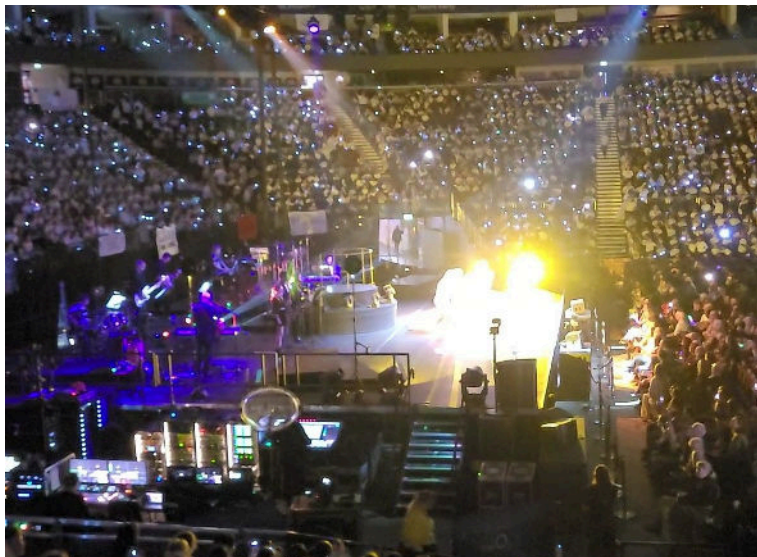


This edition of Prep Headlines is packed full of articles written by the children themselves. We feel that is how it should be. We want to hear the children's voices and it is especially valuable when they share activities that enthuse them and issues that are on their minds. Next half term's Prep Headlines is going to be produced by the children themselves under the guest editorship of Elizabeth in Prep 2 who has a flair for writing and an interest in journalism. Two old hacks will be on hand to advise Elizabeth and her team (Mr Carson and I both worked as journalists in our previous careers). However, we strongly suspect that the children will be just fine without much assistance from us or indeed from Mrs Dalton who usually oversees this publication so brilliantly! So watch this space for even more news from the Bancroft's children and, for now, enjoy the latest reports of all that's been happening this past half term.



Young Voices

Each year, Young Voices brings together children from schools across the country to form the largest children's choir in England, performing at major venues such as the O2 Arena in London. After months of rehearsing in school, thousands of pupils come together for a full afternoon rehearsal before performing in the evening alongside a live band, professional singers and dance groups. This year, the Prep 1 pupils took part in the Young Voices concert at the O2 on 21 January. It was clearly a hugely memorable experience, as so many children were keen to write about it afterwards! Here is a selection of their highlights, shared in their own words.



"We left at 12:30pm and arrived at 2:00. The main conductor, David, was sorting the groups when we arrived at the arena. After a three-hour rehearsal, the concert finally began. My personal favourites were the Pop Medley, Power in Me and Disco Fever. Nobody in the whole O2 will forget Young Voices 2026." Ibrahim IZR
"More than 8,000 children from different schools came together to perform in front of a packed audience. The arena pulsed like a living heartbeat. When thousands of glowing torches lit up the arena, waving like a sea of stars, it was magical. It's a night I'll never forget." Krish ITB

"Two days before the big event, I took the script to bed with me, to school, and even to the toilet! When we finally walked into the arena, you don't know intimidated until you've been inside the O2. Singing with 8,000 other children was an incredible feeling." Freya ITB

"When we walked through the blue corridor and into the arena, my eyes burst. The view was amazing and the arena was humongous. Singing 'Stargazing' with nearly 9,000 children was my favourite moment of the evening."

