


# Outreach Impact Report

2025-2026

St Edmund Hall

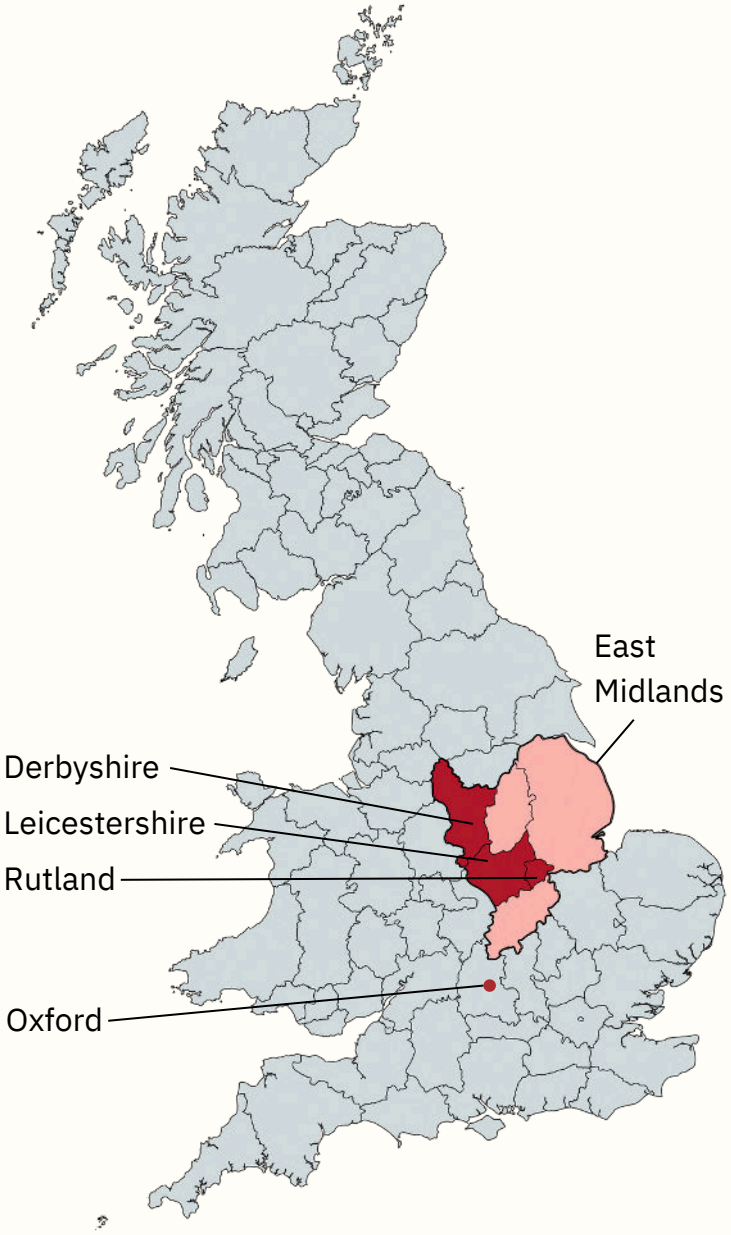
# Introduction

As part of the University's Regionalisation Programme, the College works primarily with state schools in Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Rutland.

In addition, St Edmund Hall is a member of *Oxford for East Midlands*, a consortium in partnership with Magdalen and Lincoln colleges that affords us the opportunity to work in the wider East Midlands region.

Outreach at the College has gone from strength to strength this year, seeing growth and development across a wide range of programmes and initiatives:

- Over 2500 students were reached through outreach initiatives
- Entries to the Big Think Competition doubled to 549
- 13 enhanced School Visits Plus partnerships established
- 219 hours of volunteer time contributed by ambassadors
- 75 students and their supporters attended the Offer-Holders' Day
- Over 1600 prospective students visited during Open Days
- 137 student-led mentoring sessions took place at Orchard Meadow Primary School




This report covers the period 1 September 2025 to 31 July 2026.





