

THE DUCHESS'S COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL, ALNWICK

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2016



Headteacher's Report

A warm welcome to our Autumn 2016 Newsletter.

The first one in our new surroundings!

I know many of you have already visited for open evenings and other events. Your positive comments and compliments have been extremely valuable as we settle into our new home. It is too easy to forget the difficulties that our old school generated in terms of poorness of facilities and lack of suitability due to its split site. Your comments about the newness, the extra resources and the simple things such as being in one building, warm and water tight make us remember how pleased we need to be.

Like all new things they take a bit of getting used to and making sure they work to the best of their ability. We continue to develop our ways of operating to make sure we get the best out of what we now have. Thinking is on-going about breaks and lunchtimes, about social areas in different parts of the school, and how we make sure our Sixth Form is both 'different and as one' with the rest of the school (hope you understand what I mean by this!). We are also looking at a fund raising exercise to purchase 'canopies' for some of our outside areas to provide sheltered outside social areas for our students. More on this when we have costings etc.

Moving 1050 students and 150 staff into a new building of over 8500 square metres has been a monumental

effort and could not have been achieved without the huge contributions, and giving of their own time, of so many of our support staff. If one person needs to be singled out then it must be James Clark who has stepped up from his role as Information Manager to become a highly effective Project Manager and has worked tirelessly over the last year dealing with the contractors, the sub contractors, the Local Authority, the Education Funding Agency and has gone about it in a highly professional manner. This move has been delivered with no extra financial support to the school budget in terms of extra people on the ground. It can be compared to moving house, but a hundred times more difficult. Our heads now turn with real excitement and anticipation to the development of our extension.

While all of this has been going on we wanted to make sure we continued to offer the very good level of education for our students. Exam outcomes for 2016 were strong for Year 11 and very strong for Year 13. As I have said in other newsletters, our overall cohorts of students on entry in Year 9 are identified as broadly average; the same percentage of high, middle and weaker attainers that you would find at a national level. However, during the three years, up to the end of Year 11, we have



improved their levels of progress and more than expected progress to above national averages. I am particularly impressed with our Year 11 Boy cohort in 2016 who significantly outstripped their national counterparts. At A Level we once again (fourth time in five years) added significant value to their results. Well done to everyone for working so hard to achieve these outcomes.

At the same time my colleagues have continued to offer the breadth of curricular and extra curricular that is so much part of our tradition. We want our students to gain from a wide variety of experiences. We want them to leave feeling that school life was more than just exams and nagging! This newsletter is full of examples of what our school has to offer and, just as importantly, what our students are doing to support each other.

Finally, September 2017 sees our school extend its age range to

incorporate Year 7s and 8s. We are working extremely hard to make sure we are liaising with our Middle Schools to make this happen as smoothly as possible. Dawn Morton, Head of Dukes and Lindisfarne Middle Schools has agreed to take on the role leading the transition of three year groups into our school. This unique exercise is very much at the core of our work this year. Our present Year 9 have settled wonderfully well into their new surroundings. They are a credit to their families and their previous schools. We want to make sure our new arrivals in September 2017 deal with the transfer in exactly the same, positive, fashion.

Happy Christmas to all and I wish you all the best for the New Year

M. R. Hall
Maurice Hall, Headteacher

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SENIOR STUDENTS

Below, left to right:
 Head Girl: **Jenny Kay**
 Head Boy: **Edris Ramazanpour**
 Daniel Lyst
 Jessica Swinbank
 Daisy Hope
 Jamie Macaulay



Edris Ramezanpour – Head Boy

Hello, my name is Edris and I am delighted to say that I was elected as Head Boy, which has given me the opportunity to represent the Sixth Form. I am currently studying Maths, Chemistry and Biology at A-level. I aim to further my passion for science and wanting to help others by studying medicine. Becoming Head Boy is a means of giving back to the school the opportunities it has given me; including help and support over the last four years, both academically and emotionally. As Head Boy, alongside Head Girl and the rest of the Senior Student team, we try to make our peers voices heard. By taking your ideas on-board and presenting them to the Sixth Form team, we are able to seek their approval for possible improvements

and changes, to better your experience at Duchess. We also organise many school events to raise money for charity and to boost moral during A-levels, as they are undoubtedly tough. The Sixth Form team is excellent and is always willingly on hand to help. This includes giving advice and support through UCAS applications, careers advice, for general queries and pastoral support. It is an incredibly exciting time to be part of the Duchess's Community High School. With the new build and increased facilities available to all, my time at Duchess has only got better. The vast range of subjects available and the on-going support allows you to explore a wide range of careers options to make sure you realise your ambitions, and make the best decision about your future.

Jenny Kay – Head Girl

Hi there! My name is Jenny Kay, I am currently in year 13 and am the present Head Girl at The Duchess's Community High School after being nominated by the amazing student body we have here. At DCHS I am studying Geography, Biology and Chemistry with the hope of one day going to university. However, I have decided to postpone this momentous decision and as soon as I leave Year 13 I am embarking on a mission for my church which may take me anywhere in the world! It is all down to the fantastic teaching and enthusiasm of the teachers here that has given me the love of learning and a thirst to explore and discover new things. It is so exciting to be Head Girl at this time, working with the Head Boy and Senior Student team, overcoming the challenges of a new building and exploring all the great ideas expressed by the student body to help improve and settle into the new school. It has been fabulous to work with such an excellent team of Senior Students to help organise events and be a means of developing and enhancing the Duchess experience.

