In Omnibus Caritas

AUSTIN FRIARS

Caritas Spring 2026

Newsletter for former pupils, parents & staff

S.L.A. LOURDES
EXCURSIONS AUX PYRENEES
LOURDES 195

AUSTIN FRIARS BOYS EN ROUTE TO THE PYRENEES, EASTER 1954.

Dear {First name}

Spring is here! With a fresh season comes a fresh opportunity to connect. In this edition, we’re looking at how former pupils 'pay it forward' and sharing some exciting updates from our Headmaster.

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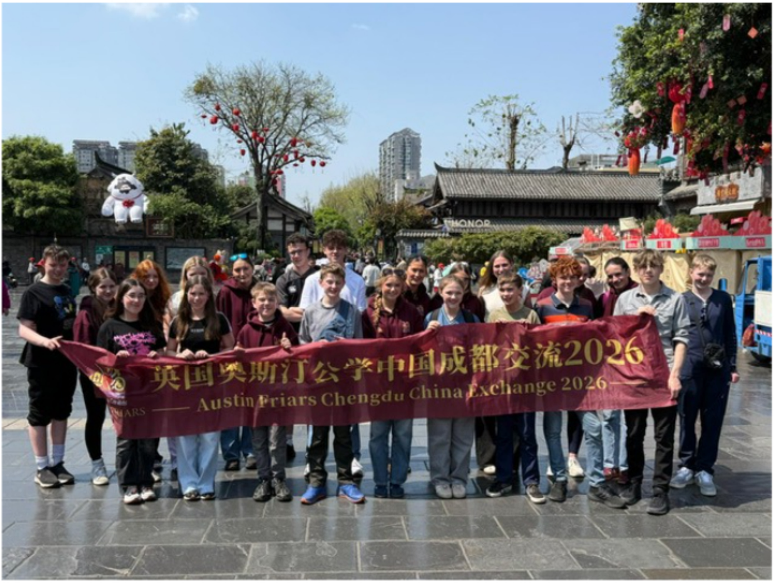
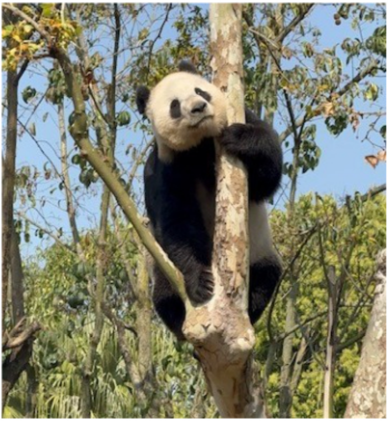

英国奥斯汀公学中国成都交流2026
Austin Friars Chengdu China Exchange 2026



Update from Mr Hattam, Headmaster

Austin Friars is an incredibly busy school! Sometimes institutions can appear busy without purpose but all that the Friars community is engaged in has purpose behind it.

Our Padel Tennis Courts, made possible by the benevolence of all who contributed to the Expanding Horizons Project, are well on their way to completion with the Easter break providing the space we need to get the final steel work in place. There is a sense of excitement as this project nears completion.

The Food Technology Room is also complete and looking very smart indeed, it is now ready to start hosting lessons and community outreach alike. Our thanks to Thomas Franks (our on-site catering team) and the Austin Friars community for making this project possible. Other projects are bubbling away in the background, all which will hit our targets of benefitting our pupils, the local community and driving revenue.

Last week saw twenty-two pupils and five staff travel to the Chengdu region of China for an immersion experience. Our pupils stayed with host families, took part in a variety of activities from making dumplings to learning calligraphy and playing tennis with a National Champion to navigating chopsticks with a local delicacy of a spicy hotpot. Our hosts recognised our pupils as well mannered, great fun and willing to have a go at anything. The Pandas were a real treat for everyone. We look forward to developing the relationships we have started and seeing many return visits between the schools in the future.

What Happened Next...

Iain Struthers

Former pupil Fiona Braidwood tells us about her journey after leaving school, and how her time at Friars has influenced her life so far:

My employment in the UAE exposed me to diverse cultures, clinical approaches and neurological conditions. After three years, I

"When I began writing this article, my thoughts returned to a lesson in the attic, beside the old exam halls and where the English department once lived. At that time, I believed the greatest challenges ahead were my upcoming exams or the next big hockey match against Trinity School. Looking back, those youthful obstacles were quietly building my inner confidence that would fuel my career in Physiotherapy which has taken me around the world.