# Unlock Oxford

**365**

students taking part in the Rural strand

*(65% more than 2025)*

**13**

schools involved in School Visits Plus

*(85% more than 2025)*

"It was a truly wonderful experience and our students have grown so much in their confidence and self-belief as a result. Please also pass on our thanks to the ambassadors who were also wonderful and made everybody feel at ease."

*— School Careers Leader, Derby*

Unlock Oxford is a targeted, sustained-contact outreach programme for students in Years 10 to 13 across our link regions. The programme is divided into two main strands: Urban, for schools in Derby and Leicester; and Rural, for schools in wider Derbyshire and Leicestershire.

## Rural

In 2025-26 we expanded the provision for targeted rural schools, offering an enhanced programme for these schools called School Visits Plus. Selected students join the programme in Year 10, where they meet a member of the Outreach Team and learn about university, student finance and start thinking about top universities like Oxford. In Year 11 students, take part in a longer visit to Oxford which introduce students to Oxford colleges, A-level choices, provide a subject taster session, and include a critical thinking session that reflects the Oxford tutorial style of teaching. Once students reach Year 12 and are starting to think about applying to University, we offer an application workshop covering personal statements, admissions tests, written work and interviews, aiming to allow students to make as competitive an application as possible to Oxford.



# Unlock Oxford

## Urban

**4**

two-day residentials held in Oxford for schools in Derby and Leicester

**11**

schools participated in the residential programme

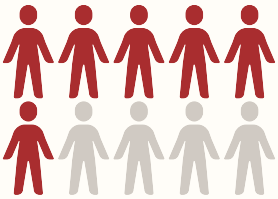
**200**

students attended the residentials

"This is the best residential and outreach programme I have been involved with across both Oxford and Cambridge, in over 20 years."

*– Executive Director of Post-16 Education, Spencer Academies Trust*

In March and April 2026, the Unlock Oxford Urban programme offered four residentials, split across Year 10 and Year 12 students in Derby and Leicester. Students were selected on key measures of deprivation, with 89% of attendees meeting at least one measure of disadvantage.



**60%**

of attendees live in areas of **socioeconomic deprivation**
*(Acorn 5/6 or IMD 1/2)*

**87%**

of attendees said they felt **knowledgeable about Oxford**
*(16% before)*

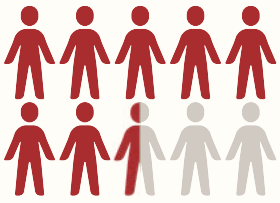
Students experienced an expanded timetable compared to previous years, with further chances to enjoy academic sessions and tasters. Year 10 enjoyed a workshop from Oxplore, as well as a subject taster session and workshops on student finance and A-level choices. Year 12 were able to meet current tutors, try out tutorial-style academic tasters, and learn about several aspects of the Oxbridge application process.

**89%**

of attendees met at least **one measure of disadvantage**
*(61% met two or more)*

**74%**

of attendees identified as Black, Asian or another **ethnic minority** group



Quantitative analysis of attendees' pre- and post- intervention survey responses showed a significant positive impact on almost all aspects measured, including participants' understanding of university and their motivation and desire to apply to Oxford. You can read more about this in our Unlock Oxford Urban Impact Infographic.

**YEAR 10 ATTENDEES:**

**89%**

felt well-equipped to make **informed A-level choices** after the residential
*(48% before)*

**YEAR 12 ATTENDEES:**

**83%**

felt they had a **good understanding of the Oxford application process**
*(37% before)*

**TEACHERS:**

**82%**

rated the residentials as **excellent**, the remaining 18% rated them as **good**

# Oxford NextGen

St Edmund Hall works with Magdalen and Lincoln colleges as part of *Oxford for East Midlands*, supporting schools across the region. Our targeted and sustained-contact outreach programme, *Oxford NextGen*, works with students from Year 10 through to Year 13 in eight schools across the East Midlands.

