



# The Athelstan Trust

*Report to Parents July 2021*

Caring, Collaborative and Excellent

## TIM GILSON, CEO OF THE ATHELSTAN TRUST, LOOKS BACK ON ANOTHER EXTRAORDINARY YEAR

Earlier this year, we were delighted to welcome Chipping Sodbury School to The Athelstan Trust. We are now a 5 school Trust (all secondaries) with Malmesbury School and Bradon Forest School in Wiltshire, Sir William Romney's School and The Dean Academy in Gloucestershire and Chipping Sodbury School in South Gloucestershire.

The past year has shown how much power and value there is in strong, effective schools collaborating and helping each other solve problems and sharing ideas and resources. It has been great seeing the development of networks and groups of colleagues across all the schools in the Athelstan Trust getting together, supporting each other and building our capacity to deal with challenges.

Throughout this newsletter we will show you how being part of Athelstan has enhanced and enriched your child's education and opportunities. Our strong financial position enables us to recruit excellent staff. We bring subject leaders from all our schools together to focus on School Improvement and our safeguarding teams regularly share best practice to keep students safe and happy. Our SENDCos meet regularly and we run cross trust training for our TAs and Learning Coaches to help them support our most vulnerable students.

Our Governors and Trustees are a team of highly skilled professionals, parents and staff who monitor educational standards and student safety and wellbeing



[www.theathelstantrust.org](http://www.theathelstantrust.org)

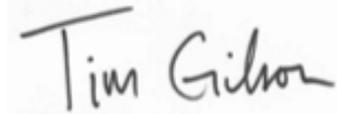
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@BradonForestSch  
@CSSSch  
@TheDeanAcademy  
@MalmesburySch  
@swr\_school  
@AvonTSA



with huge dedication on a voluntary basis. A consultation group consisting of trade union reps and staff governors regularly meet to discuss procedures and to share feedback on new ideas as well as raising questions on behalf of colleagues.

It is not easy to capture all the challenges and achievements of our schools over the past year. While in many ways this has been an academic year that none of us ever expected or would wish to repeat, as ever, when faced with seemingly insurmountable issues, all the staff working across the Trust have risen to the challenge and exceeded everyone's expectations of what was possible.

We are extremely grateful for the support parents have given us and the way in which students have settled back into school with a positive attitude and understanding of the new ways of working. We look forward to bringing back sporting fixtures, drama performances and music concerts as restrictions ease so that school feels more fun again.



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## HEADTEACHERS COMING AND GOING

It has been a challenging time for our Headteachers and Senior Leadership Teams who have managed the establishment of remote learning provision at very short notice and ensured there were staff in school to support vulnerable and key worker children who continued to attend even during the Easter and half term holidays last year.

The re-opening of schools involved detailed risk assessments, one-way systems, “bubbles” to keep groups of students apart, staffing staggered lunches and breaktimes, sourcing sanitising equipment, setting up testing facilities for staff and students and the enormous workload of assessments and marking that replaced exams.

We are extremely fortunate that staff in all our schools have accepted the challenges of the pandemic and these new ways of working with resilience and positivity, keeping the safety and education of their students at the forefront of everything they do.

One of our Headteachers, Richard Brand joined the Trust in May 2020. He says he was drawn to The Dean Academy because of its many strengths including its strong ethos. The Athelstan Trust is much smaller than his previous school's Trust which had more of a corporate



feel. He says he appreciates being in a smaller Trust that recognises how different and individual the schools are. It is important to him that his school is able to choose the priorities that are relevant for them while linking into overarching Trust principles.

Richard says this is a very supportive Trust and it is reassuring to work with such an experienced CEO who can give a different perspective while still retaining autonomy over how to run the school. He thinks a smaller Trust brings more of the benefits with fewer problems and he can see how The Dean Academy has benefitted from support and expertise offered from the wider Trust in the form of Lead Practitioners for English and Maths, leadership and IT support which have all been really effective.

Richard is grateful that he has an amazing team of staff who he says will make the best of everything by pulling together, looking after each other and stepping up to deal with whatever is thrown at them.