Ayush ICP

"All 8,891 children made this the biggest children's choir in the world. We practised for a long time, but I didn't mind because the band were playing and Urban Strides were dancing. When the lights went out and we sang and danced, it felt amazing." Sofia ICP

"When everyone turned on their tiny torches, the arena looked like a galaxy of stars. Being in the O2 is way different than singing in the classroom — it's super loud, the lights are bright, and you feel like a real rockstar!" Michael IZR

"When the concert started, all the lights turned off and you could only see the Young Voices torches. My favourite song was Stargazing in the Pop Medley. It was a one-in-a-lifetime opportunity." Ameena ICP

Debating News



On Tuesday 3rd February, a team of six Prep 2 pupils went to Forest School to participate in an Interschool Debating Challenge. Other schools attending included St Aubyn's, Snaresbrook Prep, Chigwell and Avon House. We took part in three debates: This House Believes That AI Can Solve the World's Biggest Problems, This House Believes That Animals Should Not Be Kept as Pets, and This House Believes That Social Media Should Be Banned for Under-Sixteens. Our first two debates were prepared in advance and we had notes ready. The final debate was a cold debate, and we had just ten to fifteen minutes to prepare our points. We were split into two teams of three - Bancroft's Lions and Bancroft's Pride - with a first, second and closing speaker in each team. The debates were great fun, and it was exciting to have the chance to debate against other schools. Each debate lasted about fifteen minutes, and each speaker had two minutes to speak (not including points of information). Both teams won and lost some debates, but the Challenge was not competitive. It was a great opportunity and an amazing evening. It was enjoyable to compete in a friendly way with other schools and put our debating skills to the test. We also had to practise thinking on our feet and making strong counterarguments. Overall, it was a fantastic experience and a lot of fun!

Elizabeth 2JH

Cicero Cup

On Thursday 29 January, Bancroft's took part in the Cicero Cup, a national debating competition for Years 4–6. This round was held at Mossbourne Riverside Academy, a school in Hackney. Mrs Rathod chose six Prep 2 pupils to represent the school: Izzy, Arjun, Charlotte, Shivam, Jessica and me. We met at Woodford Station and took the tube to Hackney. Upon our arrival at Mossbourne, we met the host of the Cicero Cup — a debating champion and leader of The Noisy Classroom. We weren't in the first debate, so we watched another school's debate on whether junk food should be taxed. We had prepared for a set debate on whether compulsory military service should be introduced for school leavers. We didn't know which side we were on, so we were all waiting for the moment of truth... we were on the opposing side! The team for the set debate was Elise,

Jessica and Shivam. It was really fun to give our speeches and to hear the other school's arguments. Next, it was time for the cold debate. The team for this was Izzy, Arjun and Charlotte. They had just 20 minutes to prepare once they found out the motion, which was: Should parents only have one child? We were proposing the motion and did really well, but so did the other schools. After lunch, the results were announced. Only one of the three schools could make it through. Even though Mossbourne Academy won, it was still really fun and an amazing experience. We are hoping that next year's Prep 2 pupils will also get the opportunity to compete in the Cicero Cup!

Elise 2JH

Prep 1 Science Trip

On Friday 6 February 2026, the Prep 1s embarked on an epic trip to the Science Museum in London. At the museum, we attended an event called Mission to Space. Volunteers were called up to take part in experiments, the first of which involved a student poking a hydrogen-filled balloon with a fire-tipped prong — creating quite a bang! There were other amazing demonstrations too, including a Pringles can blast, a firework strapped to a chair, and putting a toy inside a vacuum chamber. We concluded the event by learning about an astronaut who sadly burned to death... gory! After a heart-warming lunch, we headed to the big IMAX theatre to watch a film called Our Beautiful Planet. As we put on our 3D glasses, we entered a world exploring Earth, space and time, and what has happened to Mars. We learned about global temperature increases, what life is like on the International Space Station, and how Mars changed over time. Now brimming with knowledge and curiosity, we explored more of the museum before heading to our favourite part of the trip... SPACE! Since the Prep 1s are learning about the Earth, Sun and Moon in science, we were excited to see rocket engines, lunar landing modules, and even a holographic planet projector in a small auditorium. Afterwards, our teachers returned from the space café and, feeling excited and completely mind-blown by the experience, it was time to head home. If there's one thing the Prep 1s learned that day, it's that science is far more than just knowledge — it takes a lot of imagination to make all this happen. I would definitely do this trip again... if I had my way!

