



## DISS HIGH SCHOOL

### END OF TERM NEWSLETTER – December 2023

*The DHS Way – ‘Work Hard, be kind’*

#### **Update from the Headteacher**

Dear Parents & Carers,

I’m writing this report to the sound of our Drama students’ singing “Rocking Around the Christmas Tree” which they are practising in the hall ahead of the annual end-of-term pantomime. By the time you read this the panto will be over and I’m sure a good time will have been had by all who took part and all who got a chance to watch it (myself included - I was offered a part but I wouldn’t want to impose my singing voice on anyone). This pantomime is part of our December festive charity week and lots of other things are going on including an auction, a charity car wash, Diss High’s very own version of “I’m a Celebrity” and a staff karaoke.

The start of September seems like a long time ago now and it’s been an action-packed term. Two personal highlights stood out for me. Last month it was an honour that Diss High School took part in the town’s annual remembrance event for the first time – our Head Boy and Head Girl Isabel and Peter did a fantastic job of representing the school. I was also very pleased to attend the Nurtured Sound event at the Corn Hall – this was a community event and featured more than just our students but the students we had there did a superb job – it sold out very quickly! One of our music teachers Ms Dunsmore was one of the organisers and many of our staff attended to show their support for our students.

I wanted to mention in this report some of the work that the site team have been doing over the last three months – I doubt there’s a school out there that wouldn’t appreciate a bit more funding for capital investment but in the meantime the team have done a superb job with renovations to multiple classrooms, repairs of toilets, converting the field from summer to winter events, tree work to maintain site security, all the various testing that needs to be done and many other things. Parts of our site are a bit older, and so require more repairs, but the site team work very hard to do this work quickly and to do preventative site work wherever possible.

There’s been lots more going on besides this of course and hopefully the newsletter gives you a flavour of what students have been achieving. We continue to embed our new philosophy of “work hard, be kind” as the two most important qualities in the happiest and most successful people. You may have noticed in the media recently the concern there has been about the national decline in standards of behaviour and attendance in schools in the couple of years post-lockdown. At Diss High we know that good attendance and behaviour are the bedrock of happiness and success and we continue to emphasize the preciousness of learning time. The support we have received from the vast majority of parents about taking a firm stance on behaviour expectations is much appreciated.

Christmas is celebrated as ‘the most wonderful time of the year’ but then it’s also true that the pressure to be happy (usually from advertisers!) can sometimes cause its own problems for children and adults. However you and your family are spending the festive period I wish you season’s greetings and a Happy New Year. After a bit of rest, all the staff here will be looking forward to

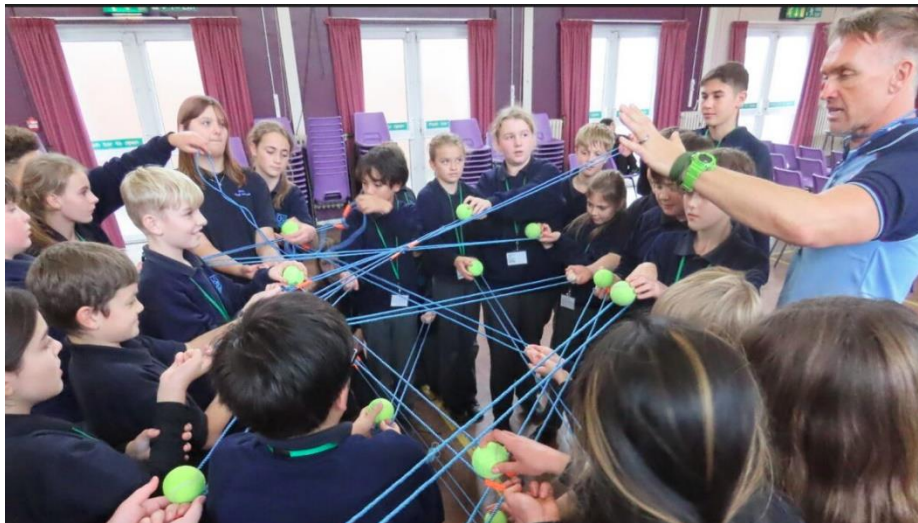
welcoming our students back for the Spring Term and, before too long, the welcome return of sunlight in the mornings and evenings...

