

DAME ALLAN'S Digest



JULY 2021

Summer of Sport



A welcome from the Principal

Welcome to the final Digest of this most challenging and yet enormously rewarding academic year, and my first at Dame Allan's. Challenging because of the pandemic and periods of being apart, but also rewarding, in seeing the Dame Allan's family pull together to achieve amazing things throughout the year. The way our pupils and staff have stepped up to face the trials and tribulations of the year has been truly astonishing to see. The fluidity and seamless nature of learning across sites isn't just about systems; it is as much about willingness to work together to learn and innovate, to support each other and carry on with resilience and determination. The progress we have made in our use of technology is now thoroughly embedded, so we can build on it in the future.

Speaking of building, it has been exciting to see the first steps in our North End Development project as the foundations for our temporary classrooms have been put in over the past fortnight - the first tangible signs of commencement of the project. As soon as we say goodbye for the summer, work on the main site will start with demolition and the digging of foundations. We will be providing regular updates as well as a vision panel on Fowberry Crescent to enable you to see what is happening on site.

It has been a pleasure to host some events across both sites in the past few weeks, from Junior Sports Days to Senior Shakespeare and LAMDA festivals. In a limited way, it has reminded us what a summer term should be like, certainly an improvement on last summer's lockdown, if not fully what we would all have liked. There is much to be hopeful for in the autumn with the government looking again at how we can maximise pupil attendance and minimise disruption. Whatever happens, I am confident that these great Schools will continue to rise to the challenge. I wish you and your families all the best for the summer.



Athletics Success

Congratulations to three of our students, who have been selected by the English Schools' Athletic Association (ESAA) to represent Northumberland in the ESA Championships in Manchester, 9-11 July. Year 12 Ava will compete in the Senior Girls' 800m, Year 9 Amelia in the Junior Girls' 200m and Year 8 Martha in the Junior Girls' pole vault.

Due to ongoing COVID restrictions, the ESAA have only the top 16 athletes in the country per event to take part, making their selection even more of an achievement.

Congratulations girls!

Short Story Competition

In June, our author-in-residence Dan Smith set a short story competition for Years 5 and 6. It had to be an adventure story between 500-900 words long.

Thirty-two pupils entered stories for consideration. Dan read each one carefully and found that making the

decision to choose a winner was really difficult! In the end, he chose three pupils to take joint 1st place: Olubomi, Mary and Edison. He praised them for their outstanding writing, imagination, plot, pace, characters and that elusive 'je ne sais quoi' that makes us love a good story.

We would like to thank each pupil who took the time and effort to participate and we thank Dan for his generosity in judging the competition and donating the prizes.



Evariste Galois



In this half term, Mrs Lines worked with boys in Year 7 and Year 9 on a fun maths-based drama project about Evariste Galois.

Widely regarded as one of France's most brilliant mathematicians, Evariste Galois had a strong interest in politics, inspired by his father Nicolas-Gabriel, who was mayor of their village. He was born at the height of Napoleon Bonaparte's powers and grew up during the ensuing civil war between the Monarchists and the Republicans. The basis of the play comes from the book 'Fermat's Last Theorem' by Simon Singh and looks at how the mathematician got caught up in the conflict.

Both classes loved it and really got involved. Big thank you to Head of Drama Mrs Clarke for the props and encouragement!



Mega Book Swap

June also saw pupils at the Junior School take part in DAJS Mega Book Swap.

For this they had to gather up to five unwanted books, string them together in a neat little parcel with a label detailing the intended age range. The aim was to have a selection of books for children aged 3-13 so that once the books were collected, all children in school would have the opportunity to select a new set of books to take home.

A great way to declutter those bookshelves and repurpose books no longer read!

In conversation with... Mrs Joicey, librarian



Tell us a little bit about yourself and your team.

I am Mrs Joicey, the Dame Allan's librarian. My team consists of myself and Mrs Giddings, working across both the Junior and Senior Schools. Each class from Years 3-9 has library lessons where we help them to choose books.

I'm often asked if we read everything that we stock and the answer is "no". Whilst we try to read as much as possible, we have over 2,000 books on the shelves and we buy over 350 books each year! Thankfully, students themselves make some of the best recommendations because they know what their peers like.

How does your department enrich the lives of our pupils?

Our main objective is threefold: to encourage reading for pleasure, to empower young people to make their own reading choices and to create a positive reading journey.

Educator and author Kylene Beers put it better than me when she wrote, 'If we teach a child to read, but fail to develop a desire to read, we will have created a skilled non-reader, a literate illiterate. And no high-test score will ever undo that damage.'