Jamie Macaulay – Senior Student

Hi, my name is Jamie and I am part of your Senior Student team. I am currently studying Chemistry, Maths and Physics, hoping to study Chemistry and Physics at university.

There are loads of great extra-curricular activities at DCHS, especially for music. I am part of the ceilidh band, the choir and the scandi band. We have a newly formed Interact Club who work with Alnwick Rotary Club to organise charity events in school.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at DCHS. I have been challenged, supported and given many new opportunities.

Dan Lyst – Senior Student

My name is Dan, I am currently studying Music and Maths at A-level and I am hoping to study popular music at university. During my time at DCHS, many new opportunities

and experiences have become available to me, such as being involved in the school productions staged in the local theatre, going on residential trips abroad and taking part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. The school plays and musicals in particular have really developed my skills and confidence, and are a fantastic thing to be a part of if given the opportunity.

Jess Swinbank – Senior Student

Hi, my name is Jess and I am part of the Senior Student team for the 6th Form. I currently study Maths, Biology and Geography which I'm finding challenging, but ultimately enjoyable. I will hopefully be continuing my education at York University next year, studying Environmental Geography in an attempt to help tackle some of the major issues we are facing as a planet.

I have found Duchess a great place to spend the past four and a half years of my life, it has allowed me to develop academically and as an individual. The new school building and facilities have been a fantastic opportunity for Duchess and everyone has done very well settling in and adapting to the big change. The building is finally feeling like school!

Daisy Hope – Senior Student

Hi, I'm Daisy Hope currently doing A levels in Music, Theatre Studies and English Literature. Next year, (if all goes to plan) I will be doing a musical theatre course at university so I can continue to do what I love, performing. Being at the Duchess has given me an understanding of what it means to have to work hard to achieve my goals. Not only has it done this, but it has also helped me develop my talent to pursue my career by providing me with opportunities such as getting important/ main roles in school productions. If you are interested in drama, I'd definitely recommend getting involved with the school productions, with dedicated staff who share the same passion.

9 GCSE GRADES ARE CHANGING

GCSEs in England are being reformed and will be graded with a new scale from 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade. English literature, English language and maths will be the first subjects to be graded in this way from August 2017. The subjects with the highest numbers of candidates (e.g. arts, humanities, languages) will follow in 2018 and most others in 2019. This is happening as GCSEs are being reformed to make them more challenging, to keep pace with employers' and universities demands.

In the first year each new GCSE subject is introduced, students who would have got a grade C or better will get a grade 4 or better. Students who would have got a Grade A or better will get a 7 or better in the first year. Grade 9 will be more difficult to achieve than a grade A*. The extra top grade will also make it easier for employers and universities to distinguish between the most able students.

To see how the numbered grades compare to the current A* to G system, google "ofqual 9 to 1 postcard".

More information about when subjects will switch to the new grades is available on the Ofqual website.



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**Education Welfare Service
Child Employment**

Did you know that?

All children from the age of 13 years and who are working must be registered with the Local Authority and be issued with a work permit.

It is an offence for an employer to employ children without registering with the local authority first.

The numbers of hours you can work whilst attending school are restricted. Children must not work before 7am and after 7pm.

Any children working without a permit is not covered by their employer's liability insurance.

If your child is working please ensure that an application form for a work permit is completed.

More information and application forms can be obtained from:
Education Welfare
Virtual Schools
Education and Skills Service
Wellbeing & Community Health Services Group

Brunel Building, 64 Regent Street, Blyth
NE24 1LT
Telephone: **01670 622800**



Five years ago I volunteered to help out backstage for the school musical *Back To The 80s*. 'This'll be a laugh', I thought as I turned up at The Playhouse, clad in theatre black clothing, 'Something fun to do with my spare time'. I had no idea this would be one of the most intense yet rewarding theatre groups I'd ever worked with. Moving from audience to stage crew to actor and finally to my current role of Stage Manager, the DCHS Drama Department has never failed to amaze me with the talent and sheer dedication they produce year on year. They have inspired my potential future career and helped my love of theatre blossom!

This autumn was no exception; I had the joy of working once again with Mr Allenby, the cast and most of all the technical crew, pulling off a widely enjoyed performance of *1984*. With time cut one week short due to the school move, both the acting and production teams had their work cut out! Starting in early September we became comfortable in our brilliant new Drama Studio and other school spaces where hours were spent projecting lines, painting the lofty set and perfecting the show until it finally came to the run.

As someone who has both acted and now runs the shows, there's nothing more rewarding than to hear the Alnwick audience cheering at the end of a well-executed performance. As Stage Manager it's down to me to run the show smoothly and solve any problems; if you never see me then that's a good thing! I can tell you that seeing the smiles of the actors and crew as they walk off stage filled with adrenaline is something truly special that very few get to witness up close. I will never forget the smiles and tears in their eyes after their first and last applauds; it makes the many small sacrifices throughout the months of rehearsals worth it.

My utmost thanks go to the Playhouse and the staff there; we can never truly express how grateful we are for the opportunity to perform in a living and breathing theatre and the support we receive during particularly long tech rehearsals!

And now onto *Fame!* Rehearsals have begun and the cast are getting ready to fly – see you in March!