Krishna ICP



Geology Workshop

On Thursday, 5th February, the Alphas took part in a geology workshop in the Prep Hall, led by Ian. He began by explaining what geology is — the scientific study of the Earth. Parents were also invited, including mine, which was lucky. Ian then split the Alphas into groups and we chose team names. Our group was called The Rockers. Our first task was to classify rocks based on their features, such as whether they were smooth or rough. Ian then explained the terms permeable and impermeable, and we carried out a fair test to see which rocks allowed water to pass through. Next, Ian explained the three types of rock: igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic. After this, we had lunch. In the afternoon, we moved around different workstations. At the first station, we made fossils out of clay. The second involved making fossils out of sweets, which helped us see how rocks are pushed together. The third station focused on squashing Play-Doh. At the fourth station, we used microscopes to look at rocks more closely. The fifth station tested erosion, and the final station involved smashing rocks. Overall, the day was fantastic. Ian made the workshop engaging, and the Alphas learned lots of different things.

Xavian AAK



Drone Workshop

On Tuesday 20 January, the Prep 2 pupils had the pleasure of taking part in a drone workshop. First, we sat down and listened very carefully to the safety instructions, before heading over to a table where we were handed Tello drones and their corresponding iPads. We were put into groups of our own choice (let's be honest - otherwise it wouldn't have been as fun) and shown which app to open so we could start coding our drones. We learned how to find tutorials on the app and began exploring this new type of code. Using a series of simple commands such as: `flyForward(cm: UINT)` and `flyBackward(cm: UINT)` `flyLeft(cm: UINT)` and `flyRight(cm: UINT)` `turnRight(degrees: INT)` and `turnLeft(degrees: INT)` `takeoff()` and `land()`

we slowly worked out how to control the drones. Some groups even created more complicated algorithms, making dance routines with two drones at once, which we marvelled at through our slowly steaming safety goggles. I can't exactly say that we were suddenly masters of drone coding after half an hour (or maybe it was just me), as I continuously crashed my drone into the curtain while trying to make it fly in a square — which turned out to be much larger than I expected... and about three metres in the air. The coding language we were using is called Swift, and by the end of the session, we had all had a hands-on introduction to how coding can bring technology to life. Theo 2BR

Borrow the Moon

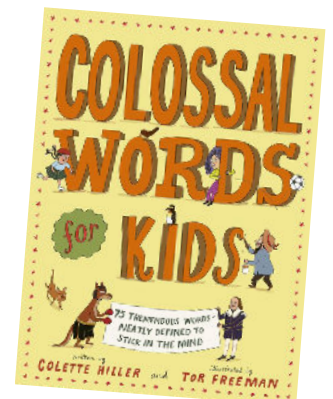


Some of our Prep 1 pupils recently took part in the incredible Borrow the Moon workshop — a programme that gives schools the rare opportunity to handle genuine Moon rock and meteorite samples collected during NASA's Apollo missions. The children were able to carefully see and touch pieces of the Moon itself, bringing their space learning thrillingly to life. Amazingly, some of these lunar rocks are over 3.8 billion years old — older than most life on Earth — and were carried back to our planet by astronauts travelling nearly 384,400 kilometres through space. It was a truly unforgettable experience and one that sparked plenty of awe and curiosity.

Colossal Words

In our Friday assemblies, we've been shining a spotlight on Colette Hiller's CLiPPA award-winning book *Colossal Words for Kids*. Each week, pupils hear a different poem from the collection, introducing them to an intriguing and ambitious word in a memorable and meaningful way. Growing a rich vocabulary is important because it gives children the tools to think more precisely, express themselves more clearly and understand the world around them with greater depth and confidence. So far we've learned these words:

- precarious
- zest
- querulous
- procrastinate
- meander
- jovial
- kerfuffle
- iridescent
- epiphany
- ambiguous
- effervescent



Can you remember what they all mean? Look out for some more colossal words coming next half term!

