



Dormers Diary

December 2018

From the Headteacher...



Welcome to the December edition of *Dormers Diary*.

We began the year on a really positive note, with another excellent set of results confirming the continuing progress the school community is making. They were above the national average and we achieved a Progress 8 score of +0.42, a fact of which we can all be very proud.

We've continued in a positive vein, with strong predictions for next Summer's results and our new Year 7 cohort settling in quickly as members of our community, and enjoying a cinema night watching *The Jungle Book* as a reward.

Another good indicator of how well a school is doing is the decisions made by Year 11 students about their choice of sixth form, particularly when they have many options open to them. I was therefore pleased that so many Year 11s chose to return to Dormers Wells Sixth Form. Even more pleasing was that many of those who opted to try an alternative sixth form changed their minds and decided they would come back to us after only a few days elsewhere.

Our current Year 11s will soon make their own choices about sixth form destinations – the deadline for



applications is 28 January – and I was pleased to see that the open evening at the beginning of November was very well attended. Current Sixth Formers acted as ambassadors for each of the subjects on the evening (left), allowing potential students to hear about what the courses are really like. I hope that perspective, along with our well-established Taster Day, will provide valuable information.

A striking feature of this term has been the very high quality of student-led assemblies we have seen. Highlights included form 8PD's commemorations of the centenary of the end of the First World War with the reading of *In Flanders Fields* by Canadian poet Colonel John McCrae. Equally impressive were the assemblies marking Mental Health Awareness Week led by the Year 13 Headteacher's Ambassadors.

The opportunity to see students up on stage demonstrating what they are capable of is always a pleasure of course and I predict that the end of term witnessed what will turn out to be one of the highlights of the school year. I am talking, of course, about our production of *Joseph and the Technicolour Dreamcoat*. My unreserved congratulations go to all of the students and staff who worked so hard to make it a success.

The end of term has also seen the Year 13 Ambassadors passing on the baton to their Year 12 colleagues, with a lunch attended by the leaders in both year groups (left) seeing a sharing of experience and advice as the leadership challenge is taken up by the new team and Head Boy and Girl.



We pass responsibility on at this time of year because it is when Year 13s must switch their focus to the future. A major part of that is, of course, applying for higher education. I'm proud to see many of our students making ambitious applications again this year; amongst them two wishing to study Medicine and four aiming for places at Cambridge. I am pleased to say that we have been fully able to support their ambitions by ensuring they were able to access courses to help them prepare for the application process.

A less public, but equally important, highlight of this term was the first Trust-wide inset day (above). It saw staff from Dormers Wells Junior School join colleagues at the High School for a day looking at the work both schools do on vocabulary and considering how this works for students as they transition from one school to the other. This is an example of a tangible benefit that the creation of the Trust has had. I am delighted that the Trust will grow even

further in 2019, with the Infant School joining us. Bringing together all three schools in a single family offers a really amazing opportunity to shape the educational experience that the Dormers Wells community enjoys.

I wish you all a pleasant break and look forward to welcoming students back in January.

Róisín Walsh
Headteacher



Citizenship in action

Year 11 GCSE Citizenship students have been creating a range of interventions designed to educate younger students about different aspects of their lives and the impacts they have. The projects have addressed a range of issues:

- An action aimed at conserving the environment by encouraging Year 8 students to use less paper
- An initiative to educate students about disability, discrimination and equality, that will spread knowledge and prevent misunderstanding
- A project that will raise awareness of recycling amongst people from different ethnic backgrounds
- A scheme researching the attitudes of Year 7s to home learning and promoting its benefits, that has already helped to change some negative attitudes.



BIMA Digital Day

The end of November saw Year 9 students working with three staff from the Reason agency for a BIMA Digital Day. The day aims to stimulate digital learning amongst 13–16 year olds. Two of Dormers Wells participants in this year's event, Gurshann and Mani, shared their reflections in a blog for the Reason website. We reproduce edited highlights of the blog here.