Sam Stopps

Headteacher

### **RAF Stem Day**

Our year 7 students had the opportunity to take part in a hand on, high energy, experiential challenge designed by RAF to encourage STEM learning. The day also incorporated activities on confidence, communication, resilience, and team building. I am sure the students who participated in the project had a great time and learned a lot. Teena Deepu – Head of Physics



### **Library News**

The Bookbuzz books have arrived! Every member of year 7 in the school has received a fab free book to keep this week. Year 7 don't forget to take part in the Bookbuzz menu challenge to gain positives and prizes! See Mrs Goddard with any questions. Enjoy your free books!

On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> Nov James T and George H (year 10) and Amelia T and Lillian B (year 8) represented the school in the annual Britannica What On Earth quiz. They competed online against dozens of other schools from across the county and although they didn't make it through to the live final a great time was had by all. From Emma Goddard – Teaching Assistant/Librarian.



### **Remembrance Sunday**

It was nice for the school to take part in the Remembrance Parade in Diss Town on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November. The weather held for us too! – Thank you to everyone who took part – it was great to see so many clubs and associations represented. Holding our wreath are our head boy and girl Isabel and Peter.



### **Dressage National Championships!**

Below are some of Jess B's (Year 11) results at the British Dressage National Championships. She had a great weekend, and in the U21 Prelim she finished 10th overall and in the U21 Novice she finished 8th!

An amazing achievement! She won her classes regionally to be able to go to these Nationals and to finish in top ten is an amazing achievement!

Her horse is called Highway Robbery (Robbie) and he is an ex-racehorse who she has been training for 2 years, and she has given him a wonderful new life off the track too! He's been very challenging at times, but she has persevered and is now getting the results for her efforts! (photos supplied)





### **English Enrichment Session**

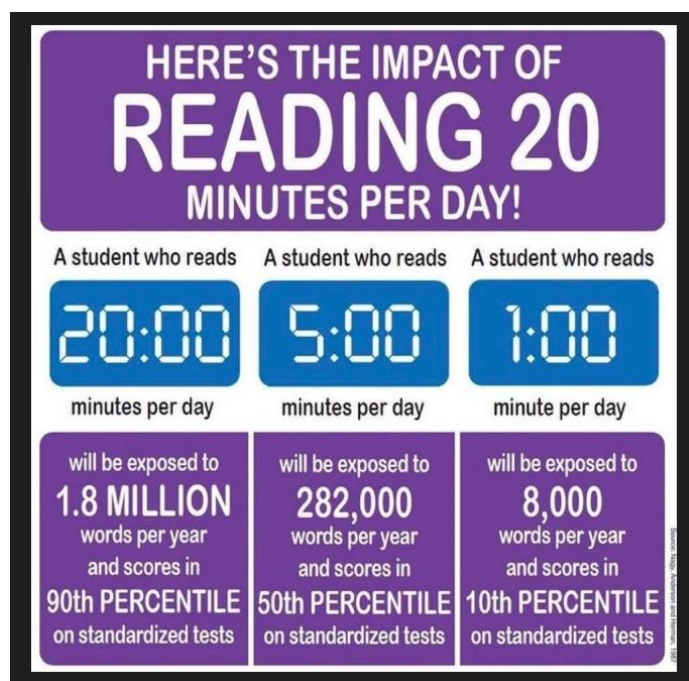
Year 13 English Literature and English Language and Literature students joined forces on 24<sup>th</sup> November to explore their set text 'A Streetcar Named Desire'. Whilst Literature students led on the exploration of context, Language and Literature students offered insightful linguistic analysis. A really productive session improving all students' ability in key exam assessment objectives whilst stretching and challenging our sixth form students' critical thinking skills.

