant that Manor and Hereford moved into the second-round debate to compete for 3rd and 4th place. Knighton and Monkams advanced to the final, where they faced each other to decide the overall winner and runner-up.

The final results were:

4th place – Manor

3rd place – Hereford

2nd place – Knighton

1st place – Monkams

A huge well done to all our debaters, and to the Prep 2 chairs and hosts who led the event so confidently. It was a fantastic celebration of pupil voice and festive fun!

Here are the overall results at the end of this first term:

HEREFORD	180
KNIGHTON	174
MANOR	180
MONKHAMS	154

Our First Parkrun

On Sunday 30th November, around forty enthusiastic pupils - along with plenty of equally energetic parents - took part in our first ever local Parkrun, an initiative led by Miss Bird, our in-house running expert. Miss Bird has already inspired many children through her popular running groups at school, and it was wonderful to see that enthusiasm spill over into a community event. It was a bright, sunny morning, perfect for running, and spirits were high from the very start. Children and parents completed the course together, cheering one another on and proving that running is even more fun when shared. For many pupils, it was their first time taking part in a Parkrun, and the sense of achievement at the finish line was clear to see. The turnout was fantastic, and even more excitingly, several children enjoyed it so much that they returned the following week to run again - a brilliant sign of growing confidence and enthusiasm. We hope to organise another school-led Parkrun soon so children can join in with their friends once again. Of course, families are welcome to take part in any Parkrun at any time, but keep an eye out for our next Bancroft's meet-up... we'd love to see even more of you there!

