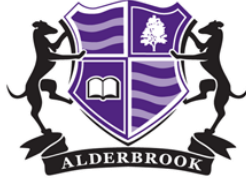


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**Alderbrook
School**
AMBITION | BRAVERY | KINDNESS

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ALDERBROOK END OF TERM CELEBRATION NEWSLETTER

Edition 3 – July 2020

A message from Tom Beveridge, Headteacher

A summer newsletter would usually be an opportunity to celebrate the wide-ranging achievements of our students in the classroom and across the school in recent months; this year is different.

In this incredibly difficult time for the whole country it may sound glib to talk of celebration. Nevertheless I do feel we have much to celebrate: First and foremost we need to celebrate the resilience and commitment of all students, who have conducted themselves admirably during this period of remote schooling; the skills and independence that students have developed will undoubtedly stand them in good stead for the challenges that life will throw at them. Well done all!

We need to especially celebrate the achievements of our Year 11s and 13s, who have been stripped of a right of passage in living out their final school days at Alderbrook. We look forward to welcoming some Year 11s back in Year 12, but we must take this opportunity to celebrate their numerous achievements in their time at Alderbrook – thank you for everything you have given to the school.

We must also take this opportunity to celebrate and give a special mention to the staff at Alderbrook, who have balanced their own family lives with providing work and support for our students. It has been a pleasure to get to know and work with our staff.

I wish those staff that are moving on at the end of this school year all the very best for the future and thank them for everything they have done for the school.

I am very excited to welcome all students back in September and I look forward to getting to know many more members of our school community. I wish you all a very happy summer

What has lockdown meant for you?

That is what we asked our staff to think about and through them, ask the same questions of our school and home communities. Everybody will have had their own unique lockdown experience, which of course is on-going, albeit that life is slowly now returning to a 'new normal'. There have undoubtedly been difficult days for everyone – the mental health and well-being of our students will be paramount as they all begin to return to us.

The difficult times and for some, very sad times, are not to be brushed away as we move forward to what we had before, but to be part of our understanding and how we all care for and support each other in the future. We hope that the stories we share in this end of term newsletter end such a very different term with reflection, empathy and hopefully, a smile.

Thoughts from our staff.....

Alderbrook lockdown experience - the 6th form pastoral perspective

I am writing this from my perspective and I am sure that others who teach and lead the 6th form would have more to add. I'd just like to say that the lockdown put me in a uniquely privileged position to be able to communicate with and support our fantastic 6th formers in a way I never expected. Wellbeing messages and bulletins aside, the individual contact with the students, 95% of whom have corresponded with me and shared their thoughts, has been very precious indeed. We have discussed films, TV box sets, gardening, dog walking, baking, care of younger siblings, contact with elderly relatives, current events and most importantly they have been very open and honest about their feelings. We have swapped quiz questions, memes, recipes and discussed what they cannot do, would like to be able to do if they were allowed to come to school, and what, as it turns out, school means to them. They felt at times like a bad spell had been cast without warning.

What have they been doing? it is a long list - volunteering, creative work, overcoming isolation, working in retail and care homes, gardening, baking and trying their best to stay in touch with their studies, with each other and with their ambitions. We have debated worries about boredom, social anxiety and loss of opportunities, rights of passage and control over their own destinies. My adult parent heart has wept many times and I could only commiserate and try to support them. But what unbelievable resilience too: virtual work experience, mentoring each other, entering essay and art competitions and writing to me in A level standard German. When they did not even study German here. I'm humbled and grateful to the students for teaching me about strength and fortitude. These are the real lessons to draw and I will never forget these strange, frustrating and surprising months of virtual instruction. I've seen Ambition all around, Bravery in buckets and Kindness has become even more of a way of life for our young people. They are the future and they have shown me that it is safe with them. To finish, as one student wrote to me early in the lockdown:

It's a shame that I couldn't show how hard I did work during sixth form and out of school hours, as I was really putting in all my greatest efforts and continued to work towards the best of my ability and am currently doing that to show teachers and I am yet still motivated to carry on doing my best. Carrying forward with a positive mindset although I am extremely worried with predicted grades and universities etc. Thank you so much once again.

As their Pastoral Manager I can only thank them back and send them my sincerest good wishes for the happy ever after they deserve. *Ms Hess, Pastoral Manager 6th Form*

‘Solitude’

As the world around us begins to open up, we find ourselves at an important junction. This is because our new way of life has brought about some unexpected revelations. What I really fear now is, that, these revelations could easily amount to nothing if we mindlessly move to the next chapter of our lives without finding a way to acknowledge them. Churchill once said that, ‘men occasionally stumble over the truth but most pick themselves up and carry on as if nothing has happened.’ Let us not be one of those people!

