



DISS HIGH SCHOOL
END OF TERM NEWSLETTER – October 2023

The DHS Way – ‘Work Hard, Be Kind’.

Update from the Headteacher

Dear Parents & Carers,

I'm very pleased to be writing my first end of half term update to you and what a half term it's been! I hope the rest of this newsletter gives you a bit of a flavour as to what's been happening at Diss High in September and October in addition to the hundreds of timetabled lessons that take place every day.

I've been very grateful for the warm welcome from staff, students and parents that I've received as Diss High School's new Headteacher. I've shown several visitors around the school already and they have all commented on how polite our students are and what a productive learning atmosphere they've seen in classrooms. We are embedding our new mission statement of "work hard, be kind" – two qualities I'm sure everyone agrees are essential in trying to ensure that the young people of today go on to become successful, decent adults in the future.

As I said in my first letter to parents, we need to have a productive and mutually supportive relationship with the town of Diss and its surrounding villages. We want to engage fully with our local community, and to this end we now have a DHS Facebook page. Please search for Diss High School and the official page is the one with our DHS crest so you can keep up to date with our latest news.

Thank you for the nearly 300 responses we had to our recent parent survey. All of these were read carefully, and I'd like to give you some initial feedback on our actions following on from this. The vast majority of parents who responded were generally happy with how things are going but there were some areas identified as needing potential further improvement. The first is around knowing what work the students are doing. The curriculum maps on the website are a good first place for this information (<https://www.disshigh.norfolk.sch.uk/home/learning/curriculum/>) but if you have any further queries then just get in touch.

The second was about how we report to parents not always being that clear. To help with this we have introduced a new 'Attitude to Learning' grade on school reports which gives you information on something that parents usually care about above all else – i.e., how much your child is engaging with, and putting effort into, each lesson in that subject.

The third was probably the most pressing need. When asked to make a comment or suggestion on the last part of the survey most parents mentioned something to do with behaviour. As I mentioned in my previous letter, helping our students to understand what we mean by good learning behaviours is a key priority of ours. In common with many schools' post-lockdown, too much learning time was being lost last year due to non-compliance and disruptive behaviour and sanctions were not always applied consistently. It is early days, and we will need to remain vigilant, but students and staff are

reporting a much calmer atmosphere at the start of this term and our new 'C system' of structured warnings is helping to improve consistency. We also need to do more to celebrate the vast majority of our students who make the right choices day out, day in. By the time you read this our new 'positive shop' will have opened where students can trade in the positives they've gained for various items.

Of course, this isn't all we're working on, and it'd be good to give you updates on other school improvement priorities in future newsletters. One exciting development is our close association with Enrich Learning Trust which will become formal membership soon. It has been really useful to network with other school leaders across Norfolk to see how they are improving student outcomes. Every school has its own unique context, and this will always be true in Diss, but there are also many common challenges that we all face and where we can support and learn from each other we should.

I'd like to close by recalling a conversation I had with one of our Year 13s who started talking to me while I was doing bus duty last week – he asked if I was glad, I'd chosen to work at Diss. My answer to him was very much yes! Diss High School is a wonderful community. Of course, there are things to work on, as there would be in any school, but we have the raw ingredients here to have lots of successes in future years.

I hope you are able to take the time to look through this newsletter because there are so many students who have already achieved a lot this year and we celebrate them and all our other students who are working hard and being kind.

Best wishes to you and your family for a relaxing half term break.

Mr Sam Stopps

Headteacher

Phoebe performs at the Royal Albert Hall

Phoebe B from year 7 performed at the Royal Albert Hall on 17th September with her Theatre group that she attends. She has been busy rehearsing this which took her also to Hertfordshire where she practiced with the whole theatre group. They performed two shows, afternoon and evening – well done Phoebe!



Year 12 Fine Art

Year 12 Fine Art Students visited two of our local galleries on 21st September, Diss Corn Hall and Designer makers 21 to view the current textiles exhibition. DHS students across all Key Stages have an exhibition planned for the Corn Hall in January 2024 and we also have a 'Big Draw' event coming up in November at Designer makers with our A level students. Donna Marshall – Head of Art.



Hive Improvements

Year 11 Asdan Group have out done themselves; they have worked incredibly hard to create an exciting and inspirational outdoor area behind the Hive. As a group they have applied for funding from Breaking the Stigma, a small grant scheme, prepared the area and then designed and painted a mural. Working to their strengths and with the support of Mr Holmes (outside) and Mrs Hannan (mural) they have created a space that others will enjoy long after they have moved onto college and their further careers. This was the final piece of work they needed to achieve the next level in their bronze and silver awards by Mr Stopps. I look forward to steering them onto Gold. – Sara Palmer.