Charley Walker



CAREERS

Thinking of the future and the job I want to have!

Over the past couple of weeks' senior teachers in the school have been meeting with every student in year 11 to discuss their progress and to start to get them thinking about the careers and next steps that they need to take to fulfil their ambitions.

One of the questions I always ask in my interviews is, 'so, if I was to meet you in the street ten years from now and asked you what you were doing, what job would you like to tell me you had?' Over the course of my interviews I had many interesting and inspiring answers to this question and met many students who were confident and ambitious. I think in such a competitive job market like we have today it is very encouraging to have young people with such clear thinking about what their future might look like.

Of course, there are some students who are still unsure of what they might like to do as their next steps or where they might want to be a year from now, and that is the very reason careers education and the little and often conversations that take place in subject areas and in formal meetings like those we have just concluded are so important.

You can never be too young to start to think about the career path you might want to explore. We do some interesting work on money management and employability skills in year 9 as we prepare for the important options choices early in 2017, in year 10 we look to give students experiences of jobs you could do from presentations and visits in different subject areas, and, in year 11 we start the year with a visit to the Metro Radio Arena for the North East Skills Careers Fair.

Some of the most important websites and information sources that can help students think about their careers can be accessed via our school website or in the Careers Corner in our Library. There are many opportunities to research and seek advice from independent people and I would urge everyone to register and familiarise yourselves with the websites below:

nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/

www.apprenticeships.org.uk

www.ucas.com

www.careerpilot.org.uk

At school there are many people who can help you think about your future and we encourage our young people to talk to them. It is a competitive world out there and fully understanding the opportunities that are open to our young people in such a world is vital for their future success.

Martin Allenby
(Assistant Head, CIAG)

BOTTLEBANK BAND

Members of the school's Ceilidh and Scandi bands were treated to some inspirational playing from Tyneside group the Bottlebank Band. The group's four fabulous players demonstrated their innovative arrangements in different styles. They answered questions from their audience and talked about how they put their pieces together. The afternoon ended with some tunes played together by the band and school's musicians. Thanks to Mrs Watchorn for arranging for the band to come in.



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ALSO AT BERWICK (01289 306479)



In June, 25 Literature and Theatre Studies students (accompanied by Ms Rigg, Mr Allenby and Ms Stone) travelled to Stratford-upon-Avon to explore the birth place of William Shakespeare and its array of historical sites.



During their time in Stratford, the group attended two performances at the Royal Shakespeare Company: Shakespeare's *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'*

and Ben Jonson's *'The Alchemist'*. The group were also lucky enough to partake in a fantastic guided tour of both Shakespeare's birth place and Anne Hathaway's Cottage. Many students went on to do the Stratford Trail and several students (...and staff) explored Stratford's infamous 'Tudor World' which was both memorable and informative.

During the first evening, students relished the opportunity to see a beguiling production of Shakespeare's *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'* at the RSC. This was a unique opportunity for us to reflect upon our own sell-out production of this play the previous November. As well as considering characterisation, students were able to reflect upon directional decisions, costume, set and lighting. The students thoroughly enjoyed this adaptation and this experience provided the students and staff alike with the assurance that our own production compared most favourably.

The second evening gave the students the opportunity to see a somewhat eccentric

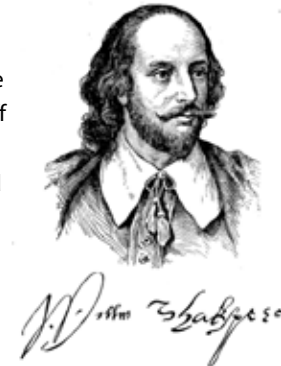


production of *'The Alchemist'* – written by one of the finest of Shakespeare's contemporaries – Ben Jonson. The satire depicted themes such as religion, transformation, art and

culture and provided much discussion and reflection. The students found this both entertaining and unfamiliar in equal measure; the stark contrast to the previous night's production was highly thought-provoking.

During the visits to sites of historical interest, students were given a real insight into the roots of William Shakespeare. Students interacted with many experts during their tours of the historical sites and their knowledge was enriched substantially. The students' exploration came full-circle – from Shakespeare's place of birth to Shakespeare's place of rest in the Holy Trinity Church.

The study of Shakespeare is an integral part of both GCSE English and A Level Literature and this trip broadens students' contextual, cultural and academic knowledge of Shakespeare and his origins. This is a regular trip which is always heavily subscribed; we exhort other students in future year groups to join us next year.



On Friday 11 November, Members of the UK Youth Parliament debated a range of topical issues, including the need for cheap, accessible public transport and tackling racist and religious discrimination.

YOUTH PARLIAMENT

The Youth Parliament, sat for its seventh year in the House of Commons Chamber, heralding the start of UK Parliament Week (14-20 November), an annual festival of events intended to connect communities across the UK with their democracy.

This year's *Make Your Mark* campaign to decide the topics of the Youth Parliament's debate in the House of Commons received a record number of ballots, reaching 978,216 young people.

Make Your Mark is now the biggest youth consultation of its kind in UK history, with almost two million young people aged 11-18 taking part in the last two years.

Around 300 MYPs from across the UK took part and at the close of debates, voted to make 'votes for 16 and 17 year olds', and 'a curriculum to prepare us for life' the focus of their 2017 campaigns.

