



Headteacher: John Holmes MA(Cantab) MTeach EdD

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17 March 2026

Dear parents and carers,

It's hard to believe that we are already so close to the end of this very short half term. It seems like only yesterday we were starting off a half term break with some excellent performances of *Shrek the Musical* and yet we are already gearing up for another holiday which will include the return of our first Ski Trip for some time and, of course, a lot of hard work revising for both our Year 11 and Year 13 students, who are fast approaching their final examinations.

We will be busy right up to the end of the term, with house sport this week, our Year 11 Information Evening this Thursday, and Year 8 Parents' Evening on the Thursday 26 March. Importantly, we will have a non-uniform day for Comic Relief, this week on Friday 20 March. We would encourage all students to take part with a donation of £1 on ParentPay, all of which will go to Comic Relief.

Water bottles

With the weather, thankfully, warming up can I please ask for your support in ensuring all children are bringing a water bottle to school with them. This is part of our required equipment, as it ensures children can have a drink at any time of day without needing to leave their lessons.

School Production of Shrek the Musical

I must take a moment to talk in more detail about the recent production of *Shrek the Musical* at John Masefield High School, which was a true celebration of talent, teamwork, and dedication. From the first rehearsal to the final curtain call, students poured an incredible amount of hard work into bringing this much-loved show to life — and their efforts paid off in a performance that was both entertaining and deeply impressive.

The cast demonstrated remarkable commitment in developing their characters, standout musical numbers and heartfelt performances. Leading roles were handled with maturity and stage presence, while the ensemble brought colour, humour, and vibrancy to every scene. Complex and lively choreography reflected months of dedicated rehearsal time, often extending well beyond the school day. Equally deserving of praise is the backstage crew. From detailed set construction and imaginative props to creative costumes and seamless lighting and sound design, the technical team ensured that the magical world of *Far Far Away* felt immersive and professional. Their precision and coordination allowed every scene change to flow smoothly, supporting the cast at every step.

What truly made the production special was the evident spirit of collaboration. Students supported one another, overcame challenges together, and showed resilience when perfecting difficult scenes and songs. Teachers and staff provided guidance, but it was the students' own commitment, teamwork, and passion that transformed the show into such a resounding success.

Masefield Matters Board Members

Some of you may be aware that Ledbury Town Council has received a National Lottery grant of £220,000 to fund the John Masefield Memorial Project, exploring the legacy of John Masefield through a range of events celebrating his work, his life, and the things that mattered to him. The project will finish with a memorial celebrating John Masefield's 150th anniversary in 2028.

Masefield Matters have been generous in supporting John Masefield High School, supporting some children to visit the Cutty Sark, a ship similar to those that Masefield sailed on, and now funding a trip to Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust. I'm looking forward to being able to share information about more opportunities in the school and in the local community with you in the coming months. For now, the Masefield Matters Board are looking for new Board members and would be glad to have a parent from JMHS on the team. If you are interested in finding out more, could you please contact the Project Co-ordinator, Emma Clowsley: mmpc@ledburytowncouncil.gov.uk. You can also find out more information on their website: <https://www.ledburytowncouncil.gov.uk/en-gb/john-masefield-memorial-project>

Robotics teams compete in FIRST Tech Challenge "DECODE" regional event

Last week our two school robotics teams, Enigma Phoenix and CTRL+ALT+DEFEAT!, competed in a regional FIRST Tech Challenge competition called DECODE, joining teams from across the region for a full day of engineering, coding and competitive robotics. FIRST Tech Challenge is an international robotics programme where students design, build and program robots to compete head-to-head in a themed game released each year. Teams must develop their own robot designs, write code to control them and continually refine their engineering throughout the season.

Our teams with students from Year 8 to Year 13 performed strongly in the initial qualification rounds, competing against ten other teams and successfully advancing to the next stage of the competition. The knock-out rounds brought even tougher opposition, with some highly experienced teams demonstrating sophisticated robot designs and strategies. After several closely contested matches, our teams finished around 6th overall, an excellent result in such a competitive field. Throughout the day both teams worked tirelessly in the pit area between matches, making rapid modifications to their robots and refining their code. New mechanisms were added and adjustments made to improve performance, with each outing showing clear improvements in speed, reliability and scoring ability.

The success of the teams would not have been possible without the dedication and support of their coaches and mentors, Helen Bowen at JMHS, Malinda Thomas at Raytheon, and Tom French at QinetiQ, and also the support of their sponsors, Raytheon Technologies, Galebreaker, Bytesnap and QinetiQ.

The competition was a fantastic experience for everyone involved. Our students demonstrated impressive teamwork, resilience and engineering creativity throughout the day, and represented the school brilliantly. As we move beyond the competition season, our robotics club will continue to meet to develop skills, mentor younger students and recruit new members—not only those interested in engineering and coding, but also students keen to contribute in areas such as marketing, communications, strategy and fundraising. We would warmly welcome additional sponsors and supporters to help us grow the programme and provide more opportunities for students. If you or your organisation would be interested in supporting the team, please do get in touch with helen.bowen@jmhs.hereford.sch.uk — we would love to hear from you.

Yours sincerely,



John Holmes
Headteacher