Book Project

We would like to say a huge thank you to our wonderful parent community for their incredible generosity in supporting the Children's Book Project. Thanks to your kindness, we donated over 350 books, helping to place high-quality, engaging stories into the hands of children who need them most. The Children's Book Project works to tackle book poverty by redistributing new and gently used books to children and families across the UK. For many children, owning books of their own can make a powerful difference - supporting literacy, sparking imagination and fostering a lifelong love of reading. This initiative was a fantastic example of what we can achieve when we work together. We are especially proud of our Charity Ambassadors, who took on the important role of delivering the donated books to the local hub. Their enthusiasm, responsibility and commitment truly embodied the spirit of the project.

Sarah Strong



Betas Got Talent

On Tuesday 13 January, Mrs Kinnair had an amazing idea. What the Betas needed to cheer them up during the cold winter months was a talent show! She wanted to showcase the wide variety of talent in the Betas, and so the idea of Betas Got Talent was born! Betas Got Talent is a show where pupils can perform any creative skill, whether that is singing, dancing, poetry or even a karate act. The Betas were very excited to hear the news and immediately started planning solos, forming duets and creating groups. Some intend to sing, others plan to dance, and still more are preparing to play musical instruments. It has been wonderful to see how the Betas have planned and practised for their auditions, working closely with one another both during and after school. The much-anticipated auditions will be held this Friday, 23 January. The show is expected to take place at the end of the Spring Term and will follow the format of semi-finals and finals. The Betas are preparing to bring all their talent to the stage, with the aim of entertaining their friends and teachers alike. While there are a few nerves, the excitement is far greater - this is a chance for the Betas to be themselves and have lots of fun!

Lauren BNB

Lunchtime Concerts

The Lunchtime Concerts are delightful and intimate events, giving pupils the opportunity to showcase their musical talents. During these special concerts, children perform for their peers and parents in a warm and engaging environment. In January, we heard from a wonderful range of instrumentalists and singers, including a beautiful solo oboe piece by Raja, an electric guitar performance by Ishen, and some lovely songs performed by Jessica, Vaishnavi, Aliyah, Adele and Eknor. We also enjoyed some fun piano pieces performed on the grand piano by Rudi, Jaini, Ophelia and Ruien. In addition, Rory played the drums along to Sunny by Boney M, and Alicia performed on the flute. It was a wonderful concert, featuring music from a range of genres including jazz, TV themes, pop and classical. February's concert was equally impressive. We heard Henry, Audrey, Summer, David, Charlotte and Aanaya perform a variety of pieces on the grand piano. We were also delighted by Delia and Elizabeth playing their clarinets, Lauren performing on the cello, Izzy on the flute, and Audrey on the violin. Daniel sang Somewhere Over the Rainbow, delivering a beautifully poignant performance. Congratulations to all of the children who performed - some for the very first time in a lunchtime concert. It has been lovely to see other pupils take time out of their lunch breaks to watch and cheer on their classmates, creating a true sense of school spirit and camaraderie. The Lunchtime Concerts are a wonderful opportunity for children to share their hard work and passion for music, and to perform for both their families and their enthusiastic supporters.

Kati Kinnair

Lunar New Year



In assembly on Thursday, we celebrated the Lunar New Year because us brilliant Bancroftians respect and recognise all the different festivals that we celebrate with our families. The Alphas sang a version of 'Baby Shark' in Mandarin, Mr Layburn told the story of how the animals were chosen to represent the years, and Audrey in 2BR presented a PowerPoint about how her family celebrate at New Year with food and special clothing. The Betas took part in some craft workshops with Haoran, the Mandarin teacher. We used red paper, golden paint, sponges and templates. We dipped our sponges in the golden paint and created Chinese symbols and pictures to celebrate the 'Year of the Horse'. We wish everyone celebrating a very Happy New Year!