St Edmund Hall welcomed eight visits to the College from schools across the East Midlands as part of *Oxford NextGen*, and facilitated three visits to these schools, located in Northampton, Derby and Leicester.

A highlight of the year was hosting an application workshop for Year 12 students in June. It served as a culmination of the *Oxford NextGen* programme, which had supported these students over the last three years of their education. Participants had the opportunity to gain subject-specific application advice in various workshops focusing on admissions tests and interviews. 100% of surveyed attendees rated the day as useful, and 80% stated they were likely to apply to Oxbridge.

"Oxford NextGen has made the prospect of studying at a top university genuinely feel within sight. It has been super informative and I understand much more about what is best for me in the future.

*– Year 11 student, Northampton Academy*






# Big Think Competition

Open to UK state school students in Years 11 to 13, the Big Think Competition invites students to answer one of our tutors' tutorial-style questions with a five-minute video essay. In 2026, seventeen questions, representing almost all of the subjects offered at St Edmund Hall, were tackled by students.

With 549 entries, the competition has doubled in size since last year, with entrants hailing from Inverness to Plymouth. The quality of entries was exceptional: 19 winners were awarded prizes and a further 130 students recognised with a special commendation for their efforts, four times as many as last year. A Prizewinners' Day was held in June, allowing the winners to meet tutors who marked their entries, chat with current students and experience Oxford.

"Researching into my topic has really helped me to understand how to properly carry out research regarding a certain topic and how to answer a question based on that investigation. Formulating original opinions and perspectives was something I found particularly rewarding."
*– Commended Entrant*

**17**
subject-specific questions on offer
*(30% more than 2025)*

**562**
entries
*(107% more than 2025)*

**22%**
of entrants lived either in an area of higher deprivation (IMD quintiles 1 and 2)



# Offer-Holders' Day

In February 2026, 75 offer-holders from across the UK were welcomed to St Edmund Hall for Offer-Holders' Day.

As shortlisted applicants do not have the opportunity to visit St Edmund Hall during their interviews, the Offer-Holders' Day allows offer-holders and their supporters to familiarise themselves with the College ahead of receiving their results and Freshers' Week.

**100%**

of surveyed attendees rated the day **Good** or **Excellent**

**87%**

felt they were **more likely to accept their offer** after attending

Offer-holders were able to hear from the Outreach & Admissions Manager, the College Registrar, JCR President and representatives from the Admissions Office. Attendees also had the opportunity to meet key members of staff and current students, enjoy lunch in the Wolfson Hall, and take tours of the College and city centre.

We wish our offer-holders the best of luck, and hope to see them begin their studies at St Edmund Hall soon!






"Really amazing! Fell in love with Teddy Hall immediately."

"We really appreciated the opportunity to hear more about Teddy Hall from students and staff, to see more of the buildings, and particularly to meet some of the other offer-holders."



# School Visits

In the 2025-26 academic year, 43 schools and colleges visited St Edmund Hall. Each school received a programme of sessions tailored to their needs, and groups from Year 3 to Year 13 benefited from first-hand experience of an Oxford college. Several schools received a hands-on academic workshop as part of their visit, with others visiting one of the University museums.

This year, the Outreach team delivered 60 in-school sessions in Leicestershire and Derbyshire, covering a number of topics including introductions to university and Oxbridge, student finance, informed A-level choices, and interviews. An enhanced programme for target schools was also introduced, offering sustained engagement through a combination of in-school and Oxford-based sessions for high-achieving students in Years 10, 11 and 12. Over the course of the year, 13 of these School Visits Plus partnerships were established.

Every autumn, the team visits schools across our link regions for a week as part of an Outreach Roadshow, alongside four student ambassadors. In October 2025, we visited ten schools across Leicestershire and Derbyshire, interacting with over 700 students.



