

BCS Press



Issue: 24

Editor: Finlay Jones

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Counselling Service:

The school offers a school time counselling service to all students. It is provided by our counsellor, Debra. It gives you a chance to talk to Debra, about what bothers you with someone who is not connected with family, friends or school. Whatever you discuss with Debra is confidential, unless she believes that you or someone else is being or is at risk of being harmed.

To Contact Debra, You Can:

Email her at: ehelp@buxton.derbyshire.sch.uk
(this can only be used during term time)
Go and see her in B6

Message for readers

I will be stepping down as Editor of the BCS Press after this edition. I'd like to say a big thank you to the team - I have loved working with them and the school to create some great reads. After half term Harry Grant will be taking over as the Editor of the newspaper and I look forward to seeing where it goes next.

Thanks for reading and have a great half term,
Finlay Jones

Choir announcement

This year we have lost some people from the choir because they have left the school. So, we would like to add some new members!

Choir is open to all year groups, even year 7s. It's good if you like to sing with a group or perform and it's on a Wednesday at lunch time.

It's also nice there because you get to meet new people and sing so many songs!

If you join choir there is an after-school group on Thursdays and you get to perform at the end of the year. It's good if you're not confident about singing on your own because you're always singing as part of a group. It doesn't matter if you have a high voice or a low voice for each song Mrs Priest creates a harmony and a tune, so it's suitable for all! Thank you and please consider joining BCS Choir!



An interview with... Mrs Flint

How long have you worked here?

I have worked here for nearly twenty years.

What has been your favourite part of your job?

I think one of my favourite parts is the students. I like being in a school because there's a nice buzz and I love meeting all the students and seeing them develop throughout the years. I also love working with Mrs Jones, she's one of my favourite people in the world. I'm part of the team in the front office and we all work really nicely together. But I like everyone in school honestly, all the staff are brilliant, and I just enjoy being part of it.

What are you going to miss the most?

That's a hard question...I think it's the people; I'll miss the people. The staff and the students.

What other jobs have you done?

I haven't had loads of jobs because I've tended to stay in things for a long time, but my first job was a little bit like this. Back then they used to call it being a secretary not a PA.. Then I was a stay-at-home mum for a few years until my husband, and I started a business. It was a bit of a funny business, my husband is a very keen bird watcher, *very keen*. So, when he was made redundant, he came up with the idea to start a business: the idea was people would ring in asking for advice on where birds were in the UK, we would then use pagers to get the information from across the country. So, we had lots of those all throughout the country and we did that for quite a while. Then we sold the part of the business that I worked in dealing with the pagers and I went to work at an accountants for a couple of years on reception, then I came here.

Have you ever had to manage a crisis in school?

Well, to be honest I think the biggest crisis we've had as a school was Covid. It happened so quickly, we had to stop people coming into school. We had a real shutdown where everybody just stayed at home and then when it looked like things started getting better, we had the kids come back for a bit until inevitably we shut down again. You can imagine the whole organisation; all the teachers trying to prepare and deliver lessons while everyone stayed in bubbles. All the Year Sevens were in the top of D - block and they weren't allowed to mix. We had everybody going into lunch at different times without any crossover. I think that was why it was definitely the biggest crisis for not just the school but for everyone.

What is your favourite food from school?

Well that a good question! I love the school dinners and I've always said that it's the reason I work here. I don't know what my favourite one is because honestly, I like almost everything. However, our new chef, has brought lots of new recipes in like a delicious vegetarian lasagne spinach and it was beautiful, restaurant quality even! So yeah, I love the school food, and I would recommend it to anyone.

Behind the scenes of Embark

By Luke Adkins

I wrote this article because I believe that the students and staff of our school should be aware of how the finances of our school and academy are managed and allocated, but also with the proper context of what money is being spent on too.

Our school is part of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT). This means the school and the trust manage the school's finances together. The trust that we belong to is called Embark. Embark must publicly display the number of people that work in their academy that have pay of over £100,000 per year. Embark's documentation shows that they employ a total of nine people who are paid above £100,000. With one being paid between £150,001 and £160,000. The average pay of these 9 people is £117,222 per year.

There is also data published by the government online that tells us the mean average salary of the teachers at each school. This data also accounts for SLT staff in schools, as well as normal teachers. SLT get paid more than teachers, so this mean average is higher than the average pay of a teacher but is still indicative of the pay of a staff member at a school. When you calculate the average salary of a teaching staff member in an Embark school, it works out as a mean average of £51,392.64 per year.

