



THE SHARPLES SPOTLIGHT

STUDENT VOICES



FEBRUARY EDITION

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FEATURING NEW SECTIONS, CHALLENGES,
ARTICLES AND MORE!



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Hello, I hope that you all had a great half-term! It's that time of the month when I have the honour of releasing the new Spotlight edition. However, as per usual, there are a few comments I would like to make.

Firstly, thank you. Thank you, our readers, for showing up not only to read our edition each month but also to give feedback through our survey. Everything that you tell us is greatly appreciated, and we take it all on board. Additionally, I would like to thank the Spotlight team, as there is a lot of work that happens in the background, including last-minute rushes that we all go through together. This month in particular, the team has been heavily relied on to come together through the challenges we have faced in such a busy month.

Secondly, it was so wonderful to see how many of you showed up to our Spotlight meeting yesterday. Seeing new faces is always incredible, but the number of you after the assembly in the morning who chose to follow their interest over to T2 was truly amazing. I was taken aback when I realised that you were all there to become the next generation of not just reporters but photographers and artists for the Spotlight.

Finally, I hope that you enjoy this publication of the Spotlight and are inspired to join our growing team or, at the very least, respond to our survey. Happy reading!

Next, as always, I would like to call on anyone else who needs a bit more encouragement to join the Spotlight. This month, you had Jasmine Kwok, your former head girl, in your assemblies. She shared her journey and achievements with you. Although she has only become this successful in her academics and extracurriculars by taking the opportunities laid out for her. So I would like to reinforce Miss Molyneux's famous motto, "take every opportunity". Joining the Spotlight could be your first step towards so many other achievements, like future head girl or boy, or even just getting into your dream college. So if you want to show your creative flair to others than email me at: 22mangeraa@sharplesschool.co.uk

Continuing, I would like to remind you all to fill in the survey after you have taken in all the interesting articles that this edition has to offer. You can vote on your favourite and even let us know what your best joke is, so we can include it in our next paper. I have to say the ones from last month were brilliant (page 5)!

BY AMAARA MANGERA - EDITOR



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LONDON TRIP

The week before we broke up for half term, a group of 30 year 9 students (along with a few year eights) went on an overnight trip to London.

We departed at 5:30 am and arrived in London, where we were greeted by the staff of the National Portrait Gallery. We split up into two groups. The people doing the photography workshop walked around the gallery, focusing on the symbolism behind the photographs. In the studio we created work inspired by the artist, using props and lighting to create a story.

Meanwhile in the art workshop, they focused on anatomy and positions of the face.

After that we made a stop at Covent gardens to do some shopping. The students split off into our own groups and enjoyed our free time. Then it was off to Las Iguanas for dinner. Students were offered a menu of food before the trip so the food was readily prepared as we arrived.

The Lion King was fantastic. I found it to be an incredibly unique musical as the puppetry used is not found in most musicals. The music was exciting, and captivated the crowd. The dances created the nature scene around, with the ensemble acting as blades of grass, animals and other elements you may find in an African desert. One thing I found unique about the musical was the use of African language, bringing the musical right back to its roots. The merchandise sold was high quality and lived up to the standards of the West End.



On day two we enjoyed the hotel's complimentary breakfast and then made our way down to Danceworks London where we learned some brilliant choreography from the amazing show by one of the cast members. We stopped for lunch before heading home at 7:30.

Some of the students described this trip as "educational", "the best trip they've ever been on", "busy" and "fun packed" with some wishing they could go back. Overall I think this was a brilliant trip that year nine's will continue to love for years to come.

BY PHOEBE BATES



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Y9 GEOGRAPHY & HISTORY TRIP

It was absolutely freezing on Thursday 5th February- the day 200 Year 9 students headed to Manchester for a day of exciting activities the majority of which happened to be outdoors.