Suzie Johnson – Assistant Headteacher & Head of English



### **The importance of Reading**

We also thought it important to share this interesting fact that was used in one of our staff briefings to keep reading on the agenda for everyone...



### **Drama Winter Showcase!**

We are so happy to see live performance making a comeback post-pandemic - and what a high to start on! Our drama Winter Showcase was on Thursday 16th November where parents were invited to come and watch the coursework performances created by our exam groups.

The evening began with the GCSE group performances, raising awareness about climate change, protest and sustainability, culminating with the phenomenal work by our Year 13 students called 'A Mother's Love' exploring the effects that county lines has not only on the young people recruited, but also the impact on the wider community. A hard-hitting piece which left the audience stunned.

One parent said 'a really thought-provoking piece! If every school child in the upper schools across the country saw this drama piece it could be an amazing deterrent to be in a gang and anti-drug learning piece also.' Well done to all students!

Amy Bishop – Head of Drama.



### **Movember!**

Supporting awareness and fundraising for Mens Health, this year we had three teachers get into the Movember spirit by them growing their moustaches! They have raised over £450 for this great cause.

Pictured below Dr Busby, Mr Lea and Mr Dugdale



### **The Hive Mural**

Ella R started the mural in the Hive after she completed her GCSE's and has since come in regularly this term to complete it. She must have worked for 60 - 80 hours on it, all voluntary. The finished result is spectacular and will be on the wall for many years to come, inspiring students attending the Hive. From Riana Halil – Teaching Assistant.



### **Taylor & Hammond**

Our 6<sup>th</sup> formers had a recent assembly on The Taylor and Hammond Educational Foundation and opportunities for applications. This supports students up to the age of 25 with funding support for school residents in Diss or local neighbourhood. If you would like to find out more, please visit their website on the link below and follow the top link 'application. The next deadline is 20<sup>th</sup> April and applications will be reviewed in May.

<https://taylorandhammondeducationalfoundation.wordpress.com/>





### **Computational Thinking Challenge!**

The Bebras Computing Challenge is organised in over 50 countries and asks questions that focus on computational and logical thinking. Students across the school took part the Bebras Competition and have been given certificates with their results. The 19 Students who scored in the top 10% of the UK have been given a Gold Award and are invited to compete in the Oxford University Computing Challenge, a tremendous achievement! Special recognition is given Lottie H (162) and Thomas M (151) in the Junior Challenge, Arthur S who scored 128 in the Intermediate Challenge, and Sam P who scored 116 in the Senior Challenge. From Alice Adlam, Computing teacher.



### **Art Updates**

Diss Draw off 2023.

On Saturday 25 November our year 12 and 13 A-Level Fine Art students were invited to participate in the 'Big Draw Off' event, at Designermakers21, with sixth-form students from Hartismere High school: drawing collaboratively on a large scale in the gallery space. Our students spent their own time preparing and discussing ideas for their composition along with the materials they intended to use. Our students decided on a robotic theme due to the media coverage for AI, each designing

either an individual robot characterised and stylized to their own way of working or working on the background to solidify the composition. Our six students worked incredibly hard to complete the drawing in the allotted 90mins and received such positive feedback from artists, family and friends. The work was then exhibited in the gallery space for a further two weeks for the general public to view. From Donna Marshall, Head of Art.



### **Maths update!**

So far this year our Year 10 Further Mathematicians have been studying Polynomial Expansion and Factorisation including The Factor Theorem (all topics which later become part of A Level Maths), with some work to come before Christmas on an introduction to Matrices, a topic exclusive to GCSE and A Level Further Maths, and a topic pivotal for students who wish to pursue physics or computing pathways.

The year 11s meanwhile have been continuing their study from last year with Further Calculus (more A level topics geared towards engineering) and applying these skills to problem solving, as well as using matrices to describe transformations (vital in their role to project 3D images onto a 2D screen).