When we compare the pre-tax pay from these two average salaries (£117,222 and £51,392.64), it works out that the average Embark salary is 2.28 times the average staff salary. The employee who is paid in the highest bracket has a salary of around 3 times more than the average staff member.

The editors of the BCS Press had an interview with Mr Crawford, the Embark trust leader, so he could explain the finances and internal functions at Embark to help us write this article. In that meeting Mr Crawford agreed that the pay of people in the senior leadership of MATs should be monitored. He also stated that in his opinion, the salaries being paid to the leadership within MATs are often too high. He explained that his background was as a teacher before starting his job at Embark.

The meeting covered 4 separate areas:

- How these salaries are determined and set
- Where the people with the salaries above £100,000 are based
- What Embark and the senior leadership team bring to the table for the schools that they manage
- How embark differs from other MATs

For ease of reading, I'll lay out those 4 areas into 4 paragraphs:

How the salaries in Embark are set:

Mr Crawford explained that his own salary (between £150,001 and £160,000) is set by the Embark board of trustees (a group of people who make decisions about how the academy works). They set his salary by taking a benchmark of the pay of trust leaders from 10 similar MATs around us. Still, his pay is lower than all the academies that they considered. With some other MATs being smaller than us with salaries much higher. He also explained that before MATs existed, a manager from the local authority with the same job would have taken a similar pay. The remaining 8 people who are paid above £100,000 per year have their salaries set in a similar way, with benchmark data of staff members from other schools and MATs.

Where the people with the high salaries are based:

Mr Crawford explained to us that the number of people with these high salaries has increased over the last few years to account for secondary schools being introduced into the academy alongside primary schools. He explained that besides himself, all the other people on that pay scale work inside secondary schools, or in their secondary school team at Embark. It's not as if all the central team members in Embark are paid £100,000+ per year.

What Embark does for BCS and other schools:

Mr Crawford described how Embark tries to operate like a business in terms of efficiency. An example he provided was the idea of the "1-million-pound drop". Embark's finance team were challenged to cut spending across the academy by 1 million pounds by unifying contracts across the academy's 23 schools. So far, they have saved £300,000 on gas, and £150,000 on electricity. The cuts from this are spread out in the academy, in savings and their capital fund (money that is reinvested back into school sites). Our school gets £200,000 per year from this. This money will be spent on our 5-year plan which includes fixing the holes in the school roof, refurbishing the lower atrium and grey toilets and making the school site more secure with the new maglock gates and doors. Being in a MAT also means that we have control over the order that we make changes/upgrades to our school site, which we didn't have before.

How Embark differs from other MATs:

Mr Crawford explained the ways that Embark is better than other MATs around us. One way is in that we have autonomy over how much of our yearly budget is given to Embark to share, and how much we keep for ourselves. Other academies take all the money and don't give schools control over how it's distributed. Another way is through inter-school communication and sharing of resources. For example, Anthony Gell High School (another secondary school in Embark) let us borrow their school mini-bus for the Year 13 geography fieldwork. Embark also does not have shares or shareholders, so the academy only works for the constituent schools. Mr Crawford also ensures that it is clear to the Embark leadership team that they are there working for the schools, and to put the best interests of the schools above all other matters.

The BCS Press team really appreciate the time and effort that Mrs Jones and Mr Crawford have spent to allow me to accurately write this article.

All salary information in this article is the pre-tax pay and does not include any contributions towards pensions from Embark, schools or teachers.

My sources:

*I have made a google drive that contains all my sources and data which is linked below. If you have any questions about this article, please reach out to me at my school email address:
2oadkiluk@buxton.derbyshire.sch.uk*

Here is a QR code to the Google Drive:



Halloween Cookies

For the cookies

150g butter
softened
50g caster sugar
100g light brown soft sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 large egg
250g plain flour
1/4 tsp baking powder
100g milk or dark chocolate chips

To decorate

60g dark chocolate
melted
60g royal icing sugar
mixed with 2 tsp water
20 Maltesers
5 Oreos
10 caramel-filled chocolates



Step 1

Heat the oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4, and line two baking sheets with baking parchment. Beat the butter and sugars together with an electric whisk until light and fluffy. Add the vanilla and egg and beat again to combine. Stir in the flour and baking powder with a wooden spoon until you have a stiff dough, then fold in the chocolate chips.

