



The Dixie Grammar School
Nursery • Junior • Senior

www.dixie.org.uk

01455 292244

Culture

One of the many privileges of my role is the opportunity to make impromptu visits to classes – from hearing Reception pupils read, seeing the progress and ingenuity of Year 11 in their Design and Technology coursework, spending time talking with Year 2 as they are writing their first ever stories to chatting with the U6th about their aspirations and university applications. Even at the end of a long term, in every corridor, classroom, Nativity performance, final assembly and Carol Concert, our values of Respect, Resilience, Courage, Commitment and Care are on display, creating an environment that nurtures not only academic excellence but also fosters individual growth and collective harmony.

The beating heart of the Dixie lies in its distinctive culture. There are many layers to school culture, from the outward face of the school community, the day to day experience of pupils, to experiences which may be harder to see. We spend a great deal of time in school considering mechanisms for hearing voices that are



harder to hear. Whilst some children are forthcoming with their struggles, for others it can be difficult to raise a concern; we are committed to helping every child to be heard. These mechanisms include face to face meetings, anonymous reporting online, student council boxes, buddies – both pastoral and academic, a school listener, as well as Sixth Form peer mentors. In addition to my meetings with the Student Council in the senior section this term, Mrs Banton has been working closely with them to seek alternative routes to enable pupils to reach out. As parents, you are a vital partner in helping us



keep your children safe and happy, from promptly raising concerns with school when you have them, to helping reinforce school messages at home.

Respect and care should be hallmarks of all communication - between pupils, parents and staff. We know that there are always contexts behind the occasional incidences of poor pupil behaviour in school, and understanding these is a priority for the

pastoral team. We always look to deal with low level, poor behaviour as quickly as possible – and again, your help in communicating concerns is invaluable. That said, just as in the classroom, with regards pastoral matters we can't just give pupils the answers— we aim to give Dixie pupils a toolkit to help them navigate their own social challenges, as well as a first aid kit when issues become more serious. How else can they develop the resilience they need for life—Resilience is the theme for this coming half term.

We are delighted that seven in our Upper Sixth aspire to medical, veterinary or Oxbridge courses, and we are pleased that the introduction of assessment points throughout the year is helping to focus the attention of all. All our Sixth Form will have worked over the holidays to prepare for assessments on their return, but with over 60% of grades from the first assessment at A* to B, and 85% at A* to C, our Upper Sixth have made an impressive start and are on track for real success this coming summer.



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**Academic,
Culture &
Christmas**

Year 11 have just sat their mock examinations – moved from their traditional slot after Christmas to a new position just before. Our aim remains to simulate the experience of the real GCSE exams, to help pupils better prepare for the summer, and we have all been delighted with the way pupils in Year 11 have risen to the challenge - congratulations to them all. Year 11 have certainly earned their Christmas break without too much study – well done!



Beyond the academic, our culture is evident in the laughter that echoes during collaborative projects, the encouragement shared during challenging times, and the applause that rings out in support of each other's successes. Our values were fully on display in the recent Nativities at the Junior site and 'Touch of Christmas' at the Senior, as well as in our Carol Services. They were also exemplified by the actions of two Sixth Form pupils earlier this term who stood between an abusive customer and staff in the Coop. The report from the recent Year 7 trip to the German Market in Birmingham was equally impressive - Mrs Till reported that "all students behaved brilliantly and made us proud."

It was a Pippins solo in our Junior service and Harriet's solo (Year 6) in our senior concert that helped ensure there was not a dry eye in the church for our carol services! Thank you to all who were able to support our Christmas celebrations.



Remaining pages contain a mix of updates, news and pictures from last term. I wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year!