“For me coding and IT was a way of creating websites or any digital technology related to computers. However, I didn't know how people code and how coding can help.”

“After experiencing the day, I decided I would like to do marketing as a career. This was only possible for me because when we were handed the challenges, I began to understand the concept while working through the booklet.”

“Digital has now become a big part of my life because I am now loving the concept of it. Today I had great fun doing computational thinking challenges, the difficult question, and the riddles, which were challenging, yet fun at the same time. I would like to do this again if possible.”

“In the future I would like to go ahead with computer science and perhaps make a career in the digital industry. I would love to do this subject as it interests me the most; it is creative.”

French play offers escape



Mid-November saw Dormers Wells students host peers from Greenford, William Perkins and Villiers high schools for a performance of a new French play, *La salle des Énigmes*. The play, which is specially written to complement French language learning at secondary level, sees its cast in two escape room scenarios; Tutankhamun's tomb and Howard Carter's Tent.

Toilet-twinning challenge

Year 11 and 10 students have taken on a charitable challenge to 'twin' toilets around the school with toilets in developing parts of the world and have succeeded in twinning four of the school's toilets. It began in the Summer term, when Year 11s were asked to raise money for the project, which is run by the Cord and Tearfund charities. The project works with local communities to educate them about sanitation issues and help build toilets using local resources. Year 10 Students had lessons where they looked at the issue of poverty both in the UK and internationally. They were given the opportunity to sign up to the KitKat Challenge, in which they donated £1 and competed to see who could remove all the chocolate from a KitKat while leaving the wafer fully intact. Framed photos of the four twinned toilets, showing the country they are in and the geographical coordinates, can be found around the school.

House leaders visit Harrow

This term saw the House leadership team visit Harrow School. Year 12 Harmanpreet Thakar reports. “The aim was to meet house leaders and gain advice and tips as to how to run a house successfully. We began our trip with a tour of the Harrow School building. We were then each buddied up with a house leader from the school. When we sat for lunch, we were told that everyone sat in their houses as this allowed people from the same house to get to know each other more. This was especially useful for the newcomers allowing them to adjust easily and make plenty of friends. During the tour, we visited the students' accommodations. Every house had its own buildings, so students had to sleep in their houses. Again, this allowed them to get to know each other more, as they even had a small break room where they could watch television and play games together. The school also had a massive theatre room where they had regular plays to allow students to be creative. Adjacent to the theatre room, there was an enormous sports field with rugby stands, goalposts and a professional race track. These elements certainly made our trip even more exciting and informative.”

Artwork of the half-term

Our first Artwork of the half-term of this academic year is *Hero* by Shatis Pun. Shatis has chosen the theme of 'heroes' for his personal investigation, focusing on the man who stood heroically in front of tanks that were coming to mow down protesters in Tiananmen Square. In this picture, Shatis depicts himself as the hero attempting to push back the tanks.



Cross Country success for KS4 and Year 7 students

Key Stage 4 Cross Country runners continued Dormers Wells' record of success this term, with all four chosen to compete in the Ealing Borough event earning selection for the London Youth Games. The school's entrants in the Year 7 competition also performed well, with the six boys and two girls racing hard to the end against 40 other runners from across the borough, their efforts typified by Ahmed Mhasi who steamed past three or four competitors in the final moments of the race. Congratulations go to Sabbath Manandhar, who ran particularly well, finishing only just short of selection to represent Ealing in the London Youth Games.



Year 12s learn lessons from Auschwitz

October saw a group of Year 12 students enjoying the privilege of being invited to the 'Lessons from Auschwitz' trip to Auschwitz in Poland. This was an eye-opening experience for all students on the project as they were encouraged to think not just about what had taken place in the death camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, but to consider how we remember an event like the Holocaust. Harpreet Katar describes her experience of the day:

"When we entered the surroundings of Auschwitz, I realised that my expectations were completely wrong. This place was not a black and white place where you see death and suffering in all four directions; this place had more to it than I could ever imagine. We began our trip with a visit to the neighbouring town of Oświęcim, just a mile from the camps. We walked into the town square and saw buildings, houses and shops where people today still live and work; this changed my view on the Holocaust. It was shocking to see how people were living in an area where down the road there is a place where over a million people had died, lost their families and were separated for a lifetime. We learnt that in the exact spot we were standing on, approximately 80 years ago, was a hustling and bustling place for Jews and other people that lived there. The stories we heard and the pictures we saw humanised the Holocaust and made the statistics into individual stories of people who were separated and murdered simply for their own or their ancestors' religious beliefs.