1. The beauty of simplicity! I have to admit that there were things in my life that I had lost the habit of doing. Like many of us, I delegated cooking to UberEats! Cooking during lockdown has made me more connected to life, has brought variety to it. I know that the Year 12 girls studying A Level Spanish identify with this statement as we study Laura Esquivel’s novel *Como agua para chocolate* and, like the main character Tita, we entangle our senses in the magical nature of food.
2. I was still doing too many things because of FOMO! I think we have all felt comfortable slowing down because everyone else was slowing down too. If it had only been our Alderbrook community, we would have felt insecure about it. This suggests to me that, sometimes, we do things because we feel we should. We should make a distinction between things that genuinely add value to our lives and the multitude of things we only do because other people do them.
3. Miracles days are overrated! During my time in solitude, I started a writing project that I had put off for a long time. I decided to write four hundred words per day. I have accomplished that because of a consistent approach and commitment, not because of a miracle day. It just reinforced the message that we can reliably achieve what we want in life if we just focus on consistency. I know that many of my Spanish learners were consistent in their approach to studying as they clearly wanted to improve, to move forward regardless of the negative outlook of the world around.
4. Lastly, we are far too hard on ourselves! We spend too much time beating ourselves up for not living up to an ideal, a standard that we set for ourselves. We all still have a lot to learn and we mustn’t take for granted the need to be kind and compassionate towards ourselves and that most importantly, our well-being depends on being kind! You have all had a go at remote learning and there is no doubt that this has positively shaped your lives. This is proof that if you change the way you look at things, the things around you change: never underestimate your efforts! *Ms Szabo, Head of Spanish*

Solihull Music Service Virtual Performances

Throughout the pandemic, there is no doubt that you will have witnessed one of the many remote and virtual performances that seemed to have taken over our lock down experience. Even closer to home, these have been happening in our very own community all thanks to the Solihull Music Service which have featured many of our Alderbrook musicians as well as students from around Solihull. The production of these videos take not only meticulous planning and effort but can also be extremely time consuming to make. The opportunity to be a part of these videos is truly amazing and this is something I know that our Alderbrook students will cherish forever. Each song was chosen in support of the NHS and key workers for all their efforts throughout the past 4 months. Well done to everyone involved. See links below as well as the Alderbrook Music Department's twitter account where these are also shared.

Miss Rafferty, Curriculum Leader for Music

Twitter Page- @ABKMusic2

Mr Brightside by Soul Matters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhVx3I7EAE8&feature=youtu.be>

Don't Stop by Soul Matters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4vTRks1aho>

Hallelujah by SMS Woodwind Extravaganza

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvFfsUftVLA>

Against All Odds by Jazz Matters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4ErbBnqvcU>

Look what our students have been doing!!

And from our French Department....

The French Department has been extremely impressed by the way so many students have engaged with their online learning. Mrs Cassidy set Year 8s a special French challenge where we had one year 8 pupil cooking her family Coq au vin for dinner and another serving croissants for breakfast, as well as a timeline on the French Revolution and a pencil drawing of the Eiffel Tower.

Congratulations to all the students who took part in the weekly Quizlet live - in particular the year 7s where there was often nearly 50 students involved! A few year 8s even braved producing a video of themselves speaking in French on Flipgrid. Year 9 students have completed one of the three GCSE General Conversation booklets whilst at home - which is no mean feat! The year 10 pupils, who attended weekly online lessons, deserve a special mention too. Finally, we mustn't forget all those pupils who have been working independently at home - very well done!

Bravo à vous tous!

Pebble project from the Art department – wonder where these stones are now!!

Students were set a project in Art to decorate a stone and decorate it with acrylic paint. The theme is your own, could be kindness; transferring this feeling on as the stone is viewed by passers-by from its new location.

The aim is to spread a feeling of togetherness, hope and sunshine – colourful, happy art, with a matching message for our neighbours, friends and communities.



And look what some of our students have been doing!

Before lockdown, Alishaba and her friends (Georgia, Gurneet, Alishaba, Lily, Millie, Megan: pictured left to right) raised over £400 for Birmingham Children's hospital. Alishaba took the initiative herself, making the posters to advertise the event and putting them up. She brought in her own baked goods, created beautiful packages of sweets as well as bought extra items to ensure maximum profit! Truly incredible!



Jazmine a year 7 student and her sister were taught by her mum during lockdown how to knit. A very cute collection of knitted animals followed and then thoughts turned to how they could help the staff in the NHS....

From that idea came head band straps and ear protectors for the face masks 'so the nurses' ears would not hurt'. Ear protectors for the face masks.

Mum explained that a friend of the family is a nurse at the neonatal ward in the QE hospital. 'So we gave them to her for the nurses.' 'We also knitted little sock booties for the babies'.

Amazing work Jazmine and family!!



Competition winners during lockdown!