The recent challenges have forced him to remember what is important about schools – there are so many conflicting demands but the main thing is to come to work, to teach great lessons and have good relationships with students and colleagues.

For Richard, the pandemic has been a leveller. Whether a Head is new, in their second year or has 40 years' worth experience, no one has come across anything like COVID and everyone has had to deal with exactly the same daily challenges.



### *FAREWELL TO TWO HEADTEACHERS WHO LEAVE THIS YEAR*

Julie Dickson, Headteacher at Bradon Forest is retiring after 8 years at the school. During her time in the Headteacher post, she has driven improvements in the school buildings and pastoral systems. She has led the creation of the shared Sixth Form provision. Tim Gilson, CEO, says *“Julie has been a wonderful colleague to work with at Trust level. She is always seeking to enable collaboration and she is generous in her support of other Headteachers. I know all the Trust leadership team have greatly valued her support, advice and kindness.”* We wish Julie a happy retirement.

Rupert Moreton leaves Malmesbury School and the Trust in August to take a break from teaching and school leadership. Rupert has worked really hard this year to steer the school through the second half of the COVID pandemic. He has ensured that staff and students have felt safe and well looked after during these really challenging times. The management of all the remote learning, risk assessments, teacher assessed grades and changes to the building and ways of working has been an enormous undertaking and Rupert has managed it skilfully. In his letter to parents Rupert says *“I have really enjoyed working at the school and with our students, staff, parents and carers. Malmesbury School is truly a very special community.”* We are very grateful for all he has done for the school and wish him all the very best for the future.

## EXCITING NEW LEADERSHIP FOR BRADON FOREST AND MALMESBURY SCHOOLS

Sarah Haines joins Bradon Forest School as the new Headteacher from her current role as Assistant Headteacher at Malmesbury School and part time Deputy Headteacher at The Dean Academy. John Scott, LGB Chair said *“I am delighted that we have selected Sarah from a competitive field of applicants. I look forward to working with Sarah in taking the school forward during the next few years.”* Sarah is particularly looking forward to developing the joint sixth form between Malmesbury School and Bradon Forest School. She says *“As the Sixth Form grows, there will be more opportunity to diversify the range of A-Level teaching and create wider pathways for Bradon Forest students post-16 in a school setting.”* She is looking forward to September *“This opportunity comes at a time when I am professionally and personally ready to embark on a headship and I hope that my experience speaks of my commitment to leading authentically, and with integrity to support all students and staff to realise their potential.”*



Brett Jouny has been appointed Headteacher of Malmesbury School from September 2021. Dr Claire Graves, Chair of Governors says, *“The Governing Body are delighted to have appointed Brett Jouny from an exceptionally strong field of candidates. It is great that he knows the school having worked here previously as a very successful Head of Modern Foreign Languages, before leaving eight years ago to go onto leadership posts in two excellent local schools, Balcarras and Burford. We are very excited about Brett leading the school through the next phase of its development.”*





# MYTH-BUSTING ABOUT ACADEMIES

*You probably know that your child's school is part of the Athelstan Trust but what do you know about Academy Trusts?*

## **Academy trusts are not businesses – nor are they run by 'private' people**

Academy trusts are education charities set up purely for the purpose of running and improving schools. Trustees have strict duties under charity law and company law.

## **Trustees and members cannot make profits**

Academy trusts are not allowed to make profits or distribute profits to trustees or members. All surpluses are invested into the front-line to improve the quality of education.

## **Academy trusts are highly accountable**

Academy trusts are held to account to a higher standard than maintained schools and the obligation of transparency and accountability is much greater than maintained schools. They are held to account by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Ofsted and Regional Schools Commissioners.

They are required to have an independent audit annually and to publish their accounts. They are also required to disclose pay in thresholds.

## **Academy trusts are part of state-funded education**

Like any other state school, academies are free to attend, inspected in the same way, and children take the same tests and exams. Academy trusts are state-funded – parents do not pay fees.

More than half of pupils in England – 3.8 million pupils – are educated in academy schools. This is seven in ten secondary pupils and three in ten primary pupils.

## **Land is not passed into 'private' ownership and trusts need permission to sell land – just like maintained schools**

There are controls on the disposal of academy and maintained school publicly funded land. The Secretary of State's permission is required for the disposal of publicly funded school land or school land which has been enhanced at public expense.