The event coincided with Armistice Day marking 98 years since the Armistice which took place during the First World War.

The UKYP sitting was presided over by the Speaker, Rt Hon John Bercow MP, who said: "I am delighted to welcome the Youth Parliament to their annual sitting. It is always encouraging to see young people debating issues so passionately in the House of Commons and participating in our democracy. Almost a million young people, from across the UK, voted for the motions before us on



the Order Paper today, and I am pleased that they are making their voices heard and engaging with the parliamentary process."

The debates held during the day were 'we must stop cuts which affect the NHS', 'votes for 16 and 17 year olds in all public elections', 'make public transport cheaper, better and accessible for all', 'tackling racism and religious discrimination, particularly against people who are Muslim or Jewish' and 'a curriculum to prepare us for life'. These were followed by speeches on 'a better, kinder democracy'.

In Northumberland, *Make Your Mark* allowed just fewer than 7000 young people to have their say in the national

consultation. In DCHS we came out with 929 students completing the ballot. This is a brilliant result, with an 89% turnout rate. In Northumberland the top *Make Your Mark* issues were; 'a curriculum to prepare us for life', 'make public transport cheaper, better and accessible for all' and 'we must stop cuts that affect the NHS'. In DCHS the top *Make Your Mark* results were; 'make public transport cheaper, better and accessible for all', 'mental health' and 'votes for 16 and 17 year olds in all public elections'.

It was an amazing experience and a great honour to sit in the House of Commons and represent Northumberland.

Jamie Macaulay

FORESTERS

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and at 41 Queen Street, Amble 01665 710424

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TOP TEN

An Alnwick school is among the top 10 secondary schools in the North East. The Duchess's Community High School is ranked at ninth in the top state secondary schools in the region as part of the annual Sunday Times Parent Power, published in The Sunday Times and online this Sunday.

The guide, which can be found at www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/parentpower, contains the top 2,000 state and independent schools, ranked by their latest academic results, and searchable by postcode, town, local authority and name of school. It says the percentage of Duchess's students gaining A* to B at A-Level last summer was 54.6, with 20 per cent notched up an A* or A at GCSE. In tenth spot is King Edward VI School in Morpeth, with 52.7 per cent and 22 per cent. The top performing state school is Durham Johnston Comprehensive School, with 76.4 per cent and 37.6 per cent.



Read more on the Northumberland Gazette website.

Article and screenshot by courtesy of The Northumberland Gazette

MATHS Challenge



Recently, a small group of students were placed 3rd in the regional UKMT 'Maths Challenge' event.

We were quite the plucky, ragtag style of team that was brought together only a few weeks before hand. Myself, Liam Juggins, Oscar Wilson and Olivia Rose had been put together to participate in this event, and do our best because it was a little last minute. We only got a small bit of practice: small dots of group work here and there, tiny bits of collaboration when work allowed for it. Expectations weren't particularly high.

In hindsight, we really should've got together earlier and more often, because we managed to be 3rd out of 20 teams from 30 minutes of practice, behind RGS and Newcastle Sixth Form College. Take into account the fact that we finished above the likes of King Edward VI, Whitley Bay and St Benet Biscop High Schools who might have been practicing for months beforehand, and... well. We did well. Well enough in fact that we think we can go further.

We've had a taste of victory, and the talent this school possesses cannot be denied. Our teachers think that we haven't reached our apex yet, and neither do we. Keep your eyes here, people. We might have something a lot bigger to celebrate next time.

Martin Murphy 12MCS

SCHOOL CLOSURE DUE TO ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

In the event of school closure due to adverse weather conditions, e.g.heavy snowfall making roads inaccessible, Radio Newcastle will be informed. They will issue school reports during the Breakfast Programme (on radio frequency 95.4) from 7.00am until 11.00am. There will be a daily update until the school reopens.

We will also be able to send any confirmation of closure by text and / or e-mail to all of those families registered with SchoolsComms. Should the weather deteriorate please check your mobile phone / e-mail to confirm whether any information has been sent. We will also post a notification on the school website (www.dchs-alnwick.org) and on Northumberland County Council website (www.northumberland.gov.uk).

Further details, with Bus Company telephone numbers, are on our website www.dchs-alnwick.org



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My personal experience with paddle sports all started when I got the chance to join the year 10 Public Services Expedition paddling the River Tweed back in 2014. This was a trip that gave me some great experiences and the love for adventure. The following year I was lucky enough to get a place on the expedition to paddle the River Tay, from Loch Tay to Perth. This was the trip that truly started my love of the water. That summer in school I saw courses advertised giving students the opportunity to take part in 10 weeks of lessons at Coquet Shorebase. I couldn't wait to get back out on the water and to learn how to be more effective in both canoe and kayak. Little did I know how the sport would soon become an obsession.

I have never been a person who enjoyed sport however, I spent one of my

fondest summers learning how to kayak and canoe in Amble harbour and paddling the River Coquet up to Warkworth. During this time, I went from not being able to control either craft effectively to being able to do all sorts of weird and wonderful things, from playing on the surf in the harbour mouth to going down weirs and rapids.

At the end of the ten weeks I joined up as a member of Amble Canoe Club as I had enjoyed it so much. I'm also a member of the school's canoe club which run sessions on a Friday night at Willowburn. I started doing river trips with Shorebase giving me a taste for 'white water'. With the school club I have learned the more technical and tactical side of the sport whether it be working on my high and low brace, to learning how to roll a kayak. The technical side has taken me a while to grasp but I have been supported by my friends and the coaches in the clubs.