We all gathered into groups at 9:00 before boarding the coaches shortly after. For some this was a moment of heartbreak as they got separated from their friends, but for others it was a moment of great relief when they saw their friends walking towards them. It was at this point I noticed that the wind was already picking up speed in Bolton and I noticed many students had come without a coat, or wearing a t-shirt, or without a bobble to tie their hair back. The prayers had begun and we needed the weather to warm up. And, yes the weather is the main character in this story.

When we arrived in Salford Quays we were hit by a biting, frosty cold and a ferocious wind, which was perfect for our first activity- a field sketch. That was sarcasm by the way. Our fingers were stiff and red, our paper would not stay still and the moaning began. I would like to clarify before I continue that the weather was the only damper to this trip and it was by no means the fault of any of the staff. They had no way to predict the weather and other than that it was a meticulously planned, and smooth running trip and we are very grateful.

For all of you wondering how on Earth Media City could become a Geography trip let me explain. We were given tasks to complete in each zone we explored- we counted pedestrians, completed an Environment Quality Survey (EQS), did a field sketch and answered questions about our surroundings. We were surprised to realise how clean, quiet and green the area was, with ease of transport and minimal traffic congestion (it was midday on a Thursday though).

Before lunch we were grateful to head inside the Imperial War museum: the History part of the trip. To give some perspective on how cold it was, it felt like we were physically thawing as we entered the warmth and it took a while to feel our toes again. I have to admit that J preferred the History section, not just because we'd escaped the cold, but because the museum was incredibly interesting. We explored the WWI and WWII exhibits alone where we were able to link our knowledge from class to the information and displays in the museum helping us to build a better understanding of the buildup, end and result of each war.

I soon realised that the displays cleverly went in chronological order and so I went on a solo mission to read the information from start to finish.





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Once we'd eaten our lunch, we completed any final zones before making our way to everyone's favourite part of the trip- the Trafford centre. We finally got to find our friends and walked around encouraging each other to buy unnecessary items. Some of us got food. I tried Wingstop for the first time and was shocked that it lived up to the hype, whereas my friends ate noodles. I spent way too much time in Waterstones where I bought a book and then spent £9 on bookmarks. No regrets. In the Jellycat section I was devastated because I just could not afford such an expensive soft toy and in Selfridges I went straight to the dessert section and bought a macaron and a dark chocolate, cherry cheesecake. It was delicious! I noticed after our shopping trip that many girls held Hollister bags, Space NYK, Kiko Milano, and Sephora bags. Whereas the boys held flimsy looking toy aeroplanes. Typical.



Overall, it was a fantastic trip and on behalf of Year 9 I'd like to thank all the staff who helped organise it, in particular, Mrs Finney and Mr Barnes. Hopefully, this trip will become a yearly tradition for Y9s, but maybe at a different time of year.

BY KHADIJA MOOSA

JOKES COLUMN:

What do you call a lazy kangaroo?

Pouch potato

- Anonymous

Why did the kid bring a ladder to school?

She wanted to go to high school!

-Zeyba Ismail 8S1

Why don't scientists trust atoms?

Because they make up
EVERYTHING

-Fatema Gendi 7P5

Why do we tell actors to break a leg?

because every play has a cast

- Anonymous



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RAMADHAN:

A month of reflection, self-discipline and spiritual growth

This month marks a very important time for Muslims around the world as it is the sacred month of Ramadhan. This month is recognised as a time of fasting, reflection, self-discipline, spiritual growth and submission. During Ramadhan, many Muslims around the world fast every day for 29-30 days from dawn until sunset. Fasting is not just abstinence from food and drink, but it also teaches patience, humility, self-control, and the ability to find strength beyond physical needs. It is a time when individuals focus on strengthening their character, faith and connection with Allah.