Richard Hyman



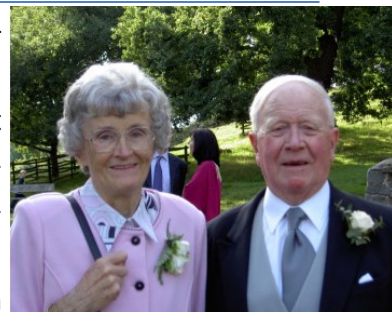
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Alumni, Patron & Staff news

We are sorry to share the sad news of the passing of re-founding Headmaster, Dr Arnold Burrows, pictured with his late wife, Marilyn. He passed away on Boxing Day night in his sleep, at the age of 95. He was also one of the founding members of the Leicestershire Independent Educational Trust. He was proud of his achievements at Dixie and attended the external re-founding plaque unveiling with Mr Frank Robinson. The school will be represented at his funeral and we hope the school choir will be able to make a contribution to the service. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dr Burrows – for his vision, determination and success as a founding member of the LIET and in re-founding Dixie Grammar School as Headmaster from 1987 until his retirement in 1993.



Just missing Dr Burrows' time as Headmaster is a member of Dixie alumni, Chris Bryant (1999-2004 and Head Boy 2003/2004). He is pictured left in a [Tweet from the FA](#) celebrating his MBE in the 2024 New Year Honours.



Christopher is currently Director of Tournaments and Events at the Football Association and has been awarded an MBE for his work in leading the delivery of England's hosting of the Women's 2022 Euro Championships and the successful bid for the Men's 2028 Euro Championships. Congratulations!

Professor Dame Carol Black, the former principal of Newnham College, Cambridge, and Dixie Patron who wrote a hard-hitting independent review of the impact of illicit drugs on society, has been made a Dame Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire (GBE) for public service. A Grand Cross is the highest rank in the Order, and is very rarely awarded, recognising only the most exceptional and sustained service to the UK.



Staff News

We look forward to welcoming Mrs Blackett as a new member of Pippins staff this term—she will be working 3 days per week—giving us greater flexibility with our popular Nursery school setting. Earlier last term we welcomed Mrs Rackham-Sayer as teaching support in Pippins.

We welcomed Mrs Horsfall back from maternity leave just before the Christmas break and look forward to welcoming Mrs Mellors back later this term.

Mrs Gu has had an extended period of time away from school and we look forward to her starting a phased return to teaching this term, alongside Miss Wang, Miss Liao and Mr Smith in our thriving Mandarin department.

Mrs Isherwood stepped away from her role at the end of last term to pursue a new challenge—we thank her for her professionalism and care and wish her every success for the future. Mrs Moore will be replacing her in the Senior front office, and I know that she will receive the traditional Dixie welcome as she starts her new role on Monday 8 January.



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Dr Evans, MP, visit to school

A number of staff took part in a 100 a day November challenge of either 100 press-ups, 100 sit-ups or 100 squats per day in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support, showing commitment and trying to raise money for such a worthy cause. We set a target of £500 and would love to reach and even surpass it. [Our Just Giving page can be found here.](#)



Navigating Change Together: An Update on Dr. Luke Evans' Visit, Local MP:

Dixie Grammar School was honoured to host local MP Dr. Luke Evans on December 15, 2023. Dr. Evans, accompanied by Reuben Stephenson (Deputy Head Boy 2018 - 2019, now working in Dr. Evans' Constituency Office), engaged in a constructive dialogue regarding potential impacts of Labour Party policies. The discussion focused on VAT on tuition fees and the potential withdrawal of charity business rates relief; and what this could mean for our school and the local community.

In an ongoing effort to ease concern among parents, School remains vigilant and proactive in monitoring and preparing for potential changes under a Labour Government. We are actively exploring strategies to mitigate any adverse impact any changes might have on our school or parents.

During the visit, a positive and informative meeting took place with our staff and governors. Head Girl Holly Davies and Head Boy Miles Pulsford provided a guided tour, engaging in rich dialogue regarding recent changes to student loans.

Finally, exciting news for our students emerged from this engagement. A private tour of the House of Commons in 2024 has been secured, and Mr. Lynn graciously accepted the invitation. This opportunity aligns seamlessly with our School's Aim to "educate students as confident and active community members". What to expect next:

1. **Diverse perspectives:** As part of our plan, we will extend similar invitations to the Labour and Liberal Democrat Parties to engage in constructive dialogue on these critical issues.
2. **Stay Informed:** We are actively monitoring and preparing for potential changes to stay ahead of the curve.
3. **Inclusive Communication:** Regular communications will be shared as necessary to proactively keep you updated.
4. **Your Input Matters:** [Share your thoughts and queries with us through our feedback mechanism.](#)
5. **Student Opportunity:** We will be communicating the school trip plan to the House of Commons in the coming months. Special gratitude to our Bursar, Michael Frost, whose invaluable support and expertise enhance our preparations substantially. We understand that change can be unsettling; please be assured that we are committed to navigating these changes together, ensuring the well-being of our indelible school culture and community.