Step 2

Divide the dough into 20 pieces and roll into balls. Arrange on the prepared baking sheets, well spaced out so there's space for spreading (you may need to bake them in batches). Press the tops of the cookies down very slightly using the palm of your hand or the bottom of a glass. Bake the cookies for 10-12 mins until golden around the edges, then leave to cool on the baking sheets for 10 mins. Transfer to wire racks and leave to cool completely.

Step 3

To make the spider cookies, lay 10 of the cooled cookies out in front of you. Spoon the melted chocolate into a piping bag and the royal icing into another, then snip off the ends using scissors. Pipe a dot of royal icing onto the back of two Maltesers and arrange these onto one of the cookies to create the head and body of the spider. Repeat with the remaining nine cookies and the rest of the Maltesers. Pipe eight spider legs around the bodies of the spiders using the chocolate. Pipe two small dots of royal icing onto the heads to create eyes, then pipe very small dots of chocolate over the eyes to create pupils. If you like, decorate the bodies with the royal icing.

Step 4

To make the bat cookies, lay the remaining 10 cookies out in front of you. Separate the cream-filled chocolate sandwich cookies and carefully scrape the cream filling off the chocolate cookie pieces. Cut the chocolate cookie pieces into semicircles using a small serrated knife. Stick a caramel-filled chocolate onto the middle of each cooled cookie using the royal icing, then use a little more to stick a chocolate cookie semicircle on either side of the chocolates to make the bat wings. Pipe eyes onto the chocolates using the royal icing and melted chocolate.

Women's world cups roundup

Over 80,000 people stormed into Twickenham, a record amount, to watch the Women's Rugby World Cup match between England and Canada. Women's sport in England has been on fire recently, with the Lionesses' Euros victory in Switzerland still fresh in everyone's minds. And with the Women's Cricket World Cup kicking off, England are already chasing another world title.

In the latest rugby action, England defeated Canada 36–12 in an impressive performance, showing real strength in attack and defence. All the matches set up an incredible

Over on the cricket pitch, England's women's team started their World Cup campaign strongly, securing wins against South Africa and India thanks to standout batting performances from Heather Knight and Nat Sciver-Brunt. The team look confident and determined to continue England's amazing run in women's sport this year.



Pumpkin on the loose

This October, Americans were treated to an unexpected Halloween surprise—a giant inflatable pumpkin that “broke free” and rolled through the streets of a small Midwestern town before becoming a viral sensation.

The 25-foot-tall pumpkin, part of a fall festival display in Des Moines, Iowa, escaped during a gusty afternoon when strong winds snapped its tether lines. Witnesses say the enormous orange globe tumbled across intersections, through car parks and past startled onlookers who cheered and filmed the runaway decoration.

Clips of the pumpkin's wild adventure spread quickly across social media, earning millions of views under the hashtag #PumpkinOnTheRun.

Thankfully, no one was hurt, and the pumpkin was eventually recovered — deflated but undamaged — by local police. Organizers say it will be securely tied down for next year's festival.



New V-Levels

Big changes are coming to post-16 education in the UK with the launch of a new qualification: the V-Level.

V-Levels — short for vocational levels — are designed to sit alongside A-Levels and T-Levels, giving students more flexibility after GCSEs. The idea is that you'll be able to mix and match subjects, such as taking a V-Level in media or engineering alongside an A-Level in Maths or English.

The government says V-Levels will replace hundreds of existing vocational courses, including some BTECs, to make the system simpler and easier to understand. They're expected to start rolling out around 2027.

The new qualification aims to make vocational routes just as respected as academic ones, helping students build real-world skills for university, apprenticeships, or skilled jobs.



Is political violence becoming the norm?

On 10th September 2025, the news of the fatal shooting of influential MAGA activist and influencer Charlie Kirk shocked the world. Kirk, a prominent figure in Republican, specifically Trump relations with young people, was addressing an audience of students in Utah Valley University, when at 12:23 PM, a single shot, from approximately 130m away hit his neck. He was quickly carried away by bodyguards and taken to hospital. News reported him in critical condition, and at 2:40 PM, a post by Donald Trump on Truth Social confirmed that Kirk was dead. Approximately 33 hours after Kirk's assassination, Tyler Robinson was taken into custody and has been pronounced as the murderer by authorities through DNA evidence on the rifle. (The attack was later described by authorities as a politically motivated assassination)

Who was Charlie Kirk?