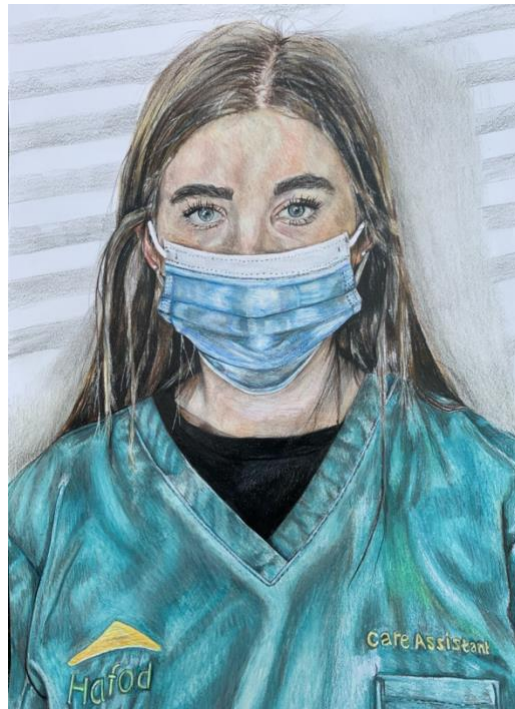
From Mrs Allen: Wonderful news just in. You all know how much I love a competition! Well I circulated this one by AimHigher with Year 12/13 last month and quite a few students entered. I am pleased to say two of our students were picked for first and second place and take the glory!! *Mrs Anna CJ Allen*
Assistant Headteacher: Director of Sixth Form & IAG

Zoe Year 12 (studying A Level Art) FIRST PRIZE **Title of Piece: Who Cares?**

This is Amy. Amy is my twenty year old cousin who has worked tirelessly throughout lockdown as a care assistant, risking her life on the front line for the well being of the elderly. My title is 'Who Cares?', as during this global pandemic, I feel that care homes have been neglected as a quarter of known coronavirus deaths in Great Britain have been in care homes. I aspire to be as brave as her.

Personally, I have struggled with my mental health throughout this difficult time as have many others. The shadow of the blinds symbolise how we have all felt so trapped during lockdown. One thing i have learnt through lockdown is that art is something that i love, a form of therapy and something i would love to pursue as a career. When i especially feel down, i think of my cousin and how much harder this must be for her. She usually lives with my grandparents but has had to move out to keep them safe. All this whilst I am safe in my bubble. Thinking of her helps me to put my situation in perspective. She is my motivation.

This is my tribute to my cousin, who makes me extremely proud, as do all the other amazing key workers out there. What an Inspiration.



Zoya Year 13 (not studying A Level Art) SECOND PRIZE

BLACKOUT

We can't defeat a system we don't know

Following the mass protests and justified anger over George Floyd's death in the US, I became inspired to educate myself more on the oppression and racism that is inherent in society during lockdown. While I was quite aware of the historic brutality black ethnic minorities experience in the US through my GCSE studies, I realised the UK's dark history is less transparent and spoken about. I was inspired to learn more about our history in the UK and the systemic racism we have been too uncomfortable to discuss. My art piece is titled 'Blackout' as there has been a suppression of information of our history. For too long the British Empire has been glorified, while the darker truths have been hidden. This, too, has been showcased through my depictions of recent occurrences. Lockdown has allowed me to reflect on the state of society and to see beyond matters that immediately affect me. Following the BLM movement during lockdown, I have become motivated to stay active and speak out on matters of injustice and oppression and my art piece.

Blackout

We can't defeat a system we don't know



Champions of English!

From day one of lockdown, Stan was sending me the work I was setting on class charts. Stan would never be satisfied with completing just the work however, he would always manage to put his own twist on creative tasks, showing real 'outside the box' thinking. Stan never seems to have been really phased by this new way of learning. I would get emails on a regular basis, asking clear and precise questions about his learning, just as he would do in the class room. He has shown real resilience and determination in problem solving and attacks everything with energy and a positive mind set. He should give himself a big pat on the back. I'm sure his parents are very proud of him. Well done Stan!

During this lockdown period, there has been another student in particular who has never failed to impress me. Her home learning has been exemplary. If I ask her to create a mind map, she will create two; a poem reflecting what 'identity' means and she will write it from a perspective she has never known nor experienced but read about and can imagine and empathise with. This student is Isabella in Year 7. Her parents tell me that Izzy has been studying completely independently as they are both working which makes her even more fantastic! When she told me she wanted to be a writer of historical fiction, I wasn't surprised. Any opportunity she can, Izzy

enriches her learning by places texts within their historical context. Izzy is an incredibly exciting student to teach because I know she will surpass all expectation, providing me with thrilling and inspiring results. Well done Izzy. You really are a remarkable young lady. *Ms Burns English Dept*

This is a snapshot of a few members of staff and a few students; their approach, outlook, generosity of spirit, what's been on their mind. There have been countless other conversations between our staff and students, staff with each other, staff with families. Staff have given of themselves in such unusual times to keep the connection between teacher and student strong and support your child, not just in their learning, but with pastoral matters or other matters as well. Your children in return have shown resilience, maturity and kindness – we are proud that as a community Alderbrook and its family of students and parents/carers have approached lockdown together and we look forward to moving on, as a community, over the coming weeks and months as lockdown is slowly eased and life returns to as we knew it. We know September will bring a 'new normal' for us all, but lockdown has shown us that our staff and your children will embrace it, manage it and simply, do it.

Happy summer all and we look forward to opening Alderbrook's doors to all students and staff in September!