For further questions, please feel free to contact Michael Frost (frostm@dixie.org.uk).



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**Governance,
Facilities,
Safeguarding**

Governance - a message from the Chair of Governors, Jo Fenton Parkes.

At our December Full Board meeting we said 'farewell and thank you' to Ian Smith. Ian has served as Vice Chair of Governors and Chair of Finance, Facilities and People Committee during his many years as a governor. Many of you will know Ian as a Dixie parent too. Charles Kendall has also retired from the Board after almost a decade of serving on several committees, significantly as Chair of the Bernard Heathcote Foundation Committee which manages bursaries. We are delighted that Charles has accepted our invitation to become a Patron. At the same meeting we welcomed David Jinks to the Board. Governors and School Leadership and Management work very closely together, sharing ideas, discussing issues, solving problems and looking to the future to ensure that The Dixie Grammar School is delivering what pupils need with the best staff in place to deliver that.

Facilities

The site will be closed for much of the Christmas and New Year break but we still anticipate the following work to be carried out prior to term starting on Monday 8th January:

1. Fixing the flooring outside room 16 (senior site)
2. Ongoing fire door inspection (both sites)
3. Continued work on the drainage for the boys toilets (senior site)
4. Upgrading the security alarm (junior site)
5. Inspection of the Astro at Barton Road (10 January)
6. The installation of a security fence (junior site) commenced 18 December 2023, and should be completed by 8th January.
7. In advance of next term, we are in the process of installing Dash Cams and Cabin View Cameras to help monitor the safety of children using our minibuses, but also the minibuses generally from other road users. in response to an incident on one of our minibuses last term.

Safeguarding— message from Mrs Banton, Designated Safeguarding Lead 3-18

Apple released their new iOS 17 operating system in September - one of the new features includes a Sensitive Content Warning. You can choose to receive a warning about any photos or videos that might contain nudity before you view them. It also links to related resources and guidance to help users make safer and comfortable choices. If **Sensitive Content Warning** is activated on your device and the device believes an image/ video contains nudity, then your device will blur the image and display a warning so you can choose to view it or not. Apple itself does not receive any notification that nudity was detected and is not able to access your photos or videos as a result. You can activate this in **Settings > Privacy & Security** - Sensitive Content Warning is turned off by default. Further information can be sourced from [Apple Support here](#).

In addition, the following age rating reminders of what your child is accessing online may also be timely: Age ratings are in place to help protect children - whether they are viewing films, accessing apps, playing games online, using social media or downloading other apps, please do check the age rating and review the content first to see if it would be beneficial to apply further parental controls. [You may also find this Parent Zone article interesting](#).



Finally, AI is a point of much discussion at the moment. [You may find this blog from Twinkl](#), which focuses on generative AI, a helpful way to stay informed and support your children as they navigate their way through this technology.



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Environ- mental update



Dixie environmental news update!!

Where's the honey?

With thanks to the PTA, we welcomed our very first colony of bees in May this year and Debbie (our queen bee!) and her colony seem to be enjoying their new home. As they arrived quite late in the year, they have expended most of their energy establishing themselves, increasing their numbers and storing food for themselves in the Winter. Bees have a 28 day life cycle so it takes a lot of their time and energy just feeding and caring for the eggs, larvae and newly born bees. We decided not to take any honey this year as we wanted them to get fully established, and it was a very wet summer. Bees do not like to fly in the rain!

At the moment the bees have shut down their visible activity for the Winter. The hive still contains the queen and female worker bees but the male drones have been 'dismissed' from the hive. The colony reduces right down over the winter to impulse speed to ensure that they survive till Spring.

