



Friday 10th October 2025

Reading

Following another summer of excellent exam results, I would like to highlight that one of the changes in GCSE exam papers in recent years has been the increasing reading age needed to access many questions. This means that the ability to read sophisticated language is ever more important when it comes to sitting a GCSE exam, no matter what the subject. So lots of reading practice is key for our children's exam success, and this does not have to be subject based revision, but can be, and should be, reading for pleasure. It is also worth remembering the other benefits of reading:

- Children who read often and widely get better at it.
- Reading exercises our brain.
- Reading improves concentration.
- Reading teaches children about the world around them.
- Reading improves vocabulary and language skills.
- Reading develops a child's imagination.
- Reading helps children to develop empathy.
- Reading is fun.

Safety

Recently our Year 7 students took part in a drop down day as part of their personal development curriculum. The sessions were focused around keeping themselves safe and the children attended sessions delivered by the police, fire service and a gambling awareness organisation called NECA. There was also a focus on online safety where students explored healthy screen time, healthy use of mobile phones, and awareness of their digital footprint. At Marden we want our students to be able to successfully navigate life both within and outside of school, and enhancing the curriculum to develop the skills required to do so, is part of the wider work we put in to help our young people have the agency to do just that. Feedback from both students and staff was very positive and the facilitators for the day commented on how well rounded, confident and polite our students are.

Raising boys

There is a monthly live online Parent Q&A on Tuesday 14 October that may be of interest to parents and carers: Raising Boys in the Age of the Manosphere – Live Parent Q&A

This takes place from 7–8pm (online) and tickets can be booked via this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1643096488829?aff=oddtcreator> The session includes 20 minutes of

conversation (live podcast style) followed by 40 minutes for parents' questions. It's designed to give parents clarity, confidence, and practical ways of talking with boys about masculinity, online influences, and the challenges they face today.

Desert Island Discs

The long running BBC radio programme, Desert Island Discs, now appears on the GCSE curriculum for Media Studies students. To enhance their cultural capital and complement their study of the radio industry, the Media department have started their own podcast series following the same theme, with Marden staff discussing their media consumption and music tastes. The first episode can be heard now on the Media Subject Cloud, and future episodes will be shared regularly. If any student would like to be involved in writing or recording future episodes, get in touch with the Media department.

Careers

We have a careers event running on Wednesday 15th of October for Year 8. It is being delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions with a focus on managing money. This topic has been highlighted by students as something they'd like additional information on, and mirrors the same event that Year 7 students very much enjoyed this week.

Creative workshops

We have some exciting opportunities coming up for our parents and carers, as the Art department will be delivering three different evening workshops for adults. Tapping into our Art and Photography teachers' expertise, participants in the workshops will be taken through step by step guidance on screen printing, light photography and clay modelling, and leave with their own piece of artwork by the end of the workshop. Details are on the school website, and information will be emailed to all parents and carers. We hope to see lots of people coming along to these informative workshops and enjoy learning, being creative and having a bit of fun.

Information and advice

We often receive emails and phone calls from colleagues at other schools in the region and from further afield, that are requesting information and advice on how we do certain things here at Marden. Our outcomes for students in so many different ways - academic, personal development, careers - are what draws peoples' attention to our school. Last week we enjoyed a visit from staff at a school in Lowestoft, and they were very impressed by what they saw here, with one of the visitors remarking that not a single student in the classes she had visited had not been deeply engaged in what was going on in the classroom, and that it was evident that every member of staff at Marden wanted to achieve the very best for our children. This, I think, is something our whole community should be very proud of.

Sports

On Monday evening, the Year 8 netball team began their round of friendlies at John Spence High School. The girls were extremely motivated and encouraging towards their teammates and some excellent game play was shown. In the end Marden won two and lost two (against two St. Thomas More teams, a John Spence and a mixed schools team).

The Year 9 and 10/11 Netball teams began their season on Thursday evening with games against Whitley Bay High School. Both teams started extremely well, scoring at will with the Year 9 team winning 14-1 and the Year 10/11 team winning 17-9. Both teams will be very pleased with their opening performances.

The Year 7 and 8 girls football teams played their first CVL on Wednesday afternoon. The girls all played magnificently, securing wins against Burnside (3-0) and St Thomas More (2-0), whilst Kings Priory held on for a draw (0-0). A brilliant start to the competition and a sign of great things to come. Well done to all.

The Year 10 boys football team hosted St Thomas More in the Northumberland County cup on Thursday afternoon. The games in previous years have always been very closely contested affairs, and so proved this one to be. With a strong wind in their face, Marden settled into the game and played some attractive, attacking football. They were awarded a penalty near the end of the first half, which was converted to take the lead in the game. This lead lasted only a few minutes as St Thomas More hit back, against the run of play, with only one minute left in the half. The second half was as tense as the first as both teams looked to find a way through the other. It was the visitors that scored late on to take the lead and shortly after the win. 2-1 to St Thomas on the night, but a fantastic effort from the Marden team.

Also on Thursday afternoon, the Year 9 boys football team played their opening game of the season against George Stephenson High School, the defending league champions. The Marden team played a solid first-half, finding themselves 1-0 down at half time and still in the contest. However, with tough conditions and the wind against them, they conceded three more goals before the final whistle making the final score 4-0 to the visitors. A valiant effort from all those involved.



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