## **Academy trusts have the same legal responsibilities as maintained schools towards children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)**

## **Academy trusts are subject to most of the same direct statutory duties as maintained mainstream schools, in respect of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).**

As such, mainstream academies must:

- Have regard to the statutory SEND Code of Practice

- Use their best endeavours to make sure a child with SEN gets the support they need
- Designate a qualified teacher to be the SENCo
- Co-operate with the local authority in respect of the child
- Admit a child where the school is named on that child's Education, Health and Care plan
- Ensure that children, young people and their families are involved in decision-making and planning.

### **Academy trusts must comply with the same law on admissions as maintained schools**

The DfE's model funding agreement for mainstream academies requires them to comply in full with the DfE School Admissions Code and the law relating to admissions.

## **Chairman of the Board of Trustees explains how The Athelstan Trust impacts your child's school**

Parents know a lot about their children's schools – and so do our students – but most don't know much about the Trust or how it helps add value to students' education and experience. So what is the Athelstan Trust and what does it do?

In every school, teachers and all staff have an overriding priority – the education and wellbeing of students. To help them focus on that, a lot of work goes on behind the scenes. Huge effort goes into ensuring, amongst much else, that every school has the right staff, that the buildings and grounds are in good repair, that the IT works, that the bills are paid and, above all, that educational, pastoral and safety standards are high. All this must be done by specialists, but it is not possible for every school to employ a team with all these skills – so that is where the Trust comes in.

Some Trusts are big bureaucratic organisations, and some try to make every school the same with the same uniform, curriculum etc. At the Athelstan Trust we believe that the best schools are part of their local communities and have a culture which is right for where they are. We foster the individuality of every school as well as the individuality of our staff and students and our small central team provides the resources to support each school.

We make a difference because we make it easier for every Head and every teacher to focus on students and staff rather than admin. We make a difference because the Trust, being bigger than any one school, can offer more career opportunities and this helps us attract and keep the best staff. And we make a difference because we enable schools to share best practice and to exchange ideas.



Richard Boggis-Rolfe  
Chair of the Board of Trustees



# PRAISE FROM OFSTED FOR CHIPPING SODBURY SCHOOL

The Ofsted monitoring inspection, carried out remotely at the end of March (just days before the school joined the Athelstan Trust), praised the school for working with parents and students to deliver remote learning during lockdown. The report also highlighted the additional support for reading and numeracy and the school's plans *"that balance the demands of the forthcoming assessments with pupils' wellbeing."*

Robert Owen, Chair of Local Governing Body, was especially pleased that Ofsted recognised how well governors and leaders have worked together to bring about school improvement. The report says *"Governors are ambitious for the school."*

Chipping Sodbury School's values of Respect, Responsibility, Aspiration and Integrity make it an ideal fit for Athelstan which focuses on being Caring, Collaborative and Excellent. CEO, Tim Gilson says *"Chipping Sodbury School is a lovely school with great leadership and a dedicated, highly skilled staff. It is a wonderful addition to our strong, effective family of local schools. We have been working together for nearly two years in the run up to the school joining the Trust and we can already see the additional value we are adding to each other. I really look forward to getting to know the school community even better."* Robert Owen, local governing body Chair says *"I am delighted that we will now be working in collaboration with other like-minded schools which I am sure will further support our drive for improved outcomes for all of our students."*

Tom Herbert, baker and food equality champion went to the school and students have been lucky enough to visit Hobbs House Bakery for work experience. There is a new multimillion-pound sports hall and all-weather pitch, high-quality technical equipment and students enjoy activities such as choir and debating club. The school is especially proud of its success with the Greenpower Project which involves designing, building and racing an electric car at Silverstone. The school's team came 26th out of 266 teams in the most recent competition.

Chipping Sodbury School has a shared Sixth Form with two other local schools and sixth formers hope to secure places at universities including both Oxford and Cambridge this year.



# SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES REGARDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN SCHOOLS

You will no doubt be aware of the national discussion in the press and social media about young people's devastating personal stories of sexual harassment and violence both in and out of schools.