I never realized, until recently, that my self-confidence and my people skills have increased - although those around me did. The sport is a great way to learn life skills, make friends and have some great laughs as well as keeping fit. I am now obsessed with paddle sports.

In March the Public Services Course here at school ran a two-day course which enabled me to get my two-star qualification. This is where you have to show that you can paddle a canoe and a kayak, demonstrating different techniques. Three instructors assessed us over the two days which took place on the River Tweed. We also camped out so it was a mini expedition! I was lucky enough to pass along with some of my friends. On the debrief it was commented on the high standard of those that had passed. This set into motion the idea of becoming a coach. Since the course, I have many hours of experience on the water

under my belt. I have paddled flat water such as Ullswater to kayaking in the Falls of Lora in Scotland as well as a few grade 3 rivers around the North East of England. Mr Brown, our coach at school, has guided me along the path to achieve the Level 1 Coaching award. I have recently taken part in the four-day course and, with the help of my coaches, I successfully completed the training and passed the assessment. I am now teaching in both clubs. As I said, this sport has really made me more confident not just in the sport but it has helped me in my school work as well. It's given me a goal and is always challenging me; I have just attempted and succeeded my first grade four rapid. So all in all I feel that having that first opportunity to try something new has really worked out for me

Jake Weddell

(Year 12 Public Services Course Student
Level 1 Coach in Paddlesport)



E-SAFETY IN THE NEWS



Health secretary calls for a 'national conversation' about social media and asks mobile phone companies to block 'sexting'.

Social media companies must do more to help protect young people's mental health rather than "simply being part of the problem", the health secretary has warned.

Jeremy Hunt said that there needed to be a "national conversation" about the links between social media and poor mental health, and urged the "fantastically profitable" companies behind such websites to do more to help.

He also called for mobile phone companies to come up with ways to block young people from "sexting".

"Why is it that mobile phone companies allow people to send a text with a sexually explicit image in it?" he asked. "Surely, there is absolutely no reason why people under 18 couldn't just be blocked from sending those kinds of images?"

Tell us about medical needs and medication!

We keep records in school of information supplied to us by parents/ carers to enable us to support students with medical conditions.

Details of the full policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions, are on our website as well as copies of forms to complete should your child need medication while at school. Please read the information and complete the relevant forms if your child has a condition we should be aware of. It is your responsibility to inform us of any condition, change to a condition or medication for your child.



"The point is that technology is the solution to so many things, but we need to challenge social media companies to be part of the solution."

He said that due to social media, young people are growing up in a world that is "quite different" from the one that his generation grew up in, and that this is having an impact on their general wellbeing.

Children as young as 10 break safety rules set by parents to hide cyber-lives

Forty-two percent of 10-year-olds believe they have the skills to hide what they've been doing online from parents. By age 13, this figure rises to 70 percent.

New research by Kaspersky Lab reveals that children as young as 10 actively attempt to hide their cyber-lives and circumnavigate the rules set by their parents to govern internet use in the home today. One thousand children between the ages of 10 and 15 were polled.

Of the 10-year-olds surveyed, 10 percent hadn't discussed their online behaviour with a parent despite easy access to and ownership of their own digital devices. Over half (51 percent) of them own

a tablet and 33 percent own a smartphone.

Of those that did have rules put in place to safeguard them from dangers and threats, 27 percent admitted to logging onto the internet at a friend's house to get around these. Because of this, children have been exposed to content containing bad language (42 percent), violent material (28 percent) and pornography (11 percent).

Both of these articles highlight the importance of parental 'policing' of online activity. As a school we have no way of controlling what our students do online when they are not in school; we work with them to advise them in staying safe and need support from home to ensure they are as safe as possible.

Useful links:

-  www.thinkuknow.co.uk
-  www.internetmatters.org
-  www.common sense media.org
-  www.childnet.com
-  www.e-safetysupport.com

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On top of the usual Autumn term commitments, the Creative Arts Faculty finally moved into its new home at the heart of the new DCHS, and the impact has been felt not only by the union of all three Faculty areas, but across the school - they certainly know we are here! The energy and buzz generated by students and staff across Art, Music and Film is tremendous and it's such a vibrant creative hub of students that whenever you walk down the corridor either during lessons or during lunchtime / after school rehearsals and clubs, you can't fail to notice the vibe. So what have we all been up to this term...

Music

The Music dept's fab musicians have thrown themselves whole-heartedly into rehearsals for various performances and commitments this term. The Autumn Variety Concert at the beginning of November showcased the amazing array of talent within the school, from the newly-formed Chamber Group led by Mrs Humphreys to the Scandi Band led by Mrs Watchorn. The school's Rock and Jazz bands got the whole

audience's feet tapping - Endless Sky, The Blueprint and the Year 12 Jazz group were particularly popular. The Young Musician of the Year Competition, organised by the Alnwick Rotary, was won by Anna Maxwell (instrumental) and Harriet Renner (vocals) who will go through to the next round - the regional competition. Capella (the school's thriving Choir) and the Ceilidh band are going to have a busy end of term with lots of performances booked within the community for Christmas events.