Showing enthusiasm, encouragement and interest in a child's reading, whatever they are choosing, is a privileged role. Increasing evidence suggests that if children are reading often and enjoying it then they will develop across all academic fields; conversely, if they feel pressured about it or that it is a chore, they will resist doing it. As librarians, we try to nudge them into exploring different authors and genres but we don't dictate to them.

Some of the ways we run Dame Allan's have changed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

How have you managed to adapt in your department?

During distance learning, we really missed direct contact with pupils so we set up an e-library for pupils to borrow digital and audiobooks. This will continue to be available during the summer holidays.

We also had some wonderful North East organisations and authors who supported us during the pandemic including our author-in-residence, Dan Smith.

And what are you most proud of over this academic year?

I know many school libraries have stayed shut for the whole academic year so I'm very proud that we have managed to run a service throughout.

I'm also proud that we managed to organise several online author events so young people could see inspirational figures from the world of books; we had Kate Wakeling, Valerie Bloom, Joseph Coelho and Ross Montgomery.

Finally, because I'm greedy for stealing more than one highlight, taking part in and winning the regional heats of the National Reading Championships made me very proud of Mrs Giddings and the pupils involved; there were 592 teams nationally and we got through to the final 18.

Hopefully this summer will see social restrictions gradually ease until we're back to normal. What are you hoping for the 2021-22 academic year ahead?

I'm hoping that we can welcome back the roles of student librarians in 2021-22 because the library always feels more welcoming when there are young people present - I'm saving a list of jobs for them! Dea and Arta in Year 9 created a beautiful display for us this year and we would like to see more positive pupil input.

I'm also hoping that 2021/22 will be the year that all pupils (and staff) return the books on time and no one tells me that their dog ate them or they were sick on them!

National Reading Championships

Congratulations to Ellie, Ben, Rachel and Ethan. After winning the regional heat earlier in the term, they joined 17 other teams in the (virtual) National Reading Championship Final in June.

A series of celebrities and literary figures were reading the questions, such as Michael Rosen, Anthony Horowitz and Cressida Cowell. It was a particularly special moment when Cressida told the team to keep reading because 'reading gives you magical eyes for seeing into someone else's heart'.

After three gruelling hours answering 100 questions - keeping up their strength and spirits with some delicious chocolate strawberries courtesy of Mrs Anderson! - the team finished joint 11th in the rankings. Mrs Joicey was extremely proud of their conduct during the entire competition, particularly their broad literary knowledge, determination and impeccable behaviour as competitors.

Alumni and development news

We are delighted to say that our Heritage Walk on 25th June was very well received. Beginning at St James' and St Basil's Church, 20 Allanians and staff took a stroll around Fenham with local historian and Fenham resident, Mike Greatbatch. As they walked, Mike explained how the area was established and how our Schools came to be in their current home. The walk was followed by a 'Meet the Team' event with the Principal, Chair of Governors and staff where they all enjoyed the opportunity to talk and share refreshments.

We hope to run more events over the next academic year and will keep you posted.

Don't forget, all current and former pupils, parents, staff and governors are members of the Allanian family and therefore you are all Allanians.



Much of the last few months have been spent working on a new website dedicated to Allanian news, events and articles. We have been collecting stories and images from across the decades and would love you to share with us your own memories to add to the archives. The site will go live in the next few weeks and will be launched formally in the next academic year!

To share stories or learn more about the website or future events please contact development@dameallans.co.uk

Allanians Return and Inspire

On Monday 21st June, the Schools welcomed back some leavers, listed below, for the Return and Inspire Event. It took part during Year 12 Enrichment and after-school in the marquee.

The afternoon saw three alumni panels comprising a group of 2020 leavers and Allanians who are now in industry.

2020 leavers

Katy Lyall (Guidance and Counselling, Northumbria University)
Charlotte Stephenson (Veterinary Science, Edinburgh University)
Matthew Bell (Project A at the Theatre Royal)
Virginia & Geordie (History & Politics, Cambridge)

Allanians

Jenny Wilkes (Class of 2013)
Louise Liddle (Class of 2002)
Charlotte Wilkinson (Class of 1995) online from Singapore
Stephen Davies (Class of 1994)
Barry Hopper (Class of 1987)

Year 12 Anna said:

Return and Inspire worked really well as it was not only informative and inspiring, but it truly highlighted the Dame Allan's community spirit. Many of the speakers talked about the value of Dame Allan's as more than just a school for academic learning, but as a place that deeply shaped their personal character. They also emphasised the importance and uniqueness of the Dame Allan's network, expressing how this continued to help them throughout their careers.