Charlie Kirk was an American conservative political activist and commentator. He was best known as the founder and president of Turning Point USA, a youth-oriented political group that promoted conservative and right-wing ideas on college campuses. Before his death, he was a prominent media figure, hosting a daily talk show and frequently appearing on television to discuss U.S. politics, culture, and religion. He has been affiliated with more radical, and sometimes extremist, views and opinions.

So, is political violence becoming more of a threat?

In simple terms, yes, and no.

Although there is evidence of increased political/terror violence in recent times, (e.g. The recent Manchester Synagogue attack), there is also an increase in repetitive, targeted news reporting, heavily reinforced by social media, which both makes it difficult to easily place the severity of situations, and furthermore reinforces the polarisation and eventually radicalisation that a major cause of this political violence. (note, this is not the only cause of this violence).

Effectively, although it might not be as major of a problem now, the media's effect on it, is a self-fulfilling prophecy, and so it could viably become a very serious issue in the future.

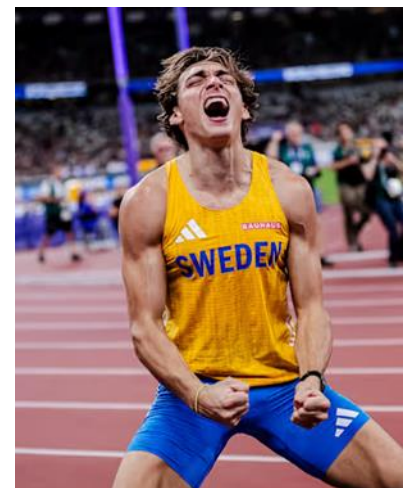


Pole Vaulting

Pole vaulting - it's one of the most dramatic and jaw-dropping events in athletics!

Continuously smashing his own world records is Armand Duplantis, the superstar of the sport. His latest record stands at an unbelievable 6 metres 30 centimetres! Even more amazing, he's broken his own records 14 times.

Watching Duplantis in action is like watching someone defy gravity. He makes something almost impossible look easy, inspiring young athletes everywhere to keep pushing their limits.



Opinion Piece: Blair in the court of Trump By Haydn Smith

This term, we saw the start of a ceasefire in - let's call it what the United Nations has described it as - Israel's Genocide in the Gaza Strip. At the forefront of said ceasefire, was the President of the United States, Donald Trump; in true Trump fashion taking all the glory for himself (there was a considerable effort from Qatar and Egypt - more than Trump's son-in-law). But there is one person, from the UK's past that has made a quiet reappearance, Tony Blair. Prime Minister from 1997 to 2007, the face of New Labour and who I describe as the Architect of the Neo-Liberalism Consensus we currently find ourselves in.