All our schools take allegations and incidents of sexual abuse between young people extremely seriously and our dedicated members of staff regularly come together to discuss preventative measures (such as behaviour policies), pastoral support and the relationships, sex and health (RSHE) curriculum which teaches age-appropriate topics such as consent.

We want to reassure you that we take allegations of such incidents extremely seriously and we will support any student or parent who comes forward.

All of our schools have undertaken thorough internal reviews of safeguarding this term to ensure our procedures relating to peer-on-peer abuse and child-on-child sexual violence are clear and known by all staff and accessible to parents (our Child Protection Policy can be found on [The Athelstan Trust website Policies – The Athelstan Trust](#)). We have spoken to many of our students and they have told us they feel safe in our schools and they know who the key staff are to go to for help.

The Designated Safeguarding Leads in each of our schools are:

Name	Responsibilities	Main registered base	Phone Number	Email address
Clark Harrell	DSL	Malmesbury School	01666 829700	charrell@malmesbury.wilts.sch.uk
Declan Mooney	DSL	The Dean Academy	01594 843202	declan.mooney@thedeanacademy.org
Gren Heathcote (from Sept '21)	DSL	Bradon Forest School	01793 770570	heathcoteg@bradonforest.wilts.sch.uk
Jon Bell	Headteacher/ DSL	Sir William Romney's School	01666 502378	j.bell@swr.gloucs.sch.uk
Chris Whitfield	DSL	Chipping Sodbury School	01454 862900	Chris.whitfield@chippingsodburysc hool.com



# GOVERNANCE OF THE ATHELSTAN TRUST

Strong, ethical governance is essential to the success of any organisation. The Athelstan Trust is fortunate to have experienced, dedicated and knowledgeable people at all levels of governance from our members to our Board of Trustees and our Local Governing Bodies. The members are “the conscience of the Trust” ensuring the ethos and values are upheld. It is their responsibility to appoint trustees. We have two new members with a vacancy for a fifth.



Martin Smith was a governor at Malmesbury School from 2003 to 2015 with periods of being Vice-Chair and Chair of the Curriculum Committee. He is also Vice Chair of governors at Sherston Primary School, a Parish Councillor in Sherston and volunteers with climate change organisations in Sherston and Malmesbury. Martin has had a career in software development for over 30 years in both Financial Services and Education sectors. He now works part-time as a Senior Project Manager for an insurance company.

Jemma Kojima is a Consultant Hand and Wrist Surgeon at Swindon’s Great Western Hospital. She gained her medical degree from Oxford University in 2005 and lives in Tetbury with her husband (a former MasterChef finalist) and young children. Jemma has a particular interest in education and teaching and she is a tutor for Bristol, Oxford and King’s College University students. Jemma is a triathlete and has competed in marathons in London, Berlin, Paris and Kenya. Jemma became a Member of the Board in May 2021.



***The trustees have independent control over, and legal responsibility for the Trust’s management and administration. We have 11 trustees who meet 6 times per year. Our two newest trustees are Sophie Scruton and Ian Tucker.***



Sophie started her career as editor of Charity Times - a magazine concerned with charity finance, law and governance. She has gone on to work for charities (the Bath Preservation Trust) and serve on governing boards such as the Athelstan Museum Council and the National Trust Council and currently the Holfords of Westonbirt Trust. Sophie has also served as an elected District Councillor for North Wiltshire. She runs a family farm as an educational resource with summer schools and educational days.

Ian Tucker has been Executive Principal of St John’s Marlborough and The John O’ Gaunt school in Hungerford since January 2019. He has over 20 years of Headship experience in both primary and secondary schools across the country and is currently the Chair of the Wiltshire Secondary School Headteacher’s Association. Ian has extensive experience of leading highly effective school leadership teams and is keen to use evidence-based research to improve the outcomes for young people. All three of his children have attended Malmesbury School and he is a keen sports fan who enjoys running and cycling when the opportunity arises.