It was reassuring to hear the 2020 leavers' experiences throughout Sixth Form and their advice for UCAS applications, and the girls really enjoyed Charlotte Wilkinson's talk as they found it very inspiring to hear about female successes in male-dominated fields. It was also very positive to learn about the companies she has established to promote female rights in advertising.

COVID-19 Bursary Fund

Thanks to your generosity and support, the COVID-19 Bursary Fund raised nearly £66,000 to help families in need and keep affected pupils in school over the last year. Most of these families are now back on their feet so we will be closing the fund at the end of this academic year.

Bridging Week



In June we welcomed back Year 11 to the Senior Schools for a week of team-building and leadership skills to give them a taste of life in the Sixth Form from September.

Working in our temporary marquee and on the field, there was much merriment, but also an air of genuine focus and concentration. In their feedback, lots of the comments talked about how much they enjoyed the taster sessions.

Here is a tiny selection of the many responses:

"I really enjoyed the taster sessions with the teachers and meeting people in the new classes for next year."

"I enjoyed experiencing my new subjects"

"I really enjoyed the games sessions."

The teambuilding was so successful, some wanted more:

"I enjoyed the team building as it was good way to break the ice... I would have liked to do more so I could meet more new people."

See you in September, Year 11 (soon to be Year 12)!



Get Outside

The end of term saw a welcome return to trips, something we're sure has been a big miss earlier in the year. The Junior School made the most of the sunny weather with some beach studies trips for Years 3 and 4 and outdoor activity days for Years 5 and 6.

Move Up!

Year 6 also took part in some team-building activities at the Senior Schools ahead of their move into Year 7 in September. In what has been a really tricky year, they have handled it superbly and set a fantastic example to the younger pupils in the Junior School and Nursery. We know the Junior School will miss them dearly, but we couldn't think of a better addition to the Senior Schools!



DASPA

Whilst this half term wasn't as busy for DASPA activities as we had hoped, DASPA members were pleased to support the drama and music departments' by providing refreshments at their wonderful concerts. We were disappointed to postpone the Years 6 and 7 parties, but pleased they have both been rescheduled for next year.

At the Junior School, DASPA has funded a cricket net and a surprise ice cream van for all junior students. Members were also pleased to help parents at the Junior School with a uniform sale and hope to have one for Senior uniform in September. If anyone has donations

please contact daspa@dameallans.co.uk for further information of local drop offs in the summer.

A big thank you to all the amazing fundraising for DASPA that a fellow parent Emma from Kingswalk Law has done this term, which has enabled DASPA funds to grow again. If anyone would like to consider nominating DASPA as your charity for Give as You Live that would really help our fundraising too. Thank you.

We say farewell to our committee members Veneta and Kay, a massive thank you for everything you have both done for DASPA.

Moving forward, we hope that next year we will be able to expand our activities and would really welcome new members. We have lots of dates booked for parties in the next academic year for Years 1-8 and we are also planning for the following exciting events:

Christmas Fair, 27th November

Family Ceilidh, 4th March

Junior School Summer Fair, 21st May

DASPA Ball at St James' Park, 18th June

Finally, the DASPA Committee would like to wish the Dame Allan's community a happy and safe summer.

Goodbye and Good Luck!

Looking ahead to September, there will be some new faces around the Schools as this term sees the departure of a few members of staff. Whether they are leaving us for pastures new or a well-deserved retirement, we hope you join us in wishing them all well for the future.

- Mr Smith, Head of Music
- Mrs Blazey and Mrs Gilbert, music
- Mrs Gardner, geography teacher and Head of EPQ
- Ms Fothergill, Spanish
- Mrs Lines, mathematics
- Mrs Whitfield, chemistry
- Mr Fletcher, biology
- Mrs Morley, religious studies
- Mr Taylor, Acting Director of Sport
- Mr Meehan, Junior classroom teacher
- Mr Liddle, lab technician
- Mrs Hill, former Head of Middle School and physics teacher

Safeguarding at Dame Allan's

Whilst we wish you all a lovely and very well-deserved summer, safeguarding remains a priority for the Schools during the holidays. Any safeguarding concerns or enquiries can still be made to the Schools over the summer.

Please contact us via enquiries@dameallans.co.uk or call the Senior Schools' office on 0191 275 0608 and your concerns will be referred on to a Safeguarding Lead.

Please note: the Junior School office will not be staffed over the summer, so the contact details above should be used for any safeguarding query about pupils from Nursery to Year 13.



DAME ALLAN'S SCHOOLS
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