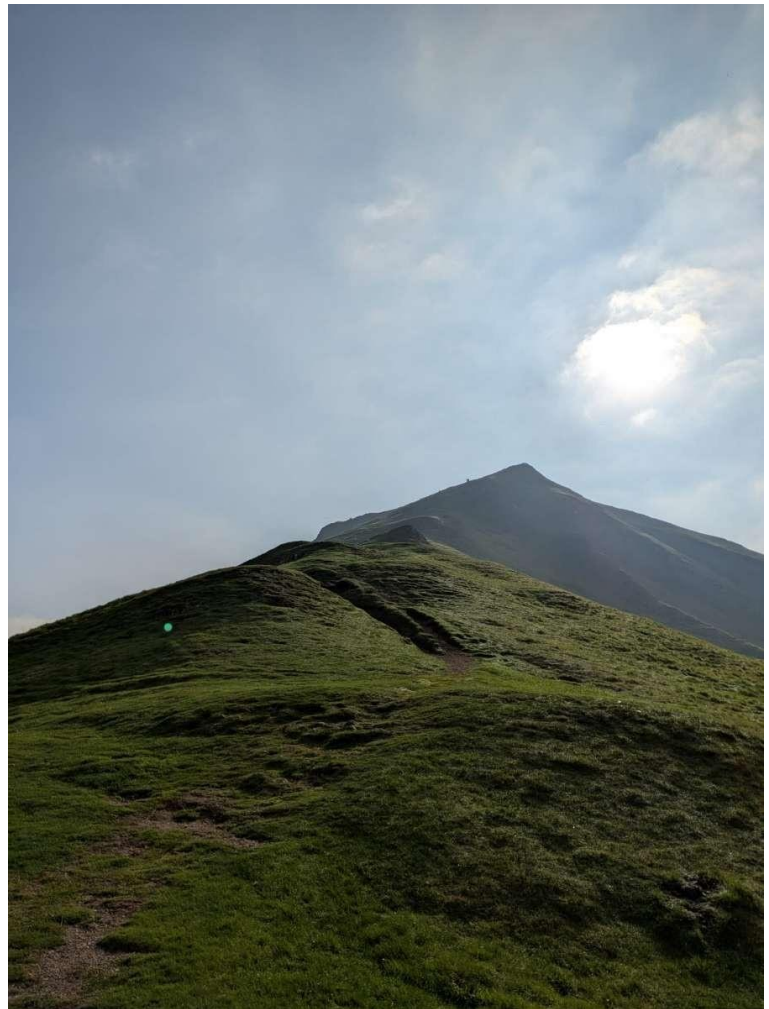
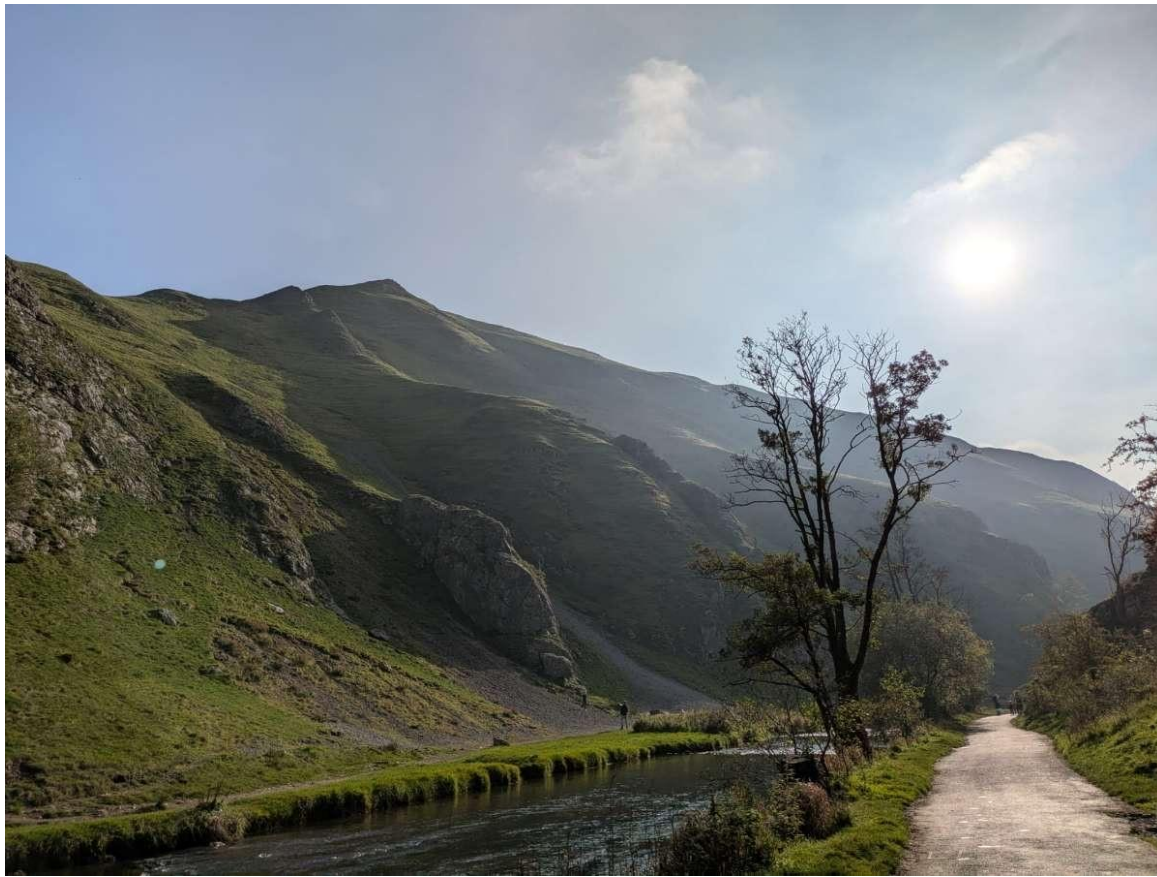
Six weeks ago, Tony Blair walked into the Oval Office to convince Trump that peace in Gaza was possible, that talk has clearly worked, with a 20-point plan being pushed onto Israel by Trump to end the war. The plan loudly echoes the Good Friday Agreement, that ended the Troubles in Northern Ireland - which was also drawn up mainly under Tony Blair and his Chief of Staff (Manager) Jonathan Powell with the full surrender of Hamas - a lot like the IRA - and the establishment of a co-operation council between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (the internationally recognised true government of Gaza and the West Bank - the 1967 United Nation's border for Palestine - crucially not Hamas) this echoes the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and North-South Ministerial Council, both setup by the Good Friday Agreement.