A Credit to Us

This half term, I was lucky enough to be one of the Green Credit Winners, and I would like to share my experience. As a reward, we were treated to a special magic show with hot chocolate. The event took place on the morning of 12th February. The magician, Tim, performed some amazing tricks for us and the other Credit Winners. One of the most surprising moments was when he pulled a real rabbit out of a string of coloured scarves! It was such a fun event, and I was very proud to receive my certificate and badge. I would like to thank everyone who helped organise this special reward. If you weren't a Credit Winner this time, keep working hard - you never know, next time it might be you! Well done to all the Credit Winners!

Aanaya BSS



Cubs Winter Camp

Cubs Winter Camp was an awesome, action-packed adventure! We got to do so many amazing activities - for example, climbing up rocky terrain, hiking up hills, or even swinging on ropes above an icy lake! On that cold wintery weekend, we went hiking, tackled a very challenging obstacle course while tied together with a partner (thank you, Grace!), and even ran through the muddy forest at 8pm - in pitch darkness! We stayed at the Cubs Centre in Cheshunt. Most of our Bancroft's Cub Pack came along, although not everyone could make it. It was such a special event for everyone in Cubs. The girls at Winter Camp were Eden, Anika, Grace and me for the whole weekend, with Isabelle and Arianna joining us for the day activities. We set off for camp on the night of Friday 30 January and returned to the warmth of our homes on Sunday, where we were greeted by warm smiles from our families, who had clearly missed us very much! Our trusted leaders for this awesome adventure were Akela, John, Andrew and Rupert's dad. Sad fact: our Akela will be leaving her role next year. We very much hope that Cubs will continue as Winter Camp was so much fun and we all loved being away for the weekend

Aliyah BSS

Pupil Spotlight - Photo

Kush in BLW is a keen and talented photographer who regularly spends time outside school capturing images through his camera lens. He has previously attended a specialist photography course at Colchester Zoo, where he took some striking wildlife photographs, and last weekend visited Richmond Park to photograph the deer that roam freely through the park. We are delighted to share a selection of his impressive work in this edition of Prep Headlines. We know many pupils have interests beyond the classroom, and we would love to hear about hobbies that reflect curiosity, creativity or dedication to a unique pursuit. If you would like to share a hobby in a future pupil spotlight, please get in touch!



School Council News

On 4th February, members of the School Council met with Mr Shaun Wilson, Chief Operating Officer, to discuss school lunches following feedback from the recent pupil survey. The meeting gave pupils the opportunity to share their views and ask thoughtful questions about catering. Several suggestions were raised. Pupils asked whether sandwiches could be offered as an alternative to jacket potatoes and pasta; however, due to the large numbers involved, preparation time and food safety considerations, this is not currently possible. Mr Wilson agreed to look into sourcing larger rolls so pupils can make their own. Pupils also suggested penne instead of spaghetti and asked whether Yorkshire puddings could accompany roast dinners. Portion sizes were considered good, and pupils were pleased that returning for seconds is allowed. Popular menu items include chicken burgers, yoghurt and churros, while tapioca was less well received. Pupils also learned more about how food is prepared fresh on site and about the school's sustainable practices. The meeting ended positively, with agreement to hold similar discussions twice a year.

Sarah Strong

Sporting News

That's eight weeks of football in games now completed. Over the final few weeks, we have seen players putting their skills into practice, from crisp, accurate passing to confident dribbling and powerful, well-timed shots. Lessons and matches have focused on developing close control, quick decision-making in tight spaces and composure in front of goal, with clear improvements in technique and teamwork throughout.

As the football programme came to an end, the pitches came alive with high-energy House Football. Hereford, Knighton, Manor and Monkams went head-to-head across Alpha, Beta, Prep 1 and Prep 2. Matches were fast-paced, fiercely competitive and often decided by the finest of margins, with thrilling end-to-end action throughout. Every House showed fantastic determination, teamwork and pride, combining skilful passing, confident dribbling and clinical finishing to produce an exciting and memorable finale to the season.