***Information about other members and trustees is available on the Trust website Trust Leadership – The Athelstan Trust.***

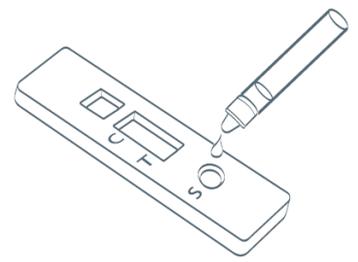
# SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACROSS ATHELSTAN



## **How we've focused on improving all our schools this year**

Last September, our two Athelstan School Improvement Leads, Emma-Jane O'Neill and Michelle Kilburn Bond started working with teams in every school. These are some of the ways they have made a difference this year:

- Curriculum collaboration: Emma-Jane and Michelle, meet with curriculum leads in English and Maths to discuss latest educational research, share subject knowledge and collaborate on development of curriculum. As a result of these discussions, resources are created, shared and modelled so that there is impact on students in classrooms across all five schools. For example, the introduction of Hegarty Maths to reinforce revision of maths knowledge outside of the classroom and the GCSE English Language and Literature revision videos that have supported online learning but also remain as a revision resource for students to use independently.
- Professional development: throughout the year, Michelle and Emma-Jane have worked with a range of teachers across all the schools to develop classroom teaching practice and support the quality assurance of assessment and monitoring of student progress. As well as working on bespoke partnerships that support individual subject teachers and teaching assistants, they have also worked with all the newly qualified Athelstan teachers to deliver thematic training sessions on 'behaviour', 'impactful feedback', 'classroom talk', 'career progression' and 'adaptive teaching'. Michelle and Emma-Jane have also been busy establishing a model for 2021 – 2022 in which all our teachers will benefit from learning from peer talent and passions for a range of 21 important topics that will translate into improved student experiences, including diversity and inclusion, supporting student mental health, fostering independent learning and motivating students to learn.
- Student enrichment: working creatively around Covid restrictions this year, Emma-Jane and Michelle have also talked to Year 7 and 10 students in each school, gathering their experiences of being in English and maths lessons in order to share patterns and areas of strength. World Book Day activities were resourced, shared and celebrated and hundreds of students from the five schools will experience a virtual author visit from novelist, Alex Sheppard. We look forward to the return of the Athelstan Maths challenges; each of the five schools will host different year group teams, challenging students' problem-solving prowess and utilising their skills of collaboration and resilience to compete over 4 varied rounds; the group round, crossnumber, shuttle and relay.



# COVID SAFETY AND TESTING

Students and staff across the Trust have now settled back into a much more normal way of school life - it is as if we were never away!

Following this most disruptive, disconcerting and challenging time, we have been impressed with students' resilience, independence and positivity upon their return to school after lockdown. As we all know, this would not have been possible without the determination, commitment and teamwork displayed by all staff, parents and families across our schools' community. It is for this reason that we can all look towards the future with great optimism and once again provide students across the Trust with the opportunities and learning experiences that they absolutely deserve.



After an initial period of students finding their feet (and confidence) again they have really taken learning into their stride and the wonderful school 'buzz' has returned.

**"It's made me realise that teachers are really important!" Malmesbury student**

Students were genuinely pleased to see us after lockdown as well as their friends and we were delighted by many messages of support we received from parents.

*"Just wanted to say a big thank you to all the teachers, administrators and all staff that have worked throughout lockdown to help our children continue with some description of home schooling. I know it's been a challenging time, but staff have been so supportive, and they too have had their own families to cope with through lockdown too. So, thank you and a big cheer from me."*



Parents have really appreciated the amount of work that has gone into our remote learning package. Our combination of live learning, tutor and pastoral support, mental health advice and leaning support for SEND students has been much appreciated. *"Whatever your role in school, you have contributed in some way to keeping the site functioning or providing a robust remote learning package. Thank you!"*

Students across the Trust have commented that it is good to be back into a more normal routine away from their screens.