Why however, has Tony Blair suddenly decided to get his hands back in the pies of politics after all these years off? I think it comes down to time. From 2007, all the way through the 2010s, he was weakened by his decision to invade Iraq with the United States. His party and the country pushed him out for sending them into a false war. But now, with a right-wing-leaning Labour Party under Starmer in Government, much like his New Labour, he has the platform to project himself into the world, with the necessary backing - Starmer and many in his government have made it publicly known their affection and respect for Blair.

If this is Blair's attempt at political revival, it is shrewd. He knows how to turn conflict settlement into legacy-building: design a peace in his image, let history remember the signing of an agreement more than the mess before. But there are obvious problems with that playbook when you scratch the surface. Gaza is not Northern Ireland. The balance of power, the regional dynamics, and the humanitarian catastrophe make any neat comparison hazardous. More practically, a plan that hinges on the "full surrender" of an armed group that has cemented itself within Gaza since 2007 and the rapid construction of "institutions" and "bodies" risks sidelining everyday Palestinians' needs - reconstruction, safe returns, and genuine political representation - in favour of headline diplomacy. It also risks cementing an international habit: outsource the messy politics to familiar faces, applaud the architecture, and ignore who pays the price on the ground.

Tony Blair's reappearance should therefore invite more questions than applause. Who benefits from a blueprint that emphasises state stability over accountability? How will the voices of Gaza's civilians be heard in a process driven by former prime ministers and presidential photo-ops? Finally, if history is to judge this moment fairly, it must do so not by the number of press conferences held in the Oval Office but by whether ordinary people in Gaza end the year alive, housed, and politically represented.

Blair may be back in the room. That does not mean his version of peace is the only one worth listening to. We are in a new world of privatised foreign policy, business trumps change.



Photos of the local area (Thorpe Cloud and Dove Valley) taken by Max Sherwood

The Debate | Digital IDs, a step forward or a step back?



The facts:

On 26th September the PM, Sir Kier Starmer announced a new digital identity card (ID) scheme for people living in the UK.

This will mean each adult with a 'right to work' will have a digital ID 'card', mainly stored on phones. (Although there are discussions on these for teens as well). These will be checked by employers before someone starts a new job, to make sure they have that 'right to work'. The primary aim of these is to stop people working illegally in the country. They will also be used to access government services such as tax filing.

However, many critics have concerns of both the security implications and requirements of these, and the moral challenges they present to privacy of people. Some worry that this makes their identity at higher risk of theft.

Digital IDs are worth it:

They allow for access to government services, from home, without any need to go anywhere physically, (e.g. apply for benefits, update address or check taxes).

This is also helpful for those who are unable to go to the physical places.

Everything is going digital in the data age; it makes sense for such integral things to do the same.

It is another layer of security to reduce fraud.

If done right, the data will be encrypted and stored securely, and if you lose your phone/ it is stolen, it is very simple to get your digital ID back

Less paperwork, and potentially less staff needed, reduces cost for the government.

UK citizens living abroad will be able to access services more easily.

A stronger digital signature gives more legal weight to documents signed online.

Digital IDs are not worth it:

This could be just the start in government tracking. The more integral digital IDs are in society, the higher the threat of being tracked in everything you do. Digital IDs are very valuable targets, if a system protecting them was to be breached, the identity theft could be widespread and very serious.

It makes it very difficult for some people to be able to work in the country.

Not everyone has constant access to a smartphone or a computer, this could exclude some people from vital services.