Before each fast, some will have a pre-dawn meal called Suhoor/ Sehri. It is a Sunnah of the Messenger (PBUH) and is a meaningful part of fasting, which carries both spiritual and physical benefits. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encouraged us to practise it as it contains many blessings and benefits. It also helps to keep you energised, hydrated and nourished for the day of fasting ahead. Beyond this, Suhoor is a time of reflection, gratitude and peace, when acts of worship can be done sincerely.

Each day's fast opens at sunset with a meal known as iftar, which often begins with dates and water. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "When one of you breaks his fast, let him break it with dates, for they are blessed. If he cannot find dates, then with water, for it is pure."

Ramadhan is a very special time as it is the month in which the Holy Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This is why many strive to recite The Holy Book as much as possible during Ramadhan. This month is also closely connected with empathy and generosity, as people are encouraged to help those in need and contribute to charitable causes.

For students observing Ramadhan, daily routines can feel different, particularly in a school environment. Energy levels may vary throughout the day, especially during physical activities or afternoon lessons. Small gestures, such as being considerate and acknowledging the significance of the month, can lead to understanding and respect from peers and teachers, making a meaningful difference.

Ramadhan Kareem!





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VALENTINE'S DAY

Roses and all

Valentine's Day is one of the most anticipated celebrations of the school year- hallways fill with excitement, friendships are highlighted, and others confess their feelings. But what makes them all link together? The simple yet kind gesture of gifting roses. Roses are a timeless symbol of love, appreciation, and friendship. On February 14th, inspired by the story of Saint Valentine, people around the world exchange gifts and messages to show they care. A single rose can brighten someone's day and create lasting memories.

From the very first day of selling them, in both the canteen and the new block, students flocked to buy roses. Some wanted to send roses to their friends, others to their crushes, and a few even bought roses for their teachers. Watching the order list fill up so quickly was both exciting and a little overwhelming. By the end of the week, most of the roses had been sold.

As Valentine's Day approached, each small, handwritten card was carefully attached to a bright red rose. Each felt like it carried a small piece of someone's feelings with it. Although it took quite a while, the effort that was put in was worth it.

Delivering the roses was the best part. As the roses were handed out in the form rooms, everyone looked up in anticipation. When names were called, the reactions were priceless. Some students blushed



bright red when they realised who the rose was from. Others burst into laughter and immediately showed their friends. One student covered her face in shock when she received a surprise rose from a secret admirer. Teachers reacted warmly, too. A few were genuinely surprised when they received roses from students. One teacher paused the lesson just to say thank you, smiling as she placed the rose on her desk. By the end of the afternoon, seeing so many students walking through the halls holding roses was incredibly rewarding.

Selling Valentine's Day roses wasn't just about raising money. It felt like happiness and joy were spread throughout the school. Being part of the team that made it happen gave me a sense of pride, and it turned Valentine's Day into a memory none of us will ever forget.

BY AAMEINA MAROTHI



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TEENS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS ON... THE SOCIAL MEDIA BAN

With a 261 to 150 vote in the House of Lords in favour of the banning of Social Media for under-16s, it's clear that we must start thinking about how this emerging legislation will affect us. Although there is no doubt that you have heard about the ban before, from the perspective of a colleague, friend or even government official. What do under-16s themselves think about the matter?

When venturing into a local youth club within Bolton and speaking to their members, I was more than intrigued when they began to tell me their stories. Many told me of how they didn't support the ban on social media and that they wanted the government to try more instead of just going to extremes. They suggested ideas such as more insightful education in school and further expanding parental knowledge on how to protect children online. Therefore, when asked why they wanted to keep social media, they expressed that the ban "feels like it's punishing us" and "it goes overlooked how many problems are caused by older people" online.

However, it wasn't a unanimous decision. Some teenagers argued for the ban but said that the execution of it would likely fail, as the government has "underestimated" how big a problem this is. These advocates took into account the negatives of social media, such as their increased feelings of insecurity once downloading these apps and even how distracted they have become. Yet they also told me how their friends were social media-obsessed and how hard it is to get them to stay off their phones, even when they're having fun offline.