**"We have finally had the chance to see the rest of the school which has been fantastic, as well as take part in lots of different clubs and getting to know the rest of Year 7." Year 7 student, SWR**

# COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE TRUST

This year, The Dean Academy has been building its social media presence on platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

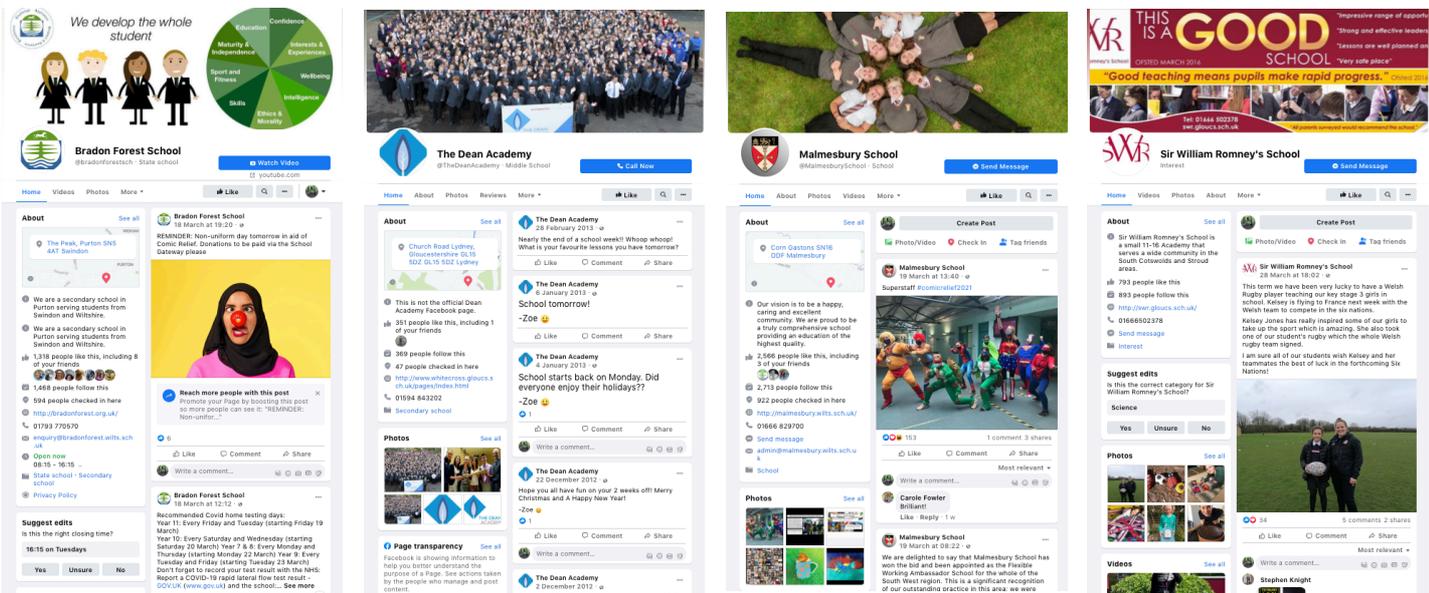
Through posts they have been aiming to provide a snapshot of school life. It is a fantastic platform for teachers to show off exemplary work from students, celebrate achievements, share thoughts and ideas and announce upcoming events. It can also help parents to find out more about the school and to make them feel part of our school community.

You can follow them on:

- Instagram: @thedeanacademyofficial
- Twitter: @TheDeanAcademy
- Facebook: @thedeanacademyofficial



Schools across the Trust embrace social media for the same purposes. Simply search for the school name on Facebook:



If you have some exciting news or achievement from home you would like to share with your school, get in touch!

Keeping in touch has been more important than ever during the last year. As well as the social media platforms all our schools use to provide students, staff, parents and our local communities with snapshots of school life, we have an impressive collection of vibrant newsletters.



The Dean Academy email a weekly Parent Bulletin, showcasing students' work in its Bright Spots section, plus a termly newsletter.

Malmesbury Matters - A newsletter for parents with a round up of school news and a celebration of students' achievements

Malmesbury 'Spark' - A Magazine written by and for staff to share teaching and learning ideas

Bradon @home was a fortnightly newsletter sent out to 'champion home learners' during both National Lockdowns. The school also sends out a weekly parent bulletin via school comms, as well as updating news and events across social media and the school website.



Sir William Romney's Holistic Herald  
The Holistic Herald is aimed at parents and helps to keep them informed of anything of note outside of the classroom. It outlines what will be covered in Personal Development lessons over the coming terms, what extra curricular opportunities are available, careers and post 16 information as well as a range of other relevant initiatives we feel they should know about.

