



# DAME ALLAN'S Digest



DECEMBER 2023

## The best single-sex independent education in the North East

**Our pioneering 'diamond' model has earned both Dame Allan's Girls' and Boys' Schools top placings in an influential guide for parents.**

The prestigious Sunday Times' Parent Power Guide 2024 has named Dame Allan's Girls' School as the third 'Best Independent School in the North East' and its Boys' School as the fourth. The results mean that we can proudly say that we offer the best single-sex education to pupils aged between 11 and 16 across the region!

Principal Will Scott spoke about this success: "At Dame Allan's, our boys and girls have the freedom to push boundaries and experiment with various subjects in an environment that is inclusive, inspiring and diverse. We see a great uptake of girls getting invested in STEM subjects and have boys passionate in the arts.

"We also believe that our exceptional pastoral care, with dedicated facilities, including 'The Snug' at the Senior School and 'The Cosy Snug' at the Junior School, plus a growing team of specialists, and our stellar co-curricular offering have helped to place the schools among the very best in the North East.

"Of course, our teaching staff will always be committed to every child's academic success, however Dame Allan's Schools are about so much more than academic excellence.

"We raise the bar on developing and nurturing the whole child by ensuring that our vibrant co-curricular offering is an equal partner to our academic curriculum. Our approach, coupled with pastoral care facilities that we have here is second-to-none. It means that every young person who leaves us at the age of 18 is fully equipped and ready to make their mark on the world."



FESTIVE FUN INSIDE!



### A welcome from the Principal

This half term has flown by in a flurry of studying and snow, sport and trips, charity and celebrations, culminating with our annual Carol Service in the beautiful setting of Newcastle Cathedral.

We are thrilled that Dame Allan's Girls' School and Boys' School have each been recognised as offering the best single-sex independent education to pupils aged between 11 and 16 across the region in the Sunday Times Parent Power Guide. What a great accolade before the end of term!

This recognition reflects all of the hard work and care that goes into educating every child as an individual at Dame Allan's.

This half term, we've seen the second in our 2023/24 series of The Lectures, as we welcomed Jonathan Warburton to the Schools. His talk was captivating for all ages - he was also a very good sport in letting us know how he has his toast in the mornings...

Excitingly, we also appointed our first ever Artificial Intelligence Lead, physics teacher Dr Smith, who speaks to us about his new role inside.

Outside lessons, there has been festive fun all around, at both the Junior and the Senior Schools, a much-anticipated season of excitement and joy to follow all our pupils' hard work this term.

From Christmas card competitions to carols, and even a reindeer visit, this is a special time of year for the Schools. As always, our Parents' Association DASPA has played a vital part in bringing these celebrations to life and we are so grateful for their time and support.

**May I wish all of you a happy Christmas.**





# Festive Round-up

Christmas has officially arrived at Dame Allan's! Christmas trees are lighting up the Reception and the Newsom Hall at the Senior School, and the Carol Service at Newcastle Cathedral was the icing on the mince pie of our festive celebrations. Congratulations also to Finlay and Jessica, both Year 7, who won the Senior School Christmas Card competition with their beautiful food-themed designs.



At the Junior School, our younger pupils have enjoyed Christmas parties, a Santa visit and even a real-life reindeer appearance - courtesy of DASPA. Year 1 and Year 2 staged a fantastic Christmas performance of Barny, about a hungry mouse at Christmas time, whilst Nursery and Reception enjoyed a day of Christmas crafts with their family. Our Junior Choir also performed at the Campus for Aging and Vitality, spreading festive joy to patients and staff.

A huge well done and thank you to everyone involved in our festive celebrations, especially the staff who have worked so hard to make them a success.



# In conversation with... Dr Smith, AI Lead and Physics Teacher

## Why do you think is it important for Schools to have an AI lead?

I think it is important for schools to have and AI Lead as AI is everywhere now, across every walk of life - just think about the phone in your pocket, which likely has some form of AI. It's becoming 'the norm' to embed into new technology and it is important that as educators we are proactive and up-to-date with this tech. It's a new horizon for a lot of people, staff and pupils included, so it is something that we all have to learn and grow alongside. My role as AI Lead at Dame Allan's Schools is brand new, and with that comes the flexibility to move forward and shape the role and the learning I can offer to help staff and pupils to get the best out of AI.

## What do you think is the biggest opportunity offered by AI in education?

I think the biggest opportunity offered by AI in schools is increased efficiency and timesaving for staff. Teachers can use it to streamline the admin-heavy aspects of their job - such as lesson planning and report writing - freeing up more time for the more human, pastoral parts of their role. This means more spending time with pupils and helping them to learn and flourish, and less time battling with word documents! We've started with Quillbot, a paraphrasing tool which helps with writing and grammar suggestions.

It will of course never replace the human input into planning and report writing. AI still needs prompts and information in

order to generate effective solutions, but it will offer a really good support.