The exciting news is that we have just received a second hive which we hope will become a training hive where some keen and interested students can get more involved. We are hoping to harvest some honey next year too! Watch this space for more information! I

Mrs Cormack's end of year Bee Movie can be accessed [here](#). All of the four movies (live from the hive) completed by Mrs Cormack are [here](#).

Glowing report from the Woodland Trust

In the summer we had a visit from the Woodland Trust who have provided all the trees that have been planted by students over the past 6 years. We have planted hundreds of saplings which arrive 10-30cm in length and some are now over 6 feet tall. Our very first saplings were planted by the current Year 11 students when they were in Year 5. We continue to care for the saplings and trees as part of Forest School and DOSE activities. We remove dead saplings or any dead growth and mulch them with the leaves collected by the ground staff to protect them from drying out in hot weather and to feed them. An-



Planting trees with the Rotary Club last Spring



drew from the Woodland Trust said the Dixie was one of the best sites he had seen in terms of the health of the trees and the ways we were caring for them. Mr Lynn is always trying to order more trees so we just have to keep finding more space!



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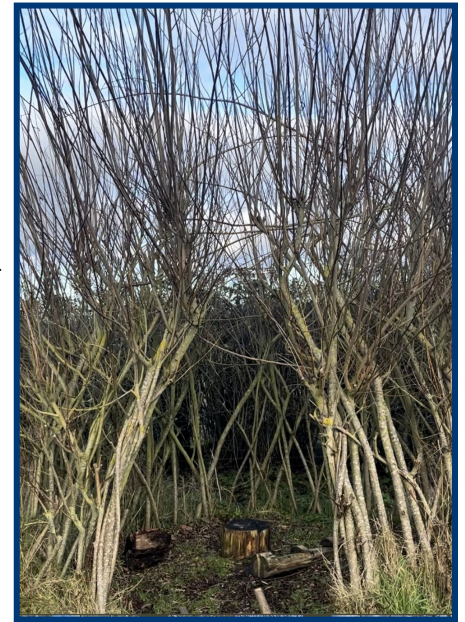
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Biodiversity & sustainability

Biodiversity & sustainability

We have seen an increase in the number of species of flora and fauna, mainly due to the increase in areas left to grow wild and ground and tree cover. We have spotted hare, deer, buzzards, ducks, pheasants, squirrels, toads, mice and voles and we plan to plant more trees and a wildflower meadow next year to help the bees and to further widen plant biodiversity on the Barton Road site.

The willow planted and self seeded on both sites continues to provide us with a sustainable source of craft and construction materials for all our forest school and DOSE activities. The more we cut the more it seems to grow. This year we have cut wood to make Christmas decorations, build a natural fence and provide a large amount of natural shelter building materials at the DOSE site. We have increased the total area of land left to grow wild across the school for several reasons: to improve drainage, ground cover and increase habitat and cover for small mammals.



Giving the domes a hair cut provides us with a renewable source of Willow

Dixie Open Skies Education

Our DOSE provision is continually improving and developing and this year so far we have been working with Year 6, building further on their skills from Forest School at the Junior School. This year group have been particularly impressive in their focus, resilience, teamwork, independent skills and commitment to improving the environment. We have clearly seen the benefits of the commitment and investment of time into outdoor education at Dixie. We look forward to working with Year 8 next term on developing their outdoor & navigation skills and taking them to the Peak District as a taster for DofE in Year 9.

We have many more ideas and plans for improvement to our wild areas, please let us know if you have any ideas or would like to support in any way.

Mrs Cormack





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PTA Bazaar



The PTA Christmas Bazaar was well-stocked with tombola donations and raffle prizes... thank you to all who donated!

...then lots of eager children and parents arrived and soon enough the tables were empty!





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Christmas in Pippins



Making salt-dough for Christmas decorations



Shopping for Christmas trees at Friezeland Farm



'Snowballs' in the sports barn for Winter PE



Christmas Party time in Pippins!