For the government to successfully keep track of these, along with protecting them, and updating software, the cost could be very high. Technical glitches could freeze major progress on a national scale.

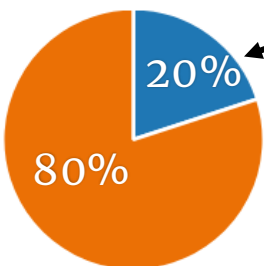
The more integral they become, the more we rely on them, making flaws more extreme.

Previous Debate's Results:

Do nuclear weapons really keep us safe?

"A small misunderstanding could destroy the whole world"

No



Yes

"We have always improved weapons to protect us with technology in history, and for the most part, they have worked."

"They ruin many homes of innocent people, and they infect the environment with nuclear energy"

"I would prefer they didn't exist, but since they do, we need them as a deterrent"

Please vote your opinion by scanning the QR code on the right.





Hub announcement:

The Hub has now reopened! Lots of work has been done by the student librarians to put in a new system to make searching for and borrowing books a lot easier. There will also be a book sale after half term so keep a look out!

Game News:

If you've ever wanted to be a police officer, firefighter, or paramedic, *Flashing Lights* lets you live that out — kind of. It's a multiplayer simulator where you team up with others to respond to emergencies, chase criminals, or put out fires. The game can be really fun when you're playing with friends, especially when everyone takes their roles seriously. But when you're playing alone, it can get a bit boring, and there are still a few bugs that make things glitchy. The graphics aren't amazing either, but they get the job done. Overall, *Flashing Lights* isn't perfect, but it's a good laugh if you like realistic roleplay games and working together.



Film Review – Nightmare before Christmas



I absolutely adore near Halloween. this film it was been There are many one of my favourites characters in the film for as long as I can and they're all VERY remember. It's got a different from one nice element of another like vampires surprise in all the and witches, it's just twists and turns of so fun to watch. It's this film. Its not just a on Disney Plus if kid's movie its for anyone hasn't seen everyone to enjoy and it! it's most fun to watch