Overall, though, the consensus was still against the ban. The group discussed how social media would take away their "ability to maintain friendships," which is crucial when they have friends they don't see every day at school. Although this wasn't their only interesting point. When queried on what their favourite social media app was, many said TikTok. Even so, this wasn't mainly because they could talk to their friends on it, but rather because they could watch videos, especially when bored. They liked the ability to see what other people online are doing and take inspiration from them, which highlights how social media has become so embedded in these and many other teenagers' lives.

Furthermore, gaming platforms also played a role in their argument when I mentioned how they weren't included in the ban, causing the group to complain. They told me that video games incite more violence and antisocial behaviour than social media, so "they should also be banned". In addition, they argued that these gaming sites still allow young people to do the same things as social media, questioning why they weren't also under scrutiny.





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On the other hand, there were still teenagers advocating for the ban as they claimed it was “understandable”. When asked why, they answered by telling me how they thought it made them more anxious to talk to new people offline rather than online, because they don’t know how they should interact with these people face-to-face.

On top of that, in response to a proposed question, they confirmed that they had in fact been exposed to graphic and uncomfortable content from a young age as a result of their time online. They reported how this made them “question things,” and even though these individuals had flagged the content as something they were not interested in, “it was still being shown” to them. This was something that the group unanimously agreed on, explaining how it “shocked and horrified” them, especially the first time they were made a victim of it.



Nonetheless, as stated earlier, the few teenagers who did agree with the ban described how their friends “seem almost addicted to social media”, which is why this ban would be a “temporary solution”. One 15-year-old stated that “it wouldn’t actually solve the problem” because you can’t simply strip this freedom away from them all at once. They told me how a long-term solution for current under-16s would be “to limit how much time is spent on it”. However, they did think that the ban could work if put in place for those under 5 who haven’t been as exposed to these algorithms at the same breadth.

In conclusion, whilst there are many against the ban due to how extreme they think it is, teenagers do understand the intention and drive that has led to these conversations. Placing some in agreement with it, and others are open to persuasion if certain clauses are changed. Still, the question remains, will this law even come into place?

BY AMAARA MANGERA

Drum roll please...

Last month, we once again asked you what your favourite article was. So after tallying up the score, the results are in. The favourite read last month was...

Teacher of the month - Mrs Smith *By Aasiya Ahmed*

A big well done to Aasiya for writing such an amazing article. However, you may be wondering how you can get involved and cast your vote. The answer is simple: answer the Spotlight survey! We’ll be sure to add your vote to our ballot!



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Youth Speaks: back for seconds

Over the past few months at Sharples, Miss Hassan has been relentlessly pouring her attention not only into marking papers, teaching lessons and berating rebellious students, but into the Rotary Youth Speaks Competition.

Now, if you haven't been looking at newsletters or Sharples' X pages, you're probably wondering what I'm writing about. The Rotary Youth Speaks Competition (you guessed it) is a competition run by the Rotary Club that allows students, in teams of three, to speak on any topic in a limited time. The speeches of each member are then judged, and the team with the most points wins the heat.

This year, two teams from Sharples took part - one team representing Key Stage 3 and one team of year 10's. Every single Wednesday lunchtime for the past 6 weeks, both teams have been discussing and practising their speeches with Miss Hassan, who gave them excellent feedback and tips.



Then came the nerve-racking part; on Tuesday, the 27th January, after school, both teams had to perform their speeches in front of a real audience, competing against other schools and demonstrating their skills under pressure. This year, for the first time in Sharples' history, one team from Sharples won their heat, though the intermediate team did not place; the senior team successfully came first in the senior division of the competition.



However, that wasn't the end of the competition altogether - just twelve days later, the North Final of Youth Speaks was held in Rochdale Town Centre. As the chairperson of the Senior team, I can testify how intense it was. No microphones, incredible speeches from the other winning teams and a level of competition that pushed us to perform at our best. Unfortunately, we didn't win - the trophies went to Hazelwood High School and Bridgewater School.

