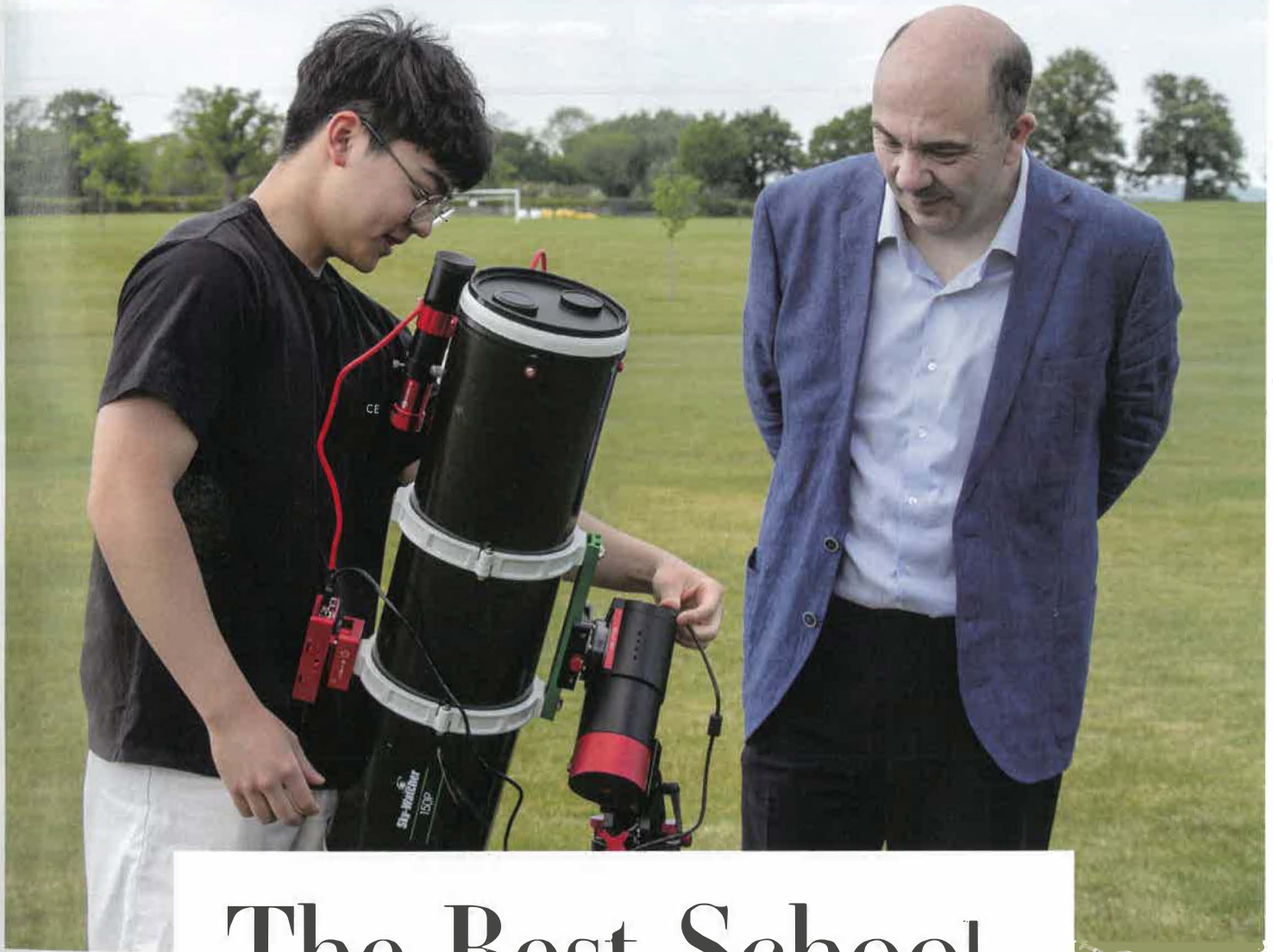


Principal of Concord College, Dr Michael Truss,
with student and astronomy enthusiast Hayden



The Best School... OBSERVATORIES & TELESCOPES

The sky is limitless with this collection of impressive space-age facilities, says *Evie Calver*

REGULARS

Marlborough College's Blackett Observatory houses Wiltshire's largest telescope.



MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE

WILTSHIRE

It is no surprise astronomy is a thriving discipline at Marlborough. The school is located in the Kennet Valley, one of the most ancient sites for astronomy in Europe. It also houses the internationally renowned Blackett Observatory, which provides an inspiring environment to allow pupils to engage in the very latest global astronomical research and debate. Teaching is significantly enhanced by access to the largest telescope in Wiltshire, the Barclay Equatorial. Dating back to 1860, this ten-inch Cooke refractor is also the oldest telescope in the world to be computer controlled following its later restoration. Since 1997, Marlborough's astronomy department has had a 100 percent pass rate at GCSE, with 93 percent achieving A*-A. Six pupils even have been awarded Presidential Certificates from the Royal Astronomical Society for placing in the top 12 nationally at GCSE.

ABINGDON SCHOOL

OXFORDSHIRE

A four-metre-wide inflatable dome planetarium provides a 360° view of the night sky for Abingdon pupils. Acquired in 2020, it is used to assist current students in their physics lessons, but is also shared with pupils from local primary schools as part of the Abingdon Science Partnership. It is an immersive experience, explains Alice Perry, Abingdon Science Partnership co-ordinator. 'It enables the pupils to stargaze without waiting for perfect weather and standing outside late at night in the cold and dark. It supports our astronomy and space teaching, acts as a revision resource and inspires enthusiasm for the subject.'

STONYHURST COLLEGE

LANCASHIRE

Stonyhurst College holds a unique place in scientific history. Its Stonyhurst Observatory was established in 1838 and became one of seven principal weather stations in the country about 15 years later. Remarkably, the observatory's temperature records from 1846 are among the oldest continuous daily readings in the world. Today, Stonyhurst pupils have the extraordinary privilege of using the UK's oldest working school observatory. Through co-curricular astronomy, they develop critical thinking, scientific literacy and a profound sense of curiosity – continuing a tradition of night sky exploration spanning almost two centuries.

Abingdon's inflatable planetarium offers an innovative way to stargaze



The historic Stonyhurst Observatory was built almost 190 years ago