Furthermore, we are excited to announce that a group of our year 10s will be visiting UEA in the New Year to complete a day of Maths activities, explore the University and listen to enrichment talks from two incredible keynote speakers, Ben Sparks <https://www.bensparks.co.uk/> and Alison Kiddle <https://alisonkiddle.co.uk/>

From Mr Billy Adamson – Assistant Headteacher. Pictured below are year 10s below hard at work.





## Geography

### A-level Hazards Conference, London

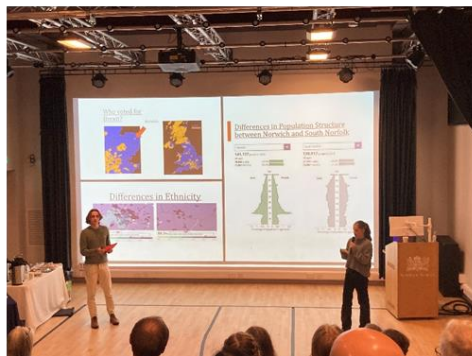
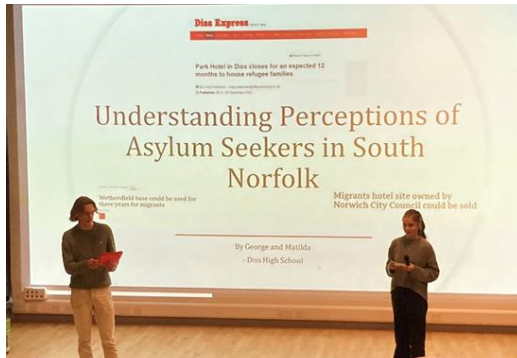
Y12 students attended the 2023 Natural Hazards Conference in London in November. The event was hosted by an expert panel to help and inform students of the latest hazards research such as earthquake forecasting and why so many buildings collapsed in the Türkiye earthquake, which happened in February this year, as well as understanding the reasons for Iceland's recent volcanic activity and its potential impacts, especially for the tourism industry. Students spoke positively about the day and saw it as a great opportunity to develop and enrich their knowledge of tectonic activity.



### Royal Geographical Society's youth Micro-Lecture event, Norwich School

Matilda S and George L took part in the second Micro-Lecture event held at Norwich School. The theme of the evening was 'People, Planet and Partnership' and along with other students from

Norwich School, Hethersett Academy, Notre Dame High School and Attleborough Academy, they spoke for seven minutes on a geographical topic of their choice. Matilda and George spoke on understanding perceptions of asylum-seekers in South Norfolk, an issue that has generated huge debate within the town. Using their geographical knowledge, they sensitively explored the reasons for the varying perceptions. The presentation was fabulous and showcased some excellent geography! Well done Matilda and George! From Vicky Nolan – Head of Geography.



### Sixth Form

On Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December, Sixth Form Media, Film and English students visited the University of Suffolk with Mrs Bond and Mr Outred. The group attended lectures on topics ranging from Shakespeare, to screenwriting to forensic linguistics. Some of our students even wrote their own odes in a poetry workshop. The day was structured to allow students to follow their own interests and to give them a taste of higher education and what it can offer them. It was very chilly - there was even some snow on the ground in Ipswich. The students were congratulated by staff at the university and complimented on their subject knowledge and polite behaviour. From Mikela Bond – Deputy Director of English.





### **Sponsored Walk**

As part of charities week, the Festive Fundraiser kicked off with 22 Sixth form students, three members of staff and 4 dogs taking part in a sponsored walk. A beautiful winter's Friday was spent walking the numerous footpaths around Knettishall Heath, totalling around 10 miles and raising a fantastic £480 for EACH and Mind. From Elizabeth Hughes – Deputy Director of Sixth Form.





### **Sixth form Festive Fundraiser**

After a very busy Autumn term at Diss Sixth Form, we reached Festive Fundraiser week. As we have in previous years, in 2023 we raised money to support East Anglian Children's Hospice. We are also donating to the mental health charity, Mind. We had a week of fabulous dress-up costumes, car washing in freezing temperatures, and cake sales. The festive quiz evening was well attended, and the auction was a very popular event, raising a huge amount of money.