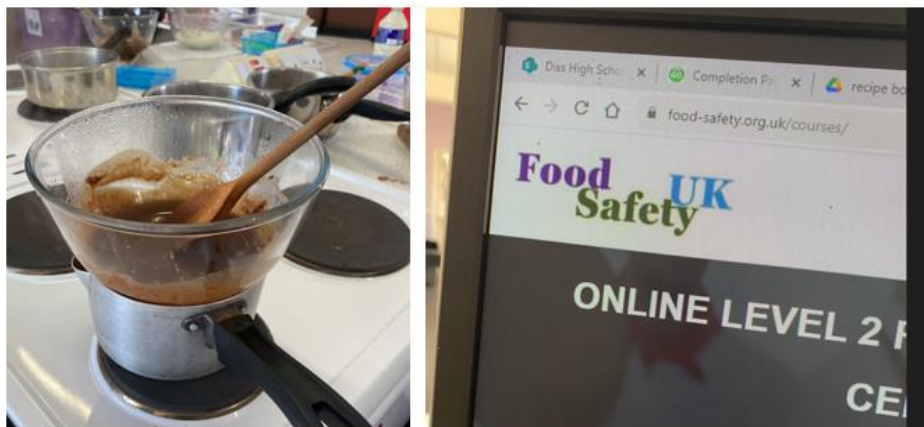
Drama

It was a sheer delight to see so many of our talented Year 7, 8 and 9 dramatists turning up for their induction into our very own DHS Youth Theatre Company giving us exciting promise for some productions to come later on in the year! Miss Bishop and Ms Oliver led some games, explaining in more detail the performance skills they help to develop and then students were invited to take an application form to fill in to demonstrate their commitment to the company. The company will initially meet every Monday lunchtime in the Drama Suite. As the year progresses, we may launch some after-school sessions too. Keep an eye out for exciting developments! – Amy Bishop – Head of Drama.



Hospitality and Catering news

This term we have started Cooking Club on Tuesday lunch times. We have planned what we have made and enjoyed cooking what we want to. So far, we have made chocolate mousse and rocky road. We are looking forward to our Halloween bakes and Christmas cake! Year 11 students have been busy completing their Level 2 Food Hygiene award. This is a recognised award in the catering industry, and it supports the theory needed for their level 1 and 2 course. They have been doing fantastically well, some have already achieved their award! Well done! Alice Molloy.



Allotment update

Over the summer holidays, thanks to the dedicated work of our community volunteers, produce from the school allotment was harvested and taken to Diss Community Fridge. Several boxes of tomatoes, cucumbers and runner beans were donated so nothing went to waste while the pupils were off. On returning to school the pupils have been able to sample some of the later ripening produce including the melons that enjoyed a warm summer in the greenhouse. Not much work got done that lunchtime as we were all busy sampling the fruit and veg picked that day! Gemma Smith.



6th Form News

The Sixth Form committee have been busy organising a Welcome BBQ for our Year 12 students, and we are looking forward to the committee revealing their plans after half term for the week-long Festive Fundraiser in December. We are in the midst of supporting Year 13 students with their plans for next year through the UCAS process for students wishing to study at university, and via a series of sessions on apprenticeships.

In September, all Sixth Formers participated in Relationship Sex Education workshops run by Laura from Jigsaw Education.



Channel 5 comes calling!

Some of you may have watched the recent documentaries on Channel 5 about Norfolk and Suffolk. Jack Jenner-Hall from Year 13 was filmed flying as part of the get into aviation initiative. Here he is with the person that he flew. Amazing – well done Jack!



European Day of Languages

The annual European Day of Languages takes place on 26th September. It is an opportunity to celebrate the cultural diversity and many languages spoken across Europe as well as promoting the importance of language learning.

This year our Y8 pupils were challenged to complete the "Find Someone Who" competition where they had to ask staff about their language skills and experience. Congratulations go to Logan Howes, Henry Webster and Dominik Lojek who successfully completed the task.

We also launched our Bake-Off competition with Y7 students, inviting them to bake a themed cake from a different country or a recipe specifically from a different country. We had several mouthwatering entries which were brought into school on Thursday 12th October so that they could be judged during the Y6 Open Evening by both the children and their parents/carers. Congratulations go to Grace, Mia and Alayna who were given the most votes!



Life After Year 11 – DHS Careers Day

During the first term of year 11, We have had the opportunity to experience careers day. This included a variety of activities to participate in such as: Speed Interviews, talks in small groups with local workers and a talk in the hall about the decision between college and sixth form.

It has been very advantageous to discover where our strong and weak areas of being interviewed are and it has also informed us about the opportunities the future holds after speaking to a large group of workers. It has been lovely to see the community of workers around us give up a day to come and speak to us all about their work and has showed the diversity of the community around us. It can feel quite scary the transition from school life security to independence but the DHS Careers Day has not only showed us that life after high school is nothing to be afraid of but there is a path for us all after year 11. - From Jessica Baldwin Year 11. Pictured below one of the talk sessions in the main hall.



Library News

It has been a great start to the school year here in the library. Every break and lunch time the library has been busy with students browsing our lovely selection of books; enjoying some colouring or a game of chess and making use of the computers for homework. It has been wonderful to meet so many enthusiastic readers from the new year 7, many of whom have signed up for our Diss High reading challenge and are busy working their way through their bookmarks. The Reading Challenge is open to all year groups and those who complete the stages will be rewarded with certificates, positives and pin badges.

At the start of term all our year 7's were given the opportunity to choose a book to keep through the Book Trust Bookbuzz scheme. There were 16 brilliant titles to choose from and after watching a short introduction to their books from the authors they set about making their choices with much excitement. The books will be distributed during library lessons in the next term so keep your eye out for them!

Here are some of the lovely year 8 library Assistants: Savannah Makgill, Amy Aldous and Logan Howes and friend Alice Dubroecq making some fabulous bats for our Batty About books autumn display.



Year 7 Open Evening

There was a brilliant turn out on 12th October for our Open Evening, some pictures below from science where they had bones and fossils, flame tests, and a great Steady Eddie Buzzer game as well as primary colouration projections. Art rooms were looking very colourful too and the night concluded with a short talk from Mr Stopps with some students speaking too.



TERM DATES for pupils 2023-24

Autumn term

- Wednesday 6 September - Friday 20 October 2023
- *Half-term holiday: Monday 23 - Friday 27 October 2023*
- 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 half term break.