



## Gregson Scholarship drives ambition and attainment at Haileybury Turnford Academy

Monday 26 June 2023

*As part of its programme for schoolchildren aged 11–18 and their teachers, Balliol awards Gregson Scholarships, which are designed to support schools with high numbers of disadvantaged students and/or without a history of successful application to Oxford within Balliol's link regions of Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. The Scholarship provides three years of funding, access to Balliol tutors and additional academic support for students, and priority access to the College's outreach events to help the recipient develop a programme of support for able students, inside and outside the classroom, and so help realise the students' potential.*

*Balliol's Outreach Officer, Pravahi Osman, reports on the success of one of the first Gregson Scholarship awards, to Haileybury Turnford in Hertfordshire:*

Haileybury Turnford decided to direct the Scholarship resources — both the financial support and the continuous professional development opportunities — to two key departments.

The English Department purchased a more challenging class text, *The Refugee Boy* by Benjamin Zephaniah, for able Year 7 students (aged 11–12). In lessons the English teachers specifically focused on providing challenge for able students, and found that the strategies they used had a positive impact on the engagement of all students in the lessons, which in turn resulted in a significant increase in students' reading ages.

The department also used Scholarship funds to launch the Debate Club, to improve students' oracy skills. This became one of the most attended clubs in school, with students going on to compete in local and national debating competitions. Those who took part exhibited increased confidence, and many of the sixth formers who joined the club honed their leadership skills by taking positions of responsibility.

The lead teacher in the English department, Sahar Khatiri, was paired with one of Balliol's English tutors, Professor Adam Smyth, who made suggestions about approaches to teaching Shakespeare texts and provided resources for students studying English Literature A-Level. As a result of their work together, the department also used Scholarship money to enable students to go on theatre visits, so that they could experience Shakespeare on the stage as well as on the page.

The Science Department purchased iPads for students to use during STEM activities. During the STEM enrichment days, Year 8 students were able to carry out practical science investigations, recording their ideas and producing presentations about them. The department also purchased new GCSE Chemistry textbooks, which students much appreciated. The lead chemistry teacher, Alex Ridge, reported improvements both in the quality of students' written responses and in the end-of-unit tests, which are indicators of GCSE outcomes. She worked with one of Balliol's chemistry tutors, Dr Rachel Quarrell, who introduced new approaches to teaching organic chemistry, in order to develop students' thinking skills. Rachel also provided examples of how she would approach problems with first-year undergraduates and suggested specific resources to foster a spirit of scientific enquiry in younger students.

In addition to the subject focus in these two areas of the curriculum, the school took part in some of Balliol's outreach activities. Year 10 (aged 14–15) students participated in the [Discovery programme](#), designed to introduce students to different areas of knowledge such as law, neuroscience and art history. Year 11 (15–16) students attended online [maths workshops](#); a group of Year 12 (16–17) biology students visited Balliol; and other students took part in our [Floreat and Frontier](#) sustained contact programmes and subject [Taster Days](#). As part of wider sixth-form provision, students also took part in a personal statement workshop, and some received one-to-one application support.

One of the keys to the success of this partnership has been the school's leadership and strategic vision, which has allowed us to provide activities which aligned with the school's priorities. We were delighted to hear that one of the Haileybury Turnford's students gained a place at Oxford this year to read biology and we hope to continue to work with the school as it goes from strength to strength.