Art

The Art Department welcomed Miss Hynes to the team at the start of the term following the retirement of Ms McDonald at the end of the Summer term. We are thrilled to have such an excellent teacher joining us. The Department has again 'been out on tour', but this time further North with a visit to Edinburgh with 60 students from Years 11-13 visiting the galleries and museums in Scotland's capital. A fantastic experience for all the students and staff, with a huge array of works on display including Van Gogh and the Impressionists, Bridget Riley and Henry

Moore at the Museum of Modern Art and the spectacular Taylor Wessing Photography prize at The National Portrait Gallery which for many was the standout exhibition of the day. Visits to The Baltic Portfolio Advice Day have helped many of our Sixth Form students (and Year 11) establish creative career paths and opportunities open to them at the end of their studies. Sunderland University also paid us a visit to talk about the Photography opportunities and Foundation and Degree courses. Our students have been the driving force behind the magnificent set for *1984*, which again was hosted by The Alnwick Playhouse. It demonstrates the dedication of a core team of students who work tirelessly after school and weekends to visualise the proposal (usually on a scrap bit of paper!).

Film

York Film Festival: November

Year 13 students recently enjoyed a trip to the **Aesthetic Short Film Festival** in York. They enjoyed a masterclass in cinematography, where some of the UK's top camera operators discussed their methods of working on such films as *Skyfall*, *Harry Potter* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Students also got to watch shortlisted short films, ranging from documentary to talking mosquitoes: all very inspiring! We also watched Ken Loach's *I, Daniel Blake*, which the students thought was fantastic.

Teeside University Workshop

Year 12 and 13 students are due to go on a free workshop to Teeside University on Monday 12th December. The Film and Media Department are hosting a one day

workshop, aimed at developing practical film-making skills. The students will work in small groups, devising and shooting a short film, before editing it, all within the space of four hours!

University Beckons...

It's great to see so many Year 13 students applying for Film and TV/Media Production course, and finishing their important UCAS application forms. At least they have loads to put down on personal statements for film! The UK is respected as producing some fantastic young talent, and of course the film and TV industry is a major employer in the UK.

Ex-Student Freddie Hinsley

It was great to hear from ex-student **Freddie Hinsley**, who is now enjoying Film Production at the famous Northern Film School. He has been emailing the short films he has been working on, and is in contact with our present Year 13s through Facebook. An inspiration, and one to look out for in the future. A number of our current Year 13 students are hoping to follow in Freddie's footsteps, by applying to Leeds Beckett University.

Goodbye from Ms Thompson:

"I would like to say goodbye to all my students and their families, as I am leaving at the end of December to pursue my own adventures on the seven seas. All the students have been such an inspiration, for their curiosity, personalities and individual quirks. I will miss you all enormously, and wish you all the best in the future. Keep up the great work, and keep making and watching films!"

Ruth Brown
Head of Creative Arts

Uniformed Services Course

SCOTTISH EXPEDITION TWEED

28 June 2016 – 1 July 2016

The School Expedition took place from Tuesday 28 June to Friday 01 July, 2016. Twenty students (15 Male, 5 Female, from years 10, 11 and 12) were supervised by three teaching staff: Keith Broughton (Deputy Leader), Clare Tennant and myself as Leader. Connall Brown also accompanied us as a volunteer coach. We were joined by six other instructors from Abernathy Trust, Barcaple.

In organising these activities, it is always my intention to keep costs to a minimum whilst trying to give our students an expedition that would take them out of their comfort zone.

Tuesday 28 June 2016:

We left school at 0730hrs, arriving in Peebles after a short detour due to roadwork at Kelso, at 1030hrs to meet up with the Abernathy team. Students were split into three groups and equipment issued whilst we transferred the vehicles to the first campsite. Briefing and training was carried out in Peebles before each group set off. The river levels were low and the weather, rain with sunny intervals. On the first day we

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When planned and implemented well, Learning Outside the Classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils' personal, social and emotional development.”

”

**Learning Outside the Classroom –
How far should you go?
OFSTED Report 2008.**

covered almost 30 km and the last group was off the water in the campsite at Fairlee at 1900hrs. For some this was a shock to the system especially when they had to organise their tents and start cooking, the midges made this more interesting!

Wednesday 29 June 2016:

It was agreed to split the groups up into two to allow the vehicle transfer which would take 2 hours in total. Whilst we moved the vehicles to Norham both groups would set off at intervals. We would then return and attempt to catch the groups up. The first rapid at Fairlee is around 100 metres down river from the campsite; this was managed well by the instructors positioning themselves at various points. Only two boats capsized, mainly due to the students getting caught on a rock and losing their balance. The day was interspersed with grade one and two rapids which made paddling more enjoyable. We covered almost 30 km before camping at Rutherford Lodge. The vehicle party managed to make up the two hours' head start but only in the last couple of Km's. The weather was mostly Scottish sunshine,

rain and more rain. Although this cleared when we reached the campsite. Despite the swimming some students did, spirits were high and with no midges a fire was organised on the river bank.

Thursday 30 June 2016:

An excellent day for moving water despite the river levels being low, groups had the opportunity to run grade one and two rapids with instructors lining the boats down the grade three at Makerstoun. Students were given instruction in lining and portage along with basic river skills. We were originally going to camp on an island but because it was overgrown we decided to camp on the river bank with the landowner's permission. We covered 24 km in fantastic sunshine. A couple of people had swims on some of the rapids but this was dealt with swiftly and effectively. Some of the lucky ones saw otters and ospreys – everyone saw fishermen. Again spirits were high and everyone was looking forward to completing the expedition.