Final Boys' Football Fixtures

The boys completed their football season with one final block fixture against Brentwood. They did themselves and the school proud with their effort, application and demonstration of skill on the field. The matches were highly competitive, and Team PE was extremely proud of the progress the boys have made since the start of the football programme in November. Well done to all involved.

In2 Hockey Boys

The U11 boys' hockey team competed in the In2 Hockey competition at Felsted School. This event provided a valuable pre-season development opportunity, allowing players to assess their current level and identify areas for further improvement ahead of the hockey season. The boys performed admirably throughout the day, showing excellent resilience and competitive spirit, and should be very proud of their efforts.

Netball and Hockey Begin

As we move into the boys' hockey and girls' netball term, pupils have started the season with great enthusiasm and energy. Early lessons have focused on introducing key skills, rules and game awareness, with an emphasis on teamwork, movement and enjoyment. It has been a positive and exciting start, setting the tone for a busy term ahead.

Bancroft's v Forest

Kick-off: 2.00pm, 22 January - what a great start! We were full of beans, tracking back well and taking opportunities. We made some great runs and had a few unlucky misses on goal, but we kept our spirits high and carried on working hard. However, we missed some crucial tackles, which led to conceding goals. In the first half, we conceded two goals but managed to score one ourselves. We were full of joy to get a goal before half-time, but sadly after the break our

coach noticed we were starting to show signs of tiredness. Forest went on to score three more goals, making the final score 5-1. It's a scoreline that stings, but there's a lot to learn and a lot to build on. One of our greatest chances came when Barnaby picked up the ball just outside the box and took a shot, missing by millimetres. That moment lifted the team's spirits and pushed us to keep trying to score. At the back, our defence was under pressure and, at times, looked stretched. Aidan was possibly the best player on the pitch — he was a brilliant goalkeeper and helped us hugely. Our team consisted of Aidan, Rory, Zach, Barnaby, Milan, Shrey, Jaxsen, Idrees and me. Personally, I think Shrey was Man of the Match; he got stuck into every tackle and never stopped working. Credit to the opposition — they played with energy, intensity and strong execution in both attack and transition. Their resilience and tactical discipline ultimately made the difference. We know where we need to improve, especially with more cohesive defending under pressure. We are already back in training, working hard and fully focused on our next fixture. This group has grit, determination, unity and a relentless spirit — and we will show that in our upcoming matches. In football, wins teach you confidence and losses teach you lessons. Go Team Bancroft's!

Viaan BLW

Bancroft's v St Edmund's

On Wednesday 21 January 2026, a group of Prep 2 girls took part in a football fixture against St Edmund's. It was a super muddy day, and I couldn't even see my own feet because the mud was covering them - even the laces - but it was worth it! We ran up and down the pitch, working as a team and passing the ball confidently to one another. We were sliding everywhere, but we managed to keep ourselves together and keep going. One of my highlights was when I scored a goal - I was very proud of myself! From this experience, I not only learned valuable football skills but also an important lesson: enjoying the game matters far more than the weather conditions. By the end of the day, we had all really enjoyed it and had big smiles on our faces.

Noor 2BR

Swimming v Chigwell

Taking part in the swimming gala against Chigwell School this half term was an amazing experience, with everyone cheering — and of course, Bancroft's won the gala! The event took place at Chigwell School on Monday 12 January from 3.45pm to 5.00pm. The gala included front crawl, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly races, as well as relay events. The participants from Bancroft's were members of the Beta and Prep 1 Swim Squads. This was a really enjoyable experience, and I would like to thank the Swimming Department for arranging the gala. At the end of the event, we shook hands with the Chigwell swimmers, showing good sportsmanship. The swimming pool at Chigwell School was excellent, with six spacious lanes, diving blocks and good changing facilities.