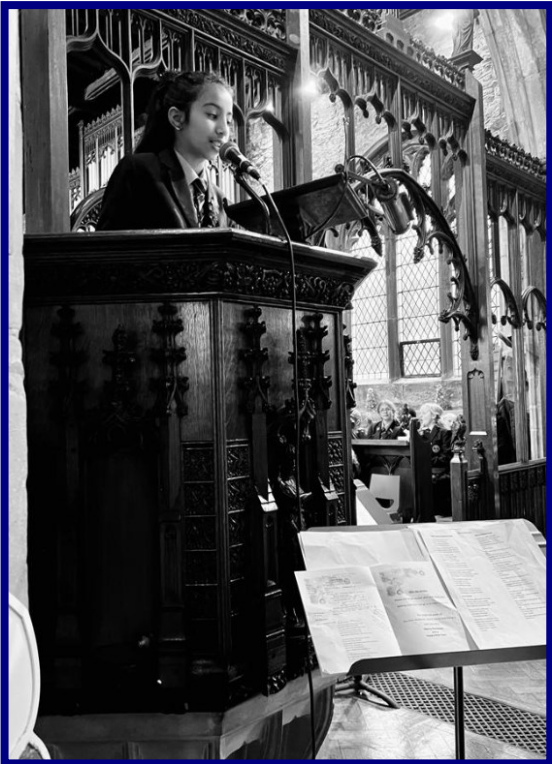
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Carols



Head Boy, Thomas, played the clarinet beautifully and head Girl, Sienna, delivered her reading with quiet confidence





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Year 7— LAMDA



The Rotary Club Santa came to visit - he read the children a Christmas story and then handed out their Christmas books (kindly provided by the PTA)

At the end of November, Year 7 embarked on a challenge to undertake their **LAMDA** Speaking in Public, Grade 1 exam, hosted at school, facilitated by a visiting examiner from the London Academy of Dramatic Arts.

The exam consisted of making a three minute speech, written by the students themselves, answering questions about the process of writing and delivering a speech, and finally engaging in a reciprocal conversation with the external examiner.

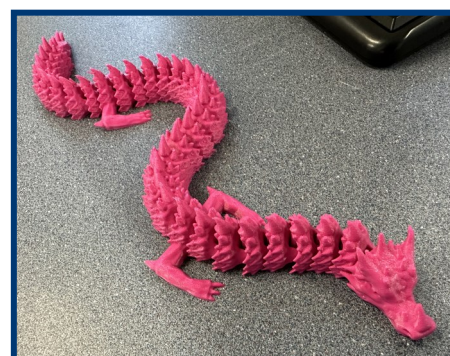
The students had worked incredibly hard for this examination, but were still apprehensive. They needn't have been!

All students passed their exam, resulting in a 100% pass rate. 68% of students received a Distinction, and 32% received a Merit.

Most importantly, both examiners commented on the students' pleasant manners, quiet confidence and their capacity to undertake a challenge, reflecting our core values of Resilience, Respect, Courage, Commitment and Care. Congratulations to all Year 7 students; we are very proud of you!

Madeline Manchon, our ever-smiling Chef at the Junior site has been nominated by Holroyd Howe for a Rising Star award. We thank her for all her dedicated work at school and wish her every success in this award.

DT and Computing were delighted to unpack their new Ultimaker 2+ 3D printer—[here is a video of it being put through its paces producing an articulated ice dragon](#) (a 7-hour print) and here is the completed piece. Dixie students benefit hugely from access to the technological skills we value so highly as part of our curriculum.



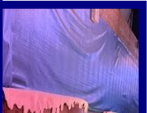


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Reception



Winter sports fun at
the Snowdome -
sledding, sleighs and
a Santa panto show!



The children had a lovely Christmas party on Monday afternoon—
lots of yummy food and party games!





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Years 1 and 2



Both year groups
enjoyed a
Christmas trip to
Conkers together



Year 2 Junk Modelling Club's
'Junk Model Angels'. The
children used various
everyday objects to create
their paper angels. (On
display at St Peter's Church).