Friday 01 July 2016:

My group left first in order for me and an instructor from Abernathy to get the vehicle we had left at Fairlee. Groups were not far behind each other so the time waiting for us to return would be used to transfer equipment up the hill and then sort out so that it could be packed onto the trailer and the minibus. Student behaviour was very good with positive comments from all Abernathy staff. I hope all students look back on this expedition with fond memories but also I hope that they have learned not only paddle skills but responsibility, self-reliance, determination and resilience.

All achieved their 1 Star qualification in paddle-sport. There are a number of students who displayed excellent qualities of teamwork and leadership. They also displayed 3 and 4 star paddling skills.



A link to the Exped video is:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5DPf7VgeLk>

This is the tenth Scottish paddling expedition I have organised. I believe that it is something in which our students:

- develop self-esteem, take personal responsibility, co-operate with and respect the needs of others;
- extend their personal horizons through greater appreciation and understanding of the world and its people around them;
- enhance practical problem solving and team work skills.
- promote a positive and knowledgeable response towards personal health and well being

The staff from Abernathy (Barcaple) were, as always, outstanding; their communication was clear both to staff and students on and off the water, nothing was too much trouble, everyone was involved in decision making, students given first class instruction in camping and paddling. Friendly and professional instructors who quickly made a good rapport with students and staff.

I've already started planning next year's expedition – we are paddling the river Tay.

Neale Brown

Sport

Boys' Sports Report

Rugby

The senior squad have enjoyed a successful term. In the first county festival the boys proved too good for all the opposition and won all their games. Player of the tournament was **Jamie Comber** who capped a fine overall display with a length of the field try. The spirit of rugby was evident when the Duchess boys made up the numbers for Ashington to give them a full 15 to complete their final match.

The friendly fixture against Longridge Towers was memorable for 2 reasons. Firstly, the team played some great attacking rugby and used our pacy wingers, and secondly to emphasise this point, **Harvey Young** scored 4 tries from the right wing.

Owen Davidson is doing a good job of captaining and organising the team this year. He has been rewarded with selection for Northumberland U18's and co-incidentally his brother **Rory** has been selected for



Under 18 Tens Squad

Northumberland U17's. They are both pictured below:



Owen & Rory Davidson

The U15's started well in their first cup game of the season, **Mark Roberts** raced over for a try and this was followed by an individual try from **Drew Thompson**. Unfortunately Hexham then replied with their own scores and proved too strong in the end. Following this they secured victories over Berwick and Kenton.

Combined Tens Squad



The U14's played their county cup games against RGS, Ponteland and Berwick. We comfortably beat RGS 'B', had a thrilling draw against Berwick but eventually lost out to an experienced Ponteland side. **Isaac Gierer** was player of the tournament after some impressive tackles and strong running.

A combined U15/U14 team entered the first county 10's tournament of the year at Ashington. The school proved to be too strong for all the teams in our pool as we defeated all 3 teams. **James Stanley** and **Jack Smith** were the leading try scorers on the day.

The same combined squad hosted Longridge Towers and James Calvert Spence from Amble in a triangular tournament. The school played some good rugby during the victory over Amble but found Longridge Towers better organised as they succumbed to a spirited defeat.

The combined 10's squad is pictured below:

Football

The season has been somewhat slow regarding games being played as we've had issues with pitches in terms of playing our home games but have still managed to get some games in. The weather has cancelled a few games but more fixtures are planned for after Christmas so there are more games to be played for all age groups. **A big thanks you goes to Alnwick Town who have allowed our senior team to play their home games at the club.**

Year 9

The U14 team have so far played 3 games winning one, drawing one and losing one. There has been a brilliant turn out to training with an enthusiasm to win being displayed in both training and the games. The team has played attacking football which has resulted in ten goals being scored in three games. **Marco Mackenley** is the leading goal scorer with six goals in three games including two hat-tricks.

U14 squad pictured below.



Year 10

The U15 team have so far only managed to play two games resulting in defeats against Astley and NCEA. Both games have been competitive matches with scores lines of 2-1 and 3-2 respectively. Similar to the U14 team,

there are a lot of talented players and more games will be played after the Christmas period. **Dylan Handyside** has captained the team really well, displaying excellent leadership skills.

Seniors

The seniors got the season off to a winning start by beating KEVI 5-0. **Paul Anderson** scored a hat-trick and goals from **Josh Hall** and **Leon Midgley** rounded off a good team performance. A narrow defeat against Prudhoe means the seniors have won one and lost one so far. A lot of year 11 students have stepped up this year and performed really well. **Joe Pickard, Leon Midgley** and **Jay Graham** have all excelled against lads from older age groups.

Senior squad pictured below.



Girls' Sports Report

Hockey

Another very busy start has been made to the sporting year by all girls participating in sport, whether recreationally for fun or for more serious competition. The U15, U16 and U18 hockey teams, as always, have made a positive start to the new season and the U15 team are enjoying more success than last year as they are another year more hockey



Under 15 Hockey Squad

wise and have a real fighting spirit. Five of the squad are now training and playing with Alnwick Ladies and have made big improvements in their play and tactical awareness. The U16 team played particularly well at their recent County Tournament finishing in 4th place. The new U14 players show real promise and have made serious progress having played very little 11 aside before in their Middle Schools and are expected to compete against private schools that have played together for 4 years already. Well done girls!