When we entered the concentration camp and saw the endless barracks where the imprisoned people were kept, and showed the inhuman conditions they had to live in, I began to question how cruel can humans be to treat each other as though they are animals or sub-human. In the final room, we saw the pictures of the victims, before they were stripped of their rights, their families and their lives. The day ended with a hauntingly beautiful sunset, something which felt out of place in an area which had seen so much pain."

London Zoo visit

Late-November saw 70 year nine students visit London Zoo as part of their Geography work on rainforests and adaptations. The students received a talk from the zookeepers on how animals and plants have adapted to different climates and living environments over time, whilst also talking about how climate change might alter the way animals are forced to live to survive in the future. Students were then able to explore all of the different parts of the zoo, allowing them to see lots of different animals and reptiles, with the highlights being the lions, tigers and monkeys. They also got to listen to a zookeeper talk about how penguins adapt to their living conditions in order to thrive.

Flying start for Year 7s

In October, a group of 35 Year 7 students who have made a particularly strong start to the academic year visited the brand new educational centre at the RAF museum in Hendon. With exclusive access, each student got the chance to test out their reaction time to find out which fighter jet they could potentially fly, and then programmed a microbit to improve their reaction speeds and created a compass. They then used their programmed compasses and set off on an exciting scavenger hunt. Students were also able to try on RAF uniforms, learn how to fly a drone and design a jet aircraft. This unique, exciting and very informative trip gave students a valuable insight into a career in technology and engineering.



Science alumni welcomed back to school



For the second year running, our Year 12 and 13 science students welcomed back ten ex-DWHS science students now either well into their university courses, or even having recently graduated.

The session with Year 12s kick-started our science enrichment programme for the year, during which we aim to enhance students' abilities to communicate scientifically, support their development of generic science skills and open their eyes to the world of science beyond school. Our visitors certainly did the latter, sharing insights into studying physiology, biochemistry, pharmacy, biomedical sciences, geology, aerospace engineering and civil engineering, at universities in London and further afield. Some year 11 students also attended, whilst budding scientists in year 10 got the chance to meet several of our visitors during their science lesson.

Many current students commented how useful and inspirational the event had been, saying both that it had been wonderful to welcome back their forbears and good to be able to understand their school-based learning in the context of their wider educational journey.

News in brief

Late November saw Year 12 student Hamnish Sharma participating in a **'business insight day'** run by Access Aspiration. The day involved workshops introducing careers in finance and Hamnish believes the experience has been of value in a number of ways: "My experience at Metro bank has

developed me as person, by enhancing my confidence levels, as well as my leadership and teamwork skills. This opportunity allowed me to engage and collaborate with people that I hadn't seen before. I found it very motivating." This term saw our **U13 Boys' Handball team** (left) take victory in the Borough competition. All of the team members showed maximum skill, effort, and discipline to achieve their victory, which qualified them for the London Youth Games.

Mid-October saw Year 8 students **visiting Warwick Castle** (above, right). Despite a rainy start, a great day was had by all. First stop on the visit was the Trebuchet, a medieval catapult that could hurtle stones (or dead bodies) over a castle wall from a very safe



distance. Next was the magnificent Bird of Prey show. This was followed by a tour of the castle walls and the ascent of the tower. We then descended into the dungeons and finished off with a display of medieval weaponry in the great Hall. The castle itself is over a thousand years old and features an original 'motte' built by the Normans. Later additions to the castle include a stone keep, curtain walls, huge tower and a bailey with drawbridge and portcullis.