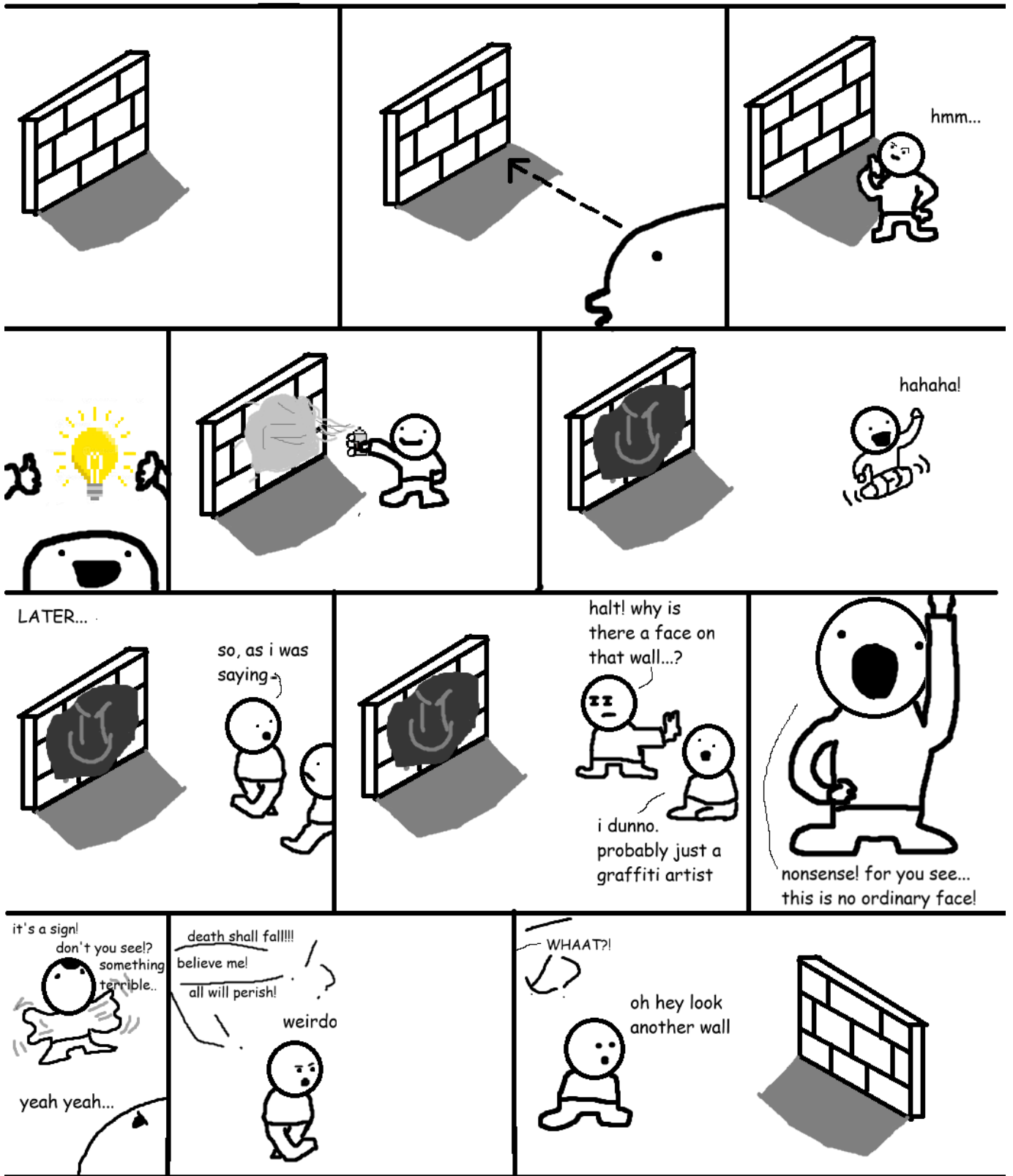
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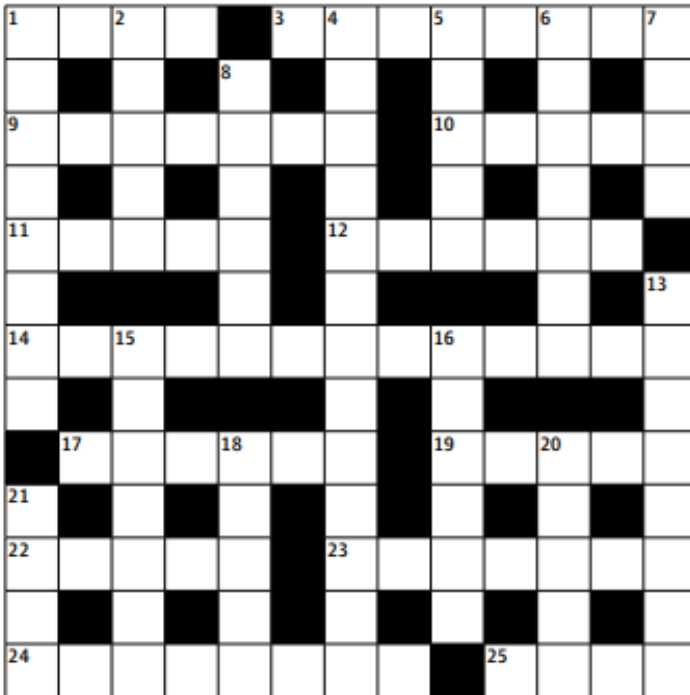


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PUZZLES



Anagrams

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 hogst
 comutes
 aveprim
 moizeb

Across

- 1 Strip off skin (4)
- 3 Italian dessert (8)
- 9 Neck cord carrying ID badge (7)
- 10 Puccini opera (5)
- 11 Stop, __! (5)
- 12 Whirlpool (6)
- 14 Yellow stuff - pud drawer cost (anag) (7,6)
- 17 Showy flower (6)
- 19 From Prague perhaps? (5)
- 22 Lukewarm (5)
- 23 Take legal possession of (7)
- 24 Land or buildings owned (8)
- 25 Electrical cable (4)

Down

- 1 Study of government and the state (8)
- 2 Feeling of weariness and boredom (5)
- 4 One that does not follow the crowd (13)
- 5 __ Henry (Prunella Scales widow sitcom) (5)

- 6 As an alternative (7)
- 7 US state (4)
- 8 Basket weaving material (6)
- 13 According to established doctrines (8)
- 15 Cleaner of locks (7)
- 16 Take up residence in (6)
- 18 Shelf-like projection (5)
- 20 Identical in quantity (5)
- 21 Naughty or goose? (4)

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