As a student at Austin Friars St Monica's, I spent 14 years, 1994-2007 surrounded by memorable tradition, from boaters, to break times at the tuck shop and rolling down the grassy hills. The friendships forged during those years have endured, and the lessons learned continue to shape my approach to life, both personally and professionally.

After leaving school, I studied Physiotherapy at York St John University. Following my graduation in 2010, I began my career in the NHS in East Riding and Lincolnshire. Over these first few years, I worked across acute and outpatient rotations in teaching hospitals, progressing into a senior role specialising in stroke rehabilitation along with acute respiratory care.

A family holiday to Dubai in 2013 opened my eyes to the possibility of an international career. Taking a leap of faith, I relocated to the Middle East to join a specialist spinal and neuro-rehabilitation hospital, and with Dubai rugby at Dubai 7s.

continued my international career, moving to Bermuda in 2015, where I would remain for nearly 10 years, there I worked alongside the island's leading orthopaedic surgeons in private MSK practice.

My passion for physiotherapy also allowed me the opportunity to support Bermuda's national sports teams, providing physio services for Bermuda Rugby Classics with ex-internationals, host tournaments locally and travel to international competitions for football, rugby and most recently, my own sport of hockey.

I was elected to be a director on the Board of Directors for Bermuda Hockey Federation as Lead of Fundraising and Events. I was able to progress professionally within the BHF and became National Team Physiotherapist and Local Medical officer. I became a Lead Committee Director of the host nation, in the organisation of the Central America and Caribbean Games, for both Olympic and World Cup pathways.

My continued love of hockey introduced me to my now husband and we have returned to his home, Jersey in the Channel Islands, where I continue to work in MSK private practice, and look forward to contributing to the island's sporting community and continuing my international professional and sporting career - this time without the school-issue gym knickers."

Painting a Bright Future

We recently featured former pupil Ophelia Appleby (AF 2007-2014) on our social media platforms. Ophelia is a portrait and figurative painter and had work in a show at Rheged's exhibition celebrating 25 years of culture in Cumbria - 'Twenty Five & Onwards'. The exhibition had a special spotlight on the next generation of Cumbrian artists. Ophelia was selected via a regional open call, and the public decided the winner through a People's Choice Award. After months of public voting Rheged were "delighted" to announce Ophelia as the winner! We reached out and asked Ophelia to tell us more about her work and her journey as an artist:

"I am a Cumbrian portrait and figurative painter. My work involves exploring the complex, implied communication of facial expressions. It also concerns my experience with autism, striving to comprehend the secret language of glances and wordless social interaction. My interest in faces and how they can be charged with a myriad of emotions depending on how the flesh holds itself, has driven me to produce portraits that range from dignified to grotesque to intimate. I work from photographs so that I can examine the most fleeting and subtle of facial nuances; tension or humour that lasts for a second but offers insight into the intent and accent of that subject's facial language. Through the painting process I interpret and play with that language.

Since moving back home to Cumbria, I have had the privilege of exhibiting with a group of fellow Cumbrians in the Venice Biennale in 2024, with 3 other Cumbrian women in Crane Kalman Gallery in London, and with many others as part of Echo Festival at Lanercost in 2025. I am constantly inspired by the community of creatives here in Cumbria of which I am now a proud part.

Being one of the 4 emerging artists in Rheged's '25 & Onwards' exhibition which celebrates and platforms a wonderfully varied group of Cumbrian artists is an immense privilege, and I was deeply moved by the outpouring of support and encouragement shown to me and all the artists present at the opening night.

The work I have up in the exhibition offers a glimpse into the kind of portraiture I have been focusing on this past 2 years. In my commissioned work, I have been spending some time considering the portrayal of subjects who are no longer with us, as I have had the honour of painting several commemorative portraits recently. In my personal practice, I have been looking at my perception of those closest to me and exploring that through portraiture.

