

# Our Trip to Oxford

Visiting a top university in the UK is an ineffable and amazing experience. For someone who grew up in East London, I didn't consider Oxford as one of my university options simply because I thought it was for rich, private-school kids and not a state-school kid like myself or my peers. This trip opened my eyes to what Oxford is really like and made me realise that there is nothing stopping me from going there, besides myself.

For me to gain an opportunity to go on this trip, around 25 HAP students had to compete in an essay-writing competition. The scariest part was the fact that only 10 HAP students were going - 10 of the best. We were given a scenario in which we had to pick the person we blamed the most for the crime committed - the crime was a car accident leading to the murder of a little child. The 10 winners were chosen by Ms Meyrick and Ms Reid who put a sheet of paper on the library door to show who had won and it felt like a great accomplishment to see my name amongst so many other great students.

On the day, we travelled with two other schools - Willowfield and Walthamstow School for Girls - by coach to get to Oxford. I loved it there as there were outstanding scenery and architecture, especially of the different colleges and libraries around the campuses. We had an amazing speaker who was from Wales and he spoke to us about Oxford; what you can do, how you can get in, the type of support provided, etc. Afterwards, two students (one from Walthamstow School for Girls and one from Willowfield) that currently attend Oxford talked to us about their application and what it was like for them. I found that part very useful because I could relate to some of the things they thought about Oxford before deciding to go there. Most importantly, they still got in despite going to a state school, like me.

After our talk, we ate lunch and went for a tour around the campus. We saw libraries, student bars and general places where students hung out and chilled. Our tour guide explained student life on campus and other things like who you would go to in an emergency or what the options were if you didn't feel well physically and mentally when you had a deadline to submit, for example. We also went on a tour around Oxford and then we visited the Pitts River museum.

The Pitts River museum was by far my favourite part of the trip. It gave me a different outlook on Oxford. We were allowed to explore the museum with our friends and at the end, we were even given the chance to go on a scavenger hunt in groups of two to look for certain artefacts in the museum. The most interesting thing was the South American shrunken heads - real life heads that had been decapitated, shrunken and kept in the museum! It was frightening and interesting at the same time because I've never seen anything like that up close. The museum was my favourite part of the trip because we experienced so many different cultures and the way they worked and the different things that they practised.

Overall, this trip was very influential and useful for me. I am even considering an application to Oxford University in the future but I learnt so many useful things (e.g. I actually didn't know it was a group of separate colleges until that trip) about one of the most prestigious universities.

## Here is an excerpt of my essay:

*'I believe that although the government plays a part in this, and the texting driver, a parent/carer has an immense responsibility which is rudimentary to taking care of a child. This immense responsibility is ensuring the child's safety and protecting him/her every single day under every single circumstance. By the child being near the busy road, unsupervised and exposed to all sorts of dangers, the parent/carer is definitely dismissing their responsibility and causing the child's death, more than anyone. Subconsciously, children lay a large amount of trust within their parents to protect them from things they are too small to understand. This parent/carer, in my opinion, has let their child down deeply and largely caused their death more than any other group/person.'*

**Ida Saidy, 10K**