'I'm a Teacher, Get me out of Here' saw teachers consuming unsettling foodstuffs that included custard macaroni and a fish milkshake. The multimedia 'Task Master' event pitted teachers against one another as they played hide-and-seek and dressed themselves as Christmas trees. The pantomime was hugely entertaining, and we're already anticipating next year's edition.

The karaoke was, as ever, extremely successful with a selection of mostly festive hit songs given exhilarating interpretations by school staff. There was even a Sixth Form sponsored walk through the wilds of Suffolk. In January we have a second edition of the 'Teacher Bake Off' episode to look forward to. Thanks to everyone involved and to everyone who made a donation – we couldn't do it without you. From James Hurley – Director of Sixth Form.



### **All things cooking!**

#### **Cooking Club**

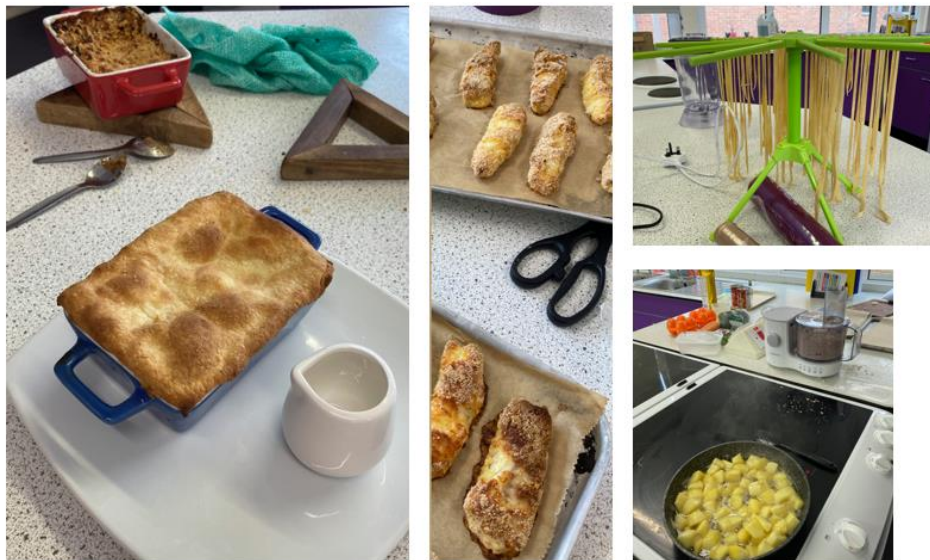
This half term we have been creating our Christmas bakes. The students have made a yule log, mince pies and Christmas cakes. Henry P's yule log looks fantastic! We will be decorating our Christmas cakes just before the end of term.

Next half term we are continuing with themed bakes and will be making products for Valentines Day and then Easter. Please see Mrs Malloy if you would like to join in on Tuesday lunch times.



#### KS4 Hospitality and Catering

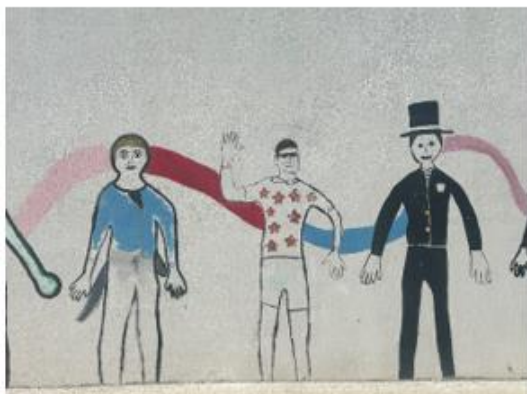
At the end of this term our year 11 students completed their practical exam. They have had 3 hours to make 2 dishes; one for an adult and one for a toddler. The standard of dishes has been exceptionally high this year and we are so proud of the students. Those that have come to see the finished dishes and have a taste have been equally impressed. Alice Malloy – Food Classroom Teacher.