I have changed a great deal since my time at Friars, but I retain my dual purpose as Painter and Musician and am extremely grateful for the

While my work is realistic, it is decidedly not photorealism, as I aim to paint more than what I can immediately see, and my impression is expressed through gesture and often unrealistic or unnatural use of colour. I rarely start with a clear path to the result, but rather, I develop my relationship to the subject as I work, and that unfolding directs the brush more than the initial reference.

start that Friars gave me to begin this journey. I am especially grateful to Charles Hattrell for taking me seriously as a musician before I knew Schubert from Schumann, and enabling me to go get my degree from the RNCM, he remains one of the best and most inspiring music teachers I have ever had, and to Katherine Quinn for supporting, believing in and guiding me as an artist (and somewhat belligerent individual) long before I decided to take it up as a profession. I know now what an unbelievably difficult pupil I must have been and am all the more appreciative of their patience and belief in me."

Ophelia must have art in her blood; her parents are both acclaimed painters, and her Great-Grandmother was internationally renowned British painter, Winifred Nicholson.

Ophelia returned to Friars and spoke to a group of GCSE and A-Level artists recently, recounting tales from her time at school and answering questions.

Ophelia paints on private commission, check out her incredible work here: www.opheliaappleby.com

Paying it Forward

We have had a series of former pupils contributing to the learning experiences of current pupils recently.

ABOUT ME: A BRIEF TIMELINE

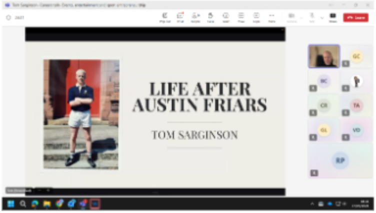
Sophie will be coming into school to take an assembly in June to tell us all about her plans in Zambia and is looking for the support of the Friars Community, financially, the university subsidise the trip, but funds are needed to cover the cost of flights, accommodation, any training and the project itself. Sophie has has a GoFundMe page - https://gofund.me/d0af8e7dd

Thank you to Ho Yu Liu (AF 2010-2017) for coming in to speak to our Biology students. Ho Yu Liu joined Austin Friars at the age of four and remained part of the school community all the way through to VI Form, alongside her older sister and younger brother.

During her time at Friars, Ho Yu embraced the many opportunities available, particularly in music and drama. A keen pianist and flautist who also enjoyed singing, her passions were balanced alongside a growing interest in the sciences, eventually choosing to study Science at A-Level. Ho Yu went on to study Biochemistry at Aberystwyth University before completing a Masters in Medical and Molecular Biosciences at Newcastle University. Most recently, she finished a four-year PhD in Molecular Microbiology at the Quadram Institute Bioscience / University of East Anglia.
Reflecting on her journey, Ho Yu encourages current pupils to “make the most of the opportunities given to you - you never know what doors they might open.”

A huge thank you to Ho Yu for returning to Friars and inspiring some young scientists by sharing her journey into research!

Sophie will also return to Friars for a further assembly in the autumn, after her trip, to share her experience and the benefits of charity work with students.



LIFE AFTER AUSTIN FRIARS

TOM SARGINSON

Tutor groups recently enjoyed a careers talk with former pupil Tom Sarginson (AF 1991-1998) via video from Malaysia where Tom has lived since 2004. Tom works in the world of Events and Sports Entrepreneurship, and spoke to the students about his progression from school to studying Management Sciences at Loughborough University, his experiences of moving to Singapore to work for Golf Link Asia at the Singapore Open to then working in Golf Event Management for World Sport Group, moving on to Malaysia where he worked for Parallel Media Asia, where he worked on the Malaysia Open, Hong Kong Open, etc. Tom then started his first business 'City Golf' in 2006 and co-founded 'Fresh Events Asia' in 2014. Tom also trained as a performance coach in 2020-2021 during the Covid pandemic and has a wealth of experience, the students enjoyed the lesson in building a career in Sports Entrepreneurship and the opportunity to ask questions; revealing a field that they may not have realised earlier. Tom expressed his appreciation of the opportunities he had at Friars, and stated "Friars gave me the wings!". Thank you to Tom for giving his time and input for our young people.