## What do you think is the biggest threat posed by AI in an educational setting?

The biggest and most obvious threat is pupils using AI for homework, such as writing essays. It is, however, still quite easy to spot, teachers can tell when a piece of work doesn't 'sound' like a pupil's voice. However, it is definitely something to keep an eye on, especially as AI continues to develop. The temptation is for pupils (and teachers) to potentially use AI as a 'crutch', which we want to avoid. It's very much a support tool, rather than a replacement for the human aspect of education.

## Can you offer a little background as to why you were interested in taking the AI Lead role, any prior experience that links back to it?

Digital tech has always been a hobby of mine, programming and coding was actually part of my PhD. I like to play with computers and I am fascinated by machine learning, so the role was a great fit for me.

## How will you be guiding the staff at Dame Allan's with regards to AI use going forward?

I will be holding regular staff training sessions and supporting them with their professional development with regards to AI. I want to help Dame Allan's staff access as many AI tools as I can to help make their jobs a little more streamlined. AI education at Dame Allan's will very much be embedded within staff training.



It's been really encouraging to see all staff willing to give AI a go!

Pupils will also be involved, I'll be offering AI training with ideas that they can use throughout their learning. I'll also be spreading the word about the latest in AI developments via pupil announcement, a new AI website, and assemblies.

## Personally, what is your favourite use of AI?

I actually used AI (ChatGPT) to aid with writing my letter of application for this role, it gives a great framework!

Outside of my teaching role, I also run a Dungeons and Dragons Club at Dame Allan's, and ChatGPT has also been useful in helping me to plan campaigns for this, as well as develop characters, which in turn makes the club more engaging for the pupils that attend.

# The Lectures

The second series of our pioneering speaker series, **The Lectures**, returned this half term to great success. In October, we welcomed bestselling author and podcaster **Damian Hughes**, who spoke about the significance of learning from failures. Most recently, we welcomed **Jonathan Warburton**, of bakery fame, who spoke about his family's business history, his iconic ad campaigns, and the power of having a focus.



The Lectures will continue for pupils in Year 9 and above (and their parents) on 15 February, as we welcome Jo Fairley of Green & Blacks chocolate. Find out more and book your free place by scanning the QR code.





# Sports Round Up

Despite some very chilly weather, our sporting teams and staff have continued to thrive this half term. The school basketball teams have all made a terrific start to the season, winning 26 of their 27 matches played so far, with a group of Year 7 boys also enjoying a coaching session from Newcastle Eagles' player Will Neighbour.

Our 1st XV rugby team were delighted to triumph over RGS, whilst our U14 girls rugby team succeeded in their first competition of the year at Ponteland High.

In hockey, our U18s won county and sub-areas to progress through to regional finals, whilst our U14s won county and came

2nd in sub-areas. In Cross County, senior girls, inter girls and senior boys all qualified for Regional Finals of ESAA Cross Country Championships, and in football our U15s continued their run in the ISFA cup with an excellent 5-2 away win at Oswestry.



## A Masterclass in Games

We were pleased to welcome back some of our local Primary School partners this half term for one of our popular Masterclass sessions. This session focused on games, with 18 enthusiastic young pupils getting to grips with rowing and hockey.



## Athlete's Breakfast

This half term saw the return of Athletes' Breakfast events, led by our very own Paratriathlete Mr Salisbury. These well-attended sessions bring together pupils of all ages who are excelling at their chosen sport, playing at county level or above. Sporting disciplines run the gamut from cricket to cross country, and football to badminton.

Attendees can use the dedicated time to meet other pupils who are balancing studying and sports, seek advice from our Athlete Mentors - Lucy, Lillie, Isabel and Katie - and take part in workshops to develop their approach to sporting life.

## Musical Milestones

Our talented musical pupils have done us proud this half term - Year 8 pupil Skye played piano and sang at The Glasshouse Winter Concert, Year 11 pupils Aaron and Dominic have once again successfully auditioned for the National Youth Training Choir, and Year 9 pupil Ann Maria won second place for violin in a national competition that takes place within the Indian Catholic community. Congratulations all!

# The Allanian Society

This half term we welcomed Guardian and Observer foreign correspondent and political columnist Simon Tisdall back to the Schools. He met aspiring journalists, attended a Q&A with Sixth Form politics students, and joined the Archivist Club to dig out his original paperwork for the schools - it was wonderful to have him back!



Our Autumn Coffee Morning was another highlight of this period, which saw Allanians old and new reunited at the Senior School for coffee, cake and chat.

## Save the Date!

- **The Lectures: Jo Fairley** - Thursday 15 February
- **The Lectures: Dr Lucy Worsley** - Thursday 21 March
- **Allanian Dinner 2024** - Saturday 23 March

**Looking ahead, early bird tickets are now available for the 2024 Allanian Dinner!**

Book by 1 January 2024 and save £10 on the admission price. Guests will enjoy a welcome drink and 3-course 1980s-inspired menu, plus table wine.

## School Trips



Pupils in the Junior and Senior Schools have enjoyed some fantastic trips this half term. Year 5 pupils visited the Theatre Royal for The Children's Bookshow with poets John Agard and Grace Nichols, Sixth Form dancers visited London, including the prestigious Rambert Dance Company, and art pupils enjoyed a fantastic trip to Paris!