**36**
visits to St Edmund Hall

**60**
sessions in schools

**13**
Schools Visit Plus partnerships

"The friendliest of staff and student ambassadors - our students were very impressed and have come away feeling inspired!"
*– Year 10 teacher, Leicestershire*

# Student Ambassadors

**66**

trained student ambassadors

**219**

hours of volunteer time contributed by ambassadors

"In 20 years of school visits to Oxford these were the best student ambassadors I have encountered. It makes such a difference who our students meet when in Oxford, and being spoken to in such an open and unpatronising way helped inspire them."

*– Executive Director of Post-16 Education, Spencer Academies Trust*

Student ambassadors are an integral part of the outreach work carried out at St Edmund Hall, providing friendly positive role models for pupils, and supporting key outreach events.

Providing prospective students with a relatable experience of Oxford, student ambassadors lead tours of the College and run Q&A sessions as part of inbound school visits, as well as assist with online outreach sessions on an ad-hoc basis.

In the 2025-2026 academic year, 25 new ambassadors were recruited, totalling 66 ambassadors for the academic year. In total, approximately 219 hours of volunteer time were contributed by St Edmund Hall student ambassadors. To recognise their dedication, six ambassadors were selected for Ambassador of the Term awards.

In May 2026, the annual Student Ambassador Formal took place, with 20 of the most engaged student ambassadors in attendance. The event allowed us to celebrate ambassadors' achievements and served as a small token of gratitude for the time they volunteered over the course of the year.

A huge thank you to all our ambassadors for their fantastic work over the last academic year!



# Primary School Twinning

In collaboration with the Oxford Hub, St Edmund Hall has partnered with a local primary school: Orchard Meadow in Blackbird Leys. This school school serves an area of high socioeconomic disadvantage, with many pupils having never left the estate where they live. The twinning programme is comprised of in-school mentoring and enrichment visits held at St Edmund Hall.

Students from the undergraduate and postgraduate communities have signed up to deliver mentoring sessions at Orchard Meadow, with 137 of these taking place over the 2025-2026 academic year. In April, a group of Year 3 students visited St Edmund Hall and enjoyed an interactive Chemistry session where they used different solutions to 'paint' pictures of choughs from the College crest. They then headed over the road to explore the Botanic Gardens.

> "Volunteering is both a lot of fun and very rewarding. The program gave me the chance to step out of the typical university routine, while also allowing me to engage with the local community in a meaningful and impactful way."
>
> *– Jess James (2022, DPhil Engineering Science)*

**12**

SEH students signed up as volunteers

**137**

mentoring sessions delivered

**44%**

of pupils eligible for Free School Meals, significantly higher than national average of 27%



“The pupils thoroughly enjoyed their visit to St Edmund Hall. I have been on quite a few university trips like this and thought the workshop was the best I have seen. The student ambassadors were great too, they were confident and it worked really well having them lead discussions in groups. Organisation was excellent and lunch was superb!

*— Director of Sixth Form*



“[Programmes] like Unlock Oxford are really what open up for the university to the great minds all around the country and shows that Oxford isn't some fairytale, it's somewhere you can be and experience for yourself if you put the work into it. After this trip, I've really felt a sense of “Yeah! I can do this! I can make it into Oxford!" And it's very much motivated me to keep going the way I am.”

*— Year 10 Unlock Oxford residential participant*



# Acknowledgements

The outreach work that takes place at St Edmund Hall would not be possible without the support of so many individuals.
A huge thank you to the teachers, staff and students at the many schools with whom we work.

Thank you also to all the tutors and fellows at St Edmund Hall, especially those who have generously given their time to deliver taster sessions, join tutor panels and contribute to the Big Think Competition.

We would also like to thank our wonderful student ambassadors, as well as key staff including Sue, Chiara, Sam, Molly, Claire, Scarlett, Hazel, Melody and Robert.

Thank you also to the Library, the Lodge, the Servery, the Kitchen, and the Housekeeping and Maintenance teams for all their work in making visits to St Edmund Hall such a success.

Luke Maw
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August 2026



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