Football

Our 2 football teams, U14 and U16, have made a great start in the County 7-a-side leagues that run in Sept/Oct and March. The U16s are currently second in their league.

Netball

Netball this term has been very positive; lots of girls especially in yrs 9 and 10 attending practice and keen to play in matches. Seniors are struggling with the pull of academic ex-tra classes but do prioritise for matches. We compete in county tournaments with relative success in U/14 and U/16 competitions both finishing in 5th place.

Like all extra-curricular we aim to include as many students as possible.

Girls are attending both Boulmer and Morpeth clubs to gain more experience which is great.

Rugby

We will enter festivals during the year and include rugby lessons at some point in the curriculum. Congratulations to **Aimee Anderson** and **Emily Chapman** Yr11 who have been selected to play for County.



Emily Chapman

Cross Country

First challenge of the year was the Tyne and Wear event at Haydon Bridge for yr 9, 10/11 and seniors. We took 3 teams who all ran good races in tough hilly conditions. Well done to **Callie Henderson** yr10 who came 3rd in her inter race. The area event is 2nd Dec at Druridge Bay.

Golf

Congratulations to **Holly Hardy** yr9 who has qualified to compete in the Junior European Finals in Spain at the end of November.

An outstanding achievement, we wish her the best of luck.

Important Calendar Dates

Thursday, December 8

Holly Ball

Monday, December 12

DCHS Community Carol Concert 6.00 p.m. Main School Hall

Friday, December 16

Prize Day (School open as usual until 1.05 p.m.)
School closes for Christmas Holidays

2017

Tuesday, January 3

Training Day

Wednesday, January 4

School reopens for Spring Term

Weeks beginning January 9 & 16

Year 11/12/13 Mock Exams

Monday, January 23

Progress Check 2 for Y13 opens

Friday, January 27

Progress Check 2 for Y13 closes

Monday, January 30

Progress Check 2 for Y11 opens

Wednesday, February 1

Options Evening for Y9

Friday, February 3

Progress Check 2 for Y11 closes
Progress Check 2 for Y13 issued

Week beginning February 6

GCSE Music Performance exams

Monday, February 6

Progress Check 2 for Y12 opens

Thursday, February 9

Y13 Parents' Evening

Friday, February 10

Y9 Consultation Day
Progress Check 2 for Y11 closed
Progress Check 2 for Y11 issued

Week beginning February 13

A Level Music Performance Exams

Wednesday, February 15

Post 16 Options Evening

Friday, February 17

Progress Check 2 for Y12 issued
School closes for Spring Mid Term holiday

February, Sat 18 – Sat 25

Ski Trip

Monday, February 27

School reopens after Spring Mid Term holiday

Monday, February 27

Progress Check 2 for Y9/10 opens

Friday, March 3

Progress Check 2 for Y9/10 closes

Wednesday, March 8

School Musical – Evening Performance

Thursday, March 9

School Musical – Evening Performance

Friday, March 10

School Musical – Evening Performance
Progress Check 2 for Y9/10 issued

Saturday, March 11

School Musical – Matinee & Evening Performance

Thursday, March 30

Y10 Parents' Evening

April, Wed 5 – Tues 11

Ceilidh/Scandi Bands tour to Sweden

April, Thurs 6 – Tues 10

A Level Geography/Biology Iceland visit

Friday, April 7

School closes for Easter holiday

Monday, April 24

School reopens after Easter holiday
Progress Check 3 for Y11/12/13 opens

Thursday, April 27

Higher Education Fair

Friday, April 28

Progress Check 3 for Y11/12/13 closes

Monday, May 1

May Day Holiday

Thursday, May 4

Y9 Parents' Evening

Friday, May 5

Progress Check 3 for Y11/12/13 issued

Monday, May 8

Progress Check 3 for Y9/10 open

Friday, May 12

Progress Check 3 for Y9/10 closes
Y12 Study Leave begins

Monday, May 15

Summer Exams begin

May, Mon 8 – Tues 16

Y9 & 10 Maths Mock Exams

Friday, May 19

Progress Check 3 for Y9/10 issued

May, Friday 26

School closes for Summer Mid Term holiday

June, Monday 5

School closes for Summer Mid Term holiday
Y13 Study Leave begins

June, Monday 12

Y12 return to school

June, Wednesday 14

Y12 Higher Education Information Evening

June, Friday 23

Y13 Leavers' Dinner

June, Sun 25 – Fri 30

Public Services Expedition Week

June, Mon 26 – Fri 30

Y12 Work Experience Week
Y9 & Y10 Mock exams week

June, Monday 26

Progress Check 4 for Y9/10 opens

June, Wednesday 28

Y12 Progression Day

June, Thurs 29 – July Sat 1

Stratford Trip

June, Friday 30

Progress Check 4 for Y9/10 closes

July, Friday 7

Progress Check 4 for Y9/10 issued

July, Monday 3 – Friday 7

Year 5 Enrichment Events

July, Friday 21

School closes for Summer Holidays

AS & A2 Results – 17 August 2017

GCSE Results – 24 August 2017

Training Day – Monday 4 September 2017



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