



Former Walworth Academy student Jeremy Ogunleye, who has just completed a degree in English Language and Literature at Oxford, says: “It’s been a life-changing experience and a challenge that was made possible with help from Ark and the Reuben Scholarship.”

Jeremy was one of the first recipients of The Reuben Scholarship Programme at Ark – securing £10,000 per year to help fund his studies. Awarded to talented Ark students, the scholarship is designed to ensure that those from disadvantaged backgrounds can take up places at top universities.

Jeremy started at Walworth Academy (then Walworth School), aged 13, the year before it joined the Ark network: “The transformation was remarkable. Within the first term of it becoming an Ark school, there was a new emphasis on discipline and, more importantly, aspiration. We were encouraged that we

could go to university or into a good career if we worked hard for it.”

It was at Walworth’s Sixth Form that Jeremy really started to appreciate his own potential: “I had this incredible English teacher, Mr Jahams – who had come from quite a humble background and gone to Oxford University, so he was someone we could really relate to.

“I had been messing about in school quite a lot and not really focusing on my work, but when I got my AS results, Mr Jahams suggested that I should think about going to Oxford myself. Having Mr Jahams’ encouragement to aim high helped me knuckle down.

“I didn’t think that my results would be good enough, but he told me I should go for it and supported me so. Thanks to him, I got in.”

Jeremy went on to Merton, one of Oxford’s most-prestigious colleges to read English Language and Literature. Very rarely for Oxford, they made Jeremy an unconditional offer – guaranteeing him a place whatever his A-level results.

With an unconditional offer, the major barrier facing Jeremy was financial: “I’d figured I’d have to juggle my studies with a part-time job if I had any chance of affording to go.

“Because of the Reuben Scholarship, I never had to worry about money, which was lucky because they don’t let you have a term-time job at Oxford. It went towards my living and course costs – for instance, if I needed a book and all the library’s copies were out, I could buy a copy.

“I hadn’t really appreciated what Oxford was going to be like. I was very confident of my abilities and knew I was hard working, but in my first few tutorials, my essays and arguments were really torn apart by my tutors. Knowing that it was so hard to impress the tutors really spurred me to work hard and develop my academic abilities quickly.

“I was with people from schools I’d only ever heard about, who had always expected to go to Oxford or Cambridge, but that just made me even more determined to prove myself.

“I played football for the University and we went over to Madrid to play against Real Madrid’s Under 18 teams, which was an amazing experience. Having the scholarship meant that I could do that.”

“Oxford has been sensational – I’ve had three of the best years of my life.”

Jeremy now regularly visits Walworth to encourage younger students to aspire to places at top universities or towards high-flying careers. He says: “When I go back to Walworth now, it’s completely unrecognisable from the school I joined as a teenager. The students are all aware of the high expectations on them and are aiming to reach the absolute limits of their potential.

“I always tell them to challenge themselves. Whether it’s a top university or a great job, they can achieve it, they just have to work hard for it.”