Sophie Nicoll's Fundraising

Sophie Nicoll (née Dodd AF 2004-2018) attended Austin Friars from Pre-School all the way to Sixth Form and will be coming into school this summer to tell us about an exciting challenge she is taking on. Sophie works at the University of Stirling, the same university she studied at after leaving Friars, Sophie has loved her time there so much that she now calls Stirling home.

Sophie has been given the opportunity to travel with Stirling University's Volunteer Zambia team in August to September this year. Stirling University along with seven other universities form 'the Wallace Group', The Wallace Group, partnered with Sport in Action, have a shared interest in promoting sports and health workshops in developing countries. Every year these universities send students out to Zambia for 8 weeks. Volunteers collaborate with Zambian volunteer coaches to deliver embedded and sustainable sport opportunities for young people in their community, particularly women and girls. As a staff member, Sophie will be there supporting the amazing work of these students.

Former pupil Laura Earl née Watt (AF 1999-2006) gave an assembly to our Junior School pupils in March; pupils listened intently to Laura talk about how she overcame and continues to overcome the challenges she has faced since undergoing surgery for a brain tumour. Laura spoke about the care she received from nursing staff and how this care can be linked to our school value Caritas, the children were very engaged and asked Laura lots of questions. We look forward to Laura returning to present an assembly to Senior School pupils in June. Laura has also recently written and published a book 'Fighting to be Just a Mum', books are available for a donation, if you would like a copy please get in touch: afa@austinfriars.co.uk. All proceeds from the book will go to Brain Tumour Research, a charity Laura continues to raise funds and awareness for: https://www.gofundme.com/f/Lauraearl-brain-tumour-research

Thank you Laura!

Congratulations to...

Former pupil Taya Dixon attended Austin Friars from 2007–2014 and was Head Girl.

Taya married her long-term partner, Juan Carlos de la Encina López, on 4 October 2025 in Toledo, Spain, where they now live. Taya says bringing together their friends and families from different languages and cultures to celebrate their union was truly magical, and something she could only have dreamed of when studying Spanish in Mrs Boyling's classroom at school!

H.M.S. RALEIGH

Congratulations to former pupil Matthew Welch (AF 2022-2025) who has successfully completed his initial Royal Navy training at HMS Raleigh in Plymouth!

At just over 17 years of age, Matthew was one of the youngest recruits to complete Phase 1 Naval training and was selected for the Lead Guard detachment on parade because of his mastery of precision drill.
Matthew now moves on to his Phase 2 specialism in marine engineering which will include both technical and maritime training, before deployment to the Royal Navy Surface Fleet as a professional technician.

Former pupil Matthew Hall (AF 2018-2025), has embarked on the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship entry route with Cumbria Police.

This is an intensive ten week training course of demanding physical exercise, discipline, ceremonial drill, teamwork, seamanship, firefighting, damage control and weapon handling, designed to prepare candidates with the necessary military and maritime skills for service in the Royal Navy.

Matthew we wish you every success in your new vocation!

little
SISTER

Former pupils, sisters and current staff, Laura Higgins (née Donoghue, AF 2004-2009) gave birth to baby girl Ivy Wren on 13th January 2026, baby weighed 8lb 4oz. Ivy is younger sister to Rosie, aged 7 years and Lily aged 4 years.

Sister Clare Hindes (née Donoghue, AF 2005-2012) gave birth to baby girl Poppy on 6th February 2026, baby weighed 7lb 12oz. Poppy is younger sister to Hallie aged 22 months.

Announcement

Former Austin Friars School Matron, Susan Pritchard, passed away aged 72 years at

Cumberland Infirmary Carlisle on 19th January 2026.

Former pupil Professor Kevin Dalton (AF1958-1965) died aged 79 years old on 20th January 2026. Professor Dalton read medicine at the Middlesex Hospital in London and completed a PhD in Physiology, an LLM (with Distinction) in Medical Law, & the Diploma in Forensic Medical Science. He was appointed University Lecturer and Consultant in Obstetrics & Gynaecology at Addenbrooke's Hospital in 1983. He was elected a Fellow of St Catharine's in 1997 and became an Emeritus Fellow in 2014. Also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and an Honorary Fellow of the Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine.

"Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility."

St Augustine

Austin Friars Association

Find out more

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