Chipping Sodbury School's regular newsletters are posted on their website and feature all the exciting news and events happening around the school.



# 10 UNUSUAL PLACES TO VISIT THIS SUMMER



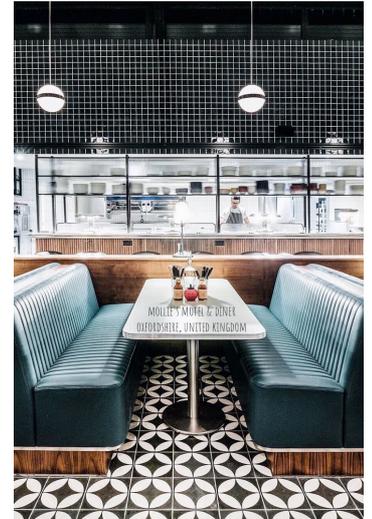
## ✓ Stanton Park

Stanton Park is a 74-hectare country park and Local Nature Reserve a few minutes drive away from the centre of Swindon. It features extensive woodland and a large lake as well as some hidden treasures! [https://www.swindon.gov.uk/directory\\_record/8470/stanton\\_park](https://www.swindon.gov.uk/directory_record/8470/stanton_park)



## ✓ Ride a pump track

Pump tracks are a great place to build up your bike skills. Try the all tarmac one at Wroughton, a great one for beginners or children as the small loop can be ridden independently. There's also a play park right next door! <https://www.facebook.com/BMXWroughton>



## ✓ Book a meal at Mollie's Diner

Experience a modern take on the American Diner! <https://mollies.com/locations/oxford/diner/>



## ✓ Visit 'Puffin City'

Bempton Cliffs, on the spectacular Yorkshire coast, is home to one of the UK's top wildlife spectacles. Around half a million seabirds gather here between March and October to raise a family on towering chalk cliffs which overlook the North Sea: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/bempton-cliffs/>

## ✓ Highgate Cemetery London, England

London's creepiest cemetery was once the site of duelling magicians and mobs of stake-carrying vampire hunters.



## ✓ Sea Tractor to Burgh Island

Ride the sea tractor at high tide to Burgh island. Walk round the island and then walk back across the beach at low tide: <https://www.coastandcountry.co.uk/blog/burgh-island-south-devon-beach-bible>



✓ Sand Dune Sledging at Merthyr Mawr Warren

Set on the South Wales coast, Merthyr Mawr Warren National Nature Reserve, Bridgend is home to the highest dune in Wales, known as the Big Dipper. Great for running and sledging down! You do need to walk quite far to get there - about 45 mins: <https://www.visitwales.com/attraction/nature-or-wildlife/merthyr-mawr-warren-national-nature-reserve-2166507>



✓ Visit the enchanted world of Puzzlewood

Located in Gloucestershire's gorgeous and historic Forest of Dean. From aliens to ancient Scowles and wizards to wildlife our unique and atmospheric ancient woodland is a natural stage that's more than a home to history and nature, it's an inspiration for authors and storytellers, where Stormtroopers and Time Lords have rubbed shoulders with dragons and unicorns. <https://www.puzzlewood.net/>



✓ Explore dramatic moorland rock formations at Brimham Rocks

The natural spectacle of Brimham Rocks, with its giant rock formations, was created by an immense river 100 million years before the first dinosaurs walked the earth, and a visit to this amazing landscape is truly a journey into pre-history: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/brimham-rocks>

✓ Ride or walk through the Bat Tunnel at Tidenham

Wye Valley volunteers have lit the tunnel on the 5 mile route from Chepstow to Tidenham. It has exit signs and distance markers and they have installed a shield

under the ventilation shaft and kerbs to steer people away from the rocky edges too - good to hear! They have installed bat improvements agreed with Natural England including stopping the drafts in roof voids, installing little bat boxes and bricking up some alcoves, and installing baffles above others to create more sheltered places for hibernation, and boarding up the gates to reduce airflow: <https://greenwaysandcyclerroutes.org/wye-valley-greenway/>