House Balloon & Feather Challenge

The school came together on a Thursday morning to take part in the House Balloon and Feather Challenges, with every child given the opportunity to participate. The first event was the Balloon Keepy-Uppy Challenge. Each House was split into year groups and given a balloon to keep off the ground — first using hands, then fingers and finally heads — until only one House group remained. Congratulations to Knighton House for winning this challenge.

Next came the Feather Challenge, where pupils, again working in their House year groups, had to keep a feather in the air for as long as possible using only their breath. Competition was fierce and House pride was on full display, with Manor House emerging as the final winners.

Well done to all who took part and helped earn valuable House points. It was wonderful to see the whole school coming together to compete enthusiastically while having fun.

House Football

The highly anticipated culmination of the football term was the House Football competition. It was fantastic to see all pupils taking part and wearing their House colours with pride. The standard of play was high, with pupils clearly applying the skills they had developed throughout the term. Matches were competitive and played in excellent spirit, with plenty of goals, some outstanding saves and great sportsmanship throughout.

In the Alpha, Beta and Prep 2 competitions, Hereford were the overall winners, while Knighton claimed victory in the Prep 1 competition. Well done to all pupils who took part.

House Table Tennis

Prep School pupils also had the opportunity to compete in House Table Tennis this term, and it was great to see such high levels of participation, including many pupils playing for the first time. The competition was fast-paced and competitive, but always played in the right spirit.

Congratulations to Hereford for winning the Beta and Prep 1 competitions, and to Manor for winning the Alpha and Prep 2 competitions.

HEREFORD	258
KNIGHTON	252
MANOR	256
MONKHAMS	212

I also loved the snacks that were given out to participants at the end by the Chigwell staff. I learned that the gala was not just about winning, but about sportsmanship and trying our best. All of the Bancroft's team members did really well. I took part in the front crawl, breaststroke and butterfly races and came first in all my races. I also competed in the freestyle relay, individual medley relay and the 12-person relay, which were great fun. Even though the races were nerve-racking, all of my teammates made it a brilliant experience. I would love to take part in more swimming galas in the future. Well done to the Bancroft's team!

Aanaya BSS

Girls' Football v Forest

On Thursday 22 January, the Betas travelled to Forest School for a football fixture. The matches were closely contested, played in challenging conditions, and gave pupils plenty to reflect on. Here are three pupil reports, each sharing a different perspective on the day:

Although it was damp and a little cold, the parents came to cheer us on - some were even shouting (in a good way)! As soon as the game started, my teammates and I raced towards the goal whenever we could. There were lots of goals, and we really felt like we were the stronger team.

With five minutes to go, the score was 3-3. One of my teammates, Aliya, got hurt and before we could blink, Forest scored the winning goal to make it 4-3. Even though we lost, we still had a great time. We all enjoyed some chocolate rice cakes afterwards, which definitely helped, and I was on cloud nine when I received Player of the Match. We are all so excited to play another game.

Grace BSS

Travelling to Forest School for the fixture was exciting, especially when we saw how big and spacious the pitch was. We played against two different teams and I was really impressed by our teamwork and the goals we scored. Even though the result didn't go our way, it was a brilliant match and a great experience. I really enjoyed playing as part of the team and seeing how well we worked together on such a large pitch. I'm already looking forward to more exciting fixtures like this in the future.

Izzah BNB

In my match, both teams played really well and the game ended in a 2-2 draw. Forest's team was strong, and I even played against a friend I know from cricket. My teammates were Audrey, Anaise, Indy, Emma, Eliza, Hana and Siana, and we worked well together as a team. Miss Dack helped us in the first half by reminding us to block Forest's players at kick-offs and not to crowd around the ball. In the second half, we had to remember and use her advice on our own - even as the rain poured straight into our faces! At the end of the match, Audrey was named Player of the Match for our team and Clara for Forest School. On the way back to Bancroft's, we were given dark chocolate rice cakes, which was a nice end to the day.

Charlotte BLW