Even though we didn't take home the North Final trophy, being part of it genuinely felt like a win in itself. Standing in front of everyone, competing at that level and representing our school with pride is really something. And yes - we did walk away with certificates for our folders, which I'm choosing to count as an official victory anyway.

I know we said all of our 'thank-you's' on both days, but I would like to reiterate just how hard my team members, our teachers and everyone at Youth Speaks and the Rotary worked to make this amazing opportunity happen. Now, if any future year nines and tens are reading this, I want you to be a part of this next year - you will become so much more confident, you will learn new things, and you will not be disappointed.

BY SAFIYA IBRAHIM



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FUTURE HONOURS PROGRAM FOR Y10

Over the past few months, some year 10 students have been partaking in the future honours programme at Bolton Sixth Form, where they attend sessions every month in their chosen strand. This stand could be linked to their potential career pathways and current interests.

My strand, future world leaders, has consisted of a great deal of new activities for the group to partake in, like assessing legal cases that are based on real-life examples. Our most recent session was the Professional Growth Evening, where we developed our team-building skills and engaged in a range of different activities with pupils from other schools.

At the start of the evening, we were all placed into different groups so that we could interact with new people we hadn't met before, rather than simply staying in our comfort zones and sticking to classmates we were already familiar with. One of our first activities in this session was to become familiar with the new people in our groups, and then to participate in some discussion tasks, where we were required to listen to and understand each other's differing viewpoints on specific scenarios. This helped us to build an understanding with many other students whom we may have never met before.

In my opinion, one of the most enjoyable aspects of this particular session was when we had to put ourselves forward to many different people and try to get to know them. This was achieved through a game of bingo consisting of many different statements. Getting involved in this activity with people from the other strands, as well as our own, meant that we could encounter peers with different ideas and aspirations, as well as different perspectives on different opinions, which is a vital aspect of team building.

The activities were very engaging and enjoyable, and they provided us with valuable knowledge and insight into how to build and maintain friendships and working relationships with new people in the future. It also taught us to build our confidence and sense of self-worth, as we were encouraged to speak to many of our peers, regardless of unfamiliarity with them.

Overall, I believe that this recent session of the programme was both enjoyable and engaging, as it was distinct from the previous sessions we had taken part in. Personally, this month's session taught me how important it is to create acquaintances, both in and beyond our prospective careers and how to communicate effectively with other people.

BY FATIMA ISMAIL

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MOST WANTED NOW



2025/2026



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WANTED



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- ★ Attend events ?
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GUESS THE COUNTRY:

Area: 637,657 sq km

Population: 17 million

Life expectancy: 55 years (men) 59 years (women)

LEADERS:

President: Hassan Sheikh Mohamud

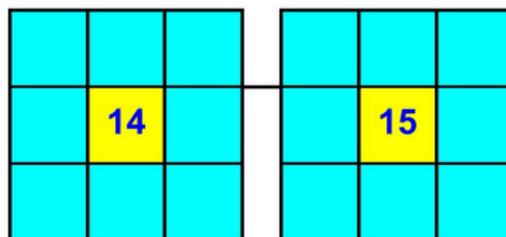
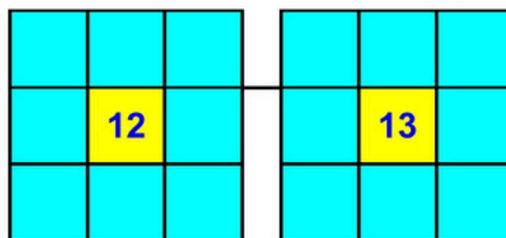
MATHS PUZZLE

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Puzzle time

12 to 15



Can you put the numbers 1 to 8 in each of the squares so that each side adds up to the middle number?

Find the answer on the next page