## Charity

There have been lots of fantastic charitable initiatives this half term:

- Year 11 pupils collected toys and games to donate to Metro Radio's Cash for Kids Mission Christmas Appeal, a cause also supported by Mrs Hansen, our HR Officer. She was part of a team that climbed Helvellyn and Skiddaw in 24 hours, plus completed a half marathon walk (dressed as a Christmas tree!), raising more than £4000



- Miss Brady took part in a sponsored walk around St James' Park to support local food bank fundraiser Wilf



- A non-uniform day raised £900.10 to benefit the Goodwill School, Zambia and Nokuphila School in South Africa (in memory of Ellie Garrett, who supported the school's work)
- At the Junior School, Children in Need fundraising saw lots of spots and Pudsey ears, as well as a bring-and-buy sale and raffle. They raised a fantastic £1310.00!



# DASPA

**Thank you very much to everyone for their support in making our Winter Fair such a great success. Our Junior and Senior choirs sang their hearts out and got us into the festive spirit.**

Many children met Father Christmas and some of his elves, while we all got ahead on our seasonal shopping with great independent and charity stalls. We would especially like to thank Lyndsey, the school Catering Manager; and her staff for providing such amazing food and to Jonathon, the school caretaker, for his tireless energy and support.

Alongside our independent stalls, we also supported many charitable organisations at our Fair, including the RNLI and Motor Neurone Disease (a stall led by Mrs Fiddaman), Daft as a Brush, Riding for the Disabled and The Children's Liver Disease Foundation. There were also stalls from those supporting Romanian orphans, Adults with autism, Derwent Valley Allstars, and the Allanian Society.

Not only did many parents volunteer at the event but the pupils also helped greatly. We had fantastic pupil stalls from those participating the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh

award, World Challenge and Enterprise. Their enthusiasm and spirit was very impressive. Thanks also to our Sixth Form Officers who were replete in Polly Bell outfits and top hats. All of the pupils were great ambassadors for our school.

The raffle was drawn at the Fair and included star prizes donated from Wooden Star Cottages, Matfen Hall, Colonel Porter's and Wonder Bar. The fair raised over £4000 which will be used to enhance pupils' experiences at Dame Allan's.

This half term we have also provided refreshments at the Autumn Concert and the Christmas Extravaganza. Thank you to the parents and pupils who helped at these events, please contact us if you'd like to get more involved with DASPA.

We have had really well attended uniform sales in St James' and St Basil's church each month - the first sale of 2024 is on 9 January (the first day of the new term) from 8.45am - 10.00am.

Our Junior committee, led by Melissa Gaglardi, has been working hard delivering Junior School events like the Christmas party, surprise visits from reindeer and Santa



himself as well as really useful uniform sales. Thanks as always to Mrs Needham who tirelessly raises thousands of pounds with her Christmas card and calendar sales.

A big thank you also to Melissa for arranging for Lord Taverners Sports Kit Recycling to collect the old junior uniform in an environmental and charitable way.

Additionally, we had a successful AGM and are pleased to announce that Julie Brazier is our new Treasurer. At the meeting we reported that we had spent £23,461.21 last year on items for the school including storage hubs, a kiln, spiders and snails, OLED equipment and gazebos.

Finally, don't forget to save the date for the 2024 DASPA Ball, which is taking place on 22 June.

We would like to wish everyone Seasons Greetings and here's to a wonderful new year.

## Safeguarding at Dame Allan's

As Christmas approaches, our attention is drawn to 'winter wellbeing' from the benefits of Hygge to the joys of simple pleasures: our Sixth Form peer mentors have given assemblies on staying mentally well this winter, including the importance of staying connected, keeping to a routine and spending time outdoors. With seasonal illnesses on the rise, Mrs Procter, the school nurse, would like to remind you of the need to keep children at home if they are too unwell to attend school, particularly if they have symptoms of fever, diarrhoea or vomiting. There has also been an increase in cases of measles in the community so please

ensure that your child has had their MMR vaccination: you can contact your child's GP for further information about this.

This half term, our Year 12 students received an informative 'safer driving' workshop, delivered by former police officer, Dennis Shotton, to highlight the particular risks for novice drivers on the roads. According to Brake, the road safety charity, 1 in 5 drivers crash within a year of passing their test, whilst over 1500 young drivers are killed or seriously injured on UK roads every year. Please may we remind parents that Sixth Form students who wish to use their own cars

may only do so to travel to and from school. Passengers may only be carried with the express permission of the parents or guardians of the other student(s). We ask that all cars are registered with school and that students drive with care and consideration for our neighbours, as well as park respectfully.

On a practical safeguarding note, Senior School pupils should not be on site before 07:45 due to there being a lack of supervision at this time. If on occasion circumstances arise that mean arrival before 07:45 is unavoidable, pupils must go to the dining hall.



**DAME ALLAN'S SCHOOLS**  
building the future