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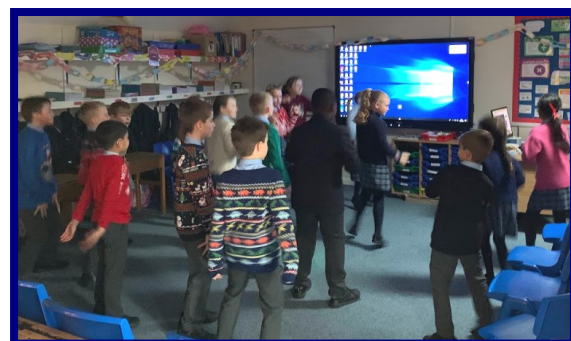
Year 3, 4 & 5



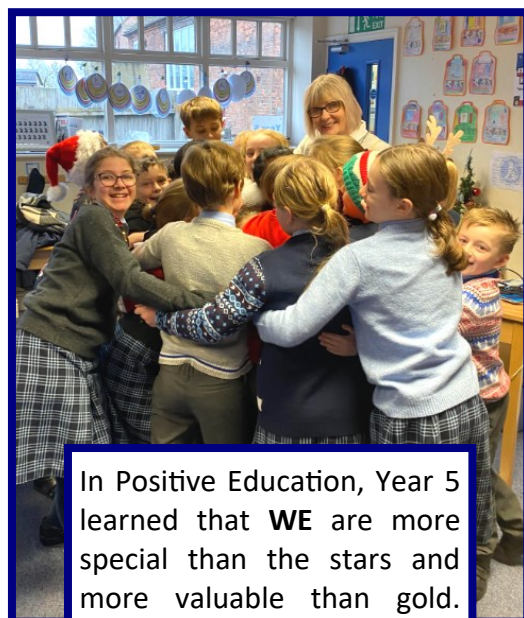
Fun final swims of the term for Year 3, 4 & 5



Year 3, 4 and 5
enjoying
Christmas
party activities.



World War II Blitz artwork



In Positive Education, Year 5
learned that **WE** are more
special than the stars and
more valuable than gold.
Then we had a group hug.
Merry Christmas Dixie-style.



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Junior Sport



Equestrian
Team success



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Junior Forest School



EYFS shared a Forest School Day where they enjoyed many fun activities, including eating their freshly-made bread rolls around the log fire and searching the forest for hidden fairy strings.



In Forest School Reception used charcoal to make paint and kept our hands warm around the fire!



After half-term, Year 2 practised tying clove hitch knots using sticks found around the grounds; last week they rounded off the term's lessons with s'mores around a roaring fire (no one noticed the drizzly rain!)





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**Enrichment,
Young
Enterprise,
Bebras**

During enrichment on Thursday 12 December, students in the Sixth Form, Year 11 and some Year 10 spent an hour via remote call with the Steven Hurst, Managing Director of HSBC China and former Dixie parent. Based in Beijing, he gave us an hour of his evening and talked about his career path and the importance of reflection, resilience and networking. He said 'your network is your net worth' and that it was never too early to make contacts and connections with those in fields you want to pursue.



*Many thanks to everyone who supported the **Young Enterprise** luxury hot chocolate fundraising event. The newly formed Pawsome Bag Company is well on its way to raising the amount needed to generate their bag for dog walkers. More news to follow in the New Year!*



Bebras is an international initiative aiming to promote Informatics and computational thinking among school students at all ages. Computational thinking involves using a set of problem-solving skills and techniques that software engineers use to write programs and apps. The Bebras challenge promotes problem solving skills and Informatics concepts including the ability to break down complex tasks into simpler components, algorithm design, pattern recognition, pattern generalisation and abstraction.

Over 408,000 students in the UK took part this year, with 125 from Dixie (Years 7-13). 10 of our students scored in the top 10% in the country, 2 more than last year!

Those in the top 10% nationally get a special Gold Award certificate and an invitation to take part in the OUCC. The Oxford University Computing Challenge (OUCC) is an invitation event which aims to encourage students who have achieved a top 10% score in the UK

Bebras Challenge to develop their skills further and produce programmed solutions to computational thinking problems. The first round will take place between 15th-19th January 2024.

The distinction and gold certificates were handed out in the final assembly of last term.

| Year | Merit | Distinction | Gold (Top 10% Nationally) |
|------|-------|-------------|------------------------------|
| 7 | 11 | 9 | 2 |
| 8 | 12 | 9 | 2 |
| 9 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| 10 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| 11 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| 12 | - | - | - |
| 13 | 0 | 1 | 1 |