## Mexico 2024

Some of you may be aware we managed to secure funding to take a group of 40 students on a trip to visit St Johns School in La Paz Mexico in May 2024 to work on a joint cultural project. I was lucky enough to visit the school in late November and meet all the staff and students to discuss our time there. The school is a beautiful site and located in a conservation area and all the staff and students were welcoming and excited about our visit. Whilst in Mexico I visited their famous 'Magical' town where the real Hotel California is supposed to be located, a trip we will be taking our students on.



Upon return to the UK, and just a week later two teachers from the school visited us here in Diss. They were keen to meet our students, experience some of our culture and finalise planning for the trip in May. Both teachers were extremely impressed with our school, teachers and students; they are looking forward to bringing their students to visit us during the next Academic year.

I would like to particularly thank all the staff and students involved in both visits, particularly Mrs Budds, Mrs Marshall and Miss Dear for helping with the planning of the forthcoming trip and to Mrs Malloy and Mrs Adams and the Yr10 students who prepared a wonderful afternoon tea for the Mexican Teachers.



Photo below of the afternoon tea, students prepared everything from scratch including the bread and butter. The food looked and tasted great, and we were able to introduce our guests to part of English culture. The students did an excellent job. Viv Pittman – Deputy Headteacher.





### **Business Department**

Y13 Business BTEC students have to plan, organise and run an event as part of their Unit 4 coursework. One group of six (Alan, Riyaz, Sam B, Thomas, Ryan and Vlad) have organised a quiz night. This has involved everything from liaising with the site staff for booking the hall, planning the questions, organising refreshments and the raffle to selling tickets.

The quiz took place on Thursday 14th December and was hugely successful. Participants all had a great time, the staff present were very impressed with the organisation and the event made £250 for Each and Mind.

The other group of five (Malachi, Erin, Yasmine, Freddie and Lizzie) have been organising the Charity Auction. This has involved collecting over 40 lots from local businesses and friends of the school and also learning how to use our online bidding system via the auction website.

The auction took place on Monday 11th December, with a professional auctioneer from Gazes, Ed Taxil-Webber. We had a good number of online bids before the event as well as enthusiastic bidders on the night. The students had produced an excellent catalogue as well as a presentation, showcasing the lots and they organised refreshments for the evening. The total raised was £990 - a magnificent effort!

Both groups worked incredibly hard to make their events successful and are delighted with the total amount raised which will all go towards the 6th Form Charity week total. They have also completed their logbooks and in January will be evaluating the events.

Y11 Enterprise students completed their second controlled assessment this term. This will count towards 30% of their overall GCSE. They had to create a business plan for a micro enterprise and then pitch their idea via a filmed presentation to Mrs Budds and Mr Hemsley. Finally, they had to watch back their presentations and write a review of their performance. The students all worked incredibly hard on this assessment, and we were very impressed by the standard of their pitches. They will receive their results in March.

Finally, Y10 Enterprise students have started preparing for their first controlled assessment which will take place in March. Students have to research a local business and we were delighted to welcome Andy Hipwell from Ampersand Brewery who gave a presentation about how he started his business and his plans for the future. We are always looking for small business owners to talk to our students about their experiences. Please get in touch if you would be happy to come into school. From Mrs Budds – Head of Business Studies & Computing.



## **TERM DATES for pupils 2023-24**

### **Autumn term**

- Monday 30 October - Wednesday 20 December 2023
- *Christmas holiday: Thursday 21 December - Wednesday 3 January 2024*

### **Spring term**

- Thursday 4 January - Friday 16 February 2024
- *Half-term holiday: Monday 19 - Friday 23 February 2024*
- Monday 26 February - Wednesday 27 March 2024
- *Easter holiday: Thursday 28 March - Friday 12 April 2024*

### **Summer term**

- Monday 15 April - Friday 24 May 2024 (Monday 6 May is a Bank Holiday)
- *Half-term holiday: Monday 27 - Friday 31 May 2024*
  - Monday 3 June - Friday 19 July 2024

**We all wish you a very pleasant Festive break.**