



Dear Parents and Carers,

Message from the Headteacher

The festive season is always a time for reflection and the power of human kindness is never taken for granted. I came across this piece which seems to summon up how we may all be feeling:

A gentle reminder about why you are utterly exhausted...

No one I know began this year on a full tank. Given the vicious onslaught of the previous two years (let's just call it what it was) most of us dragged ourselves across the finish line of 2021... frazzled, spent, running on aged adrenaline fumes...

We crawled into 2022 still carrying shock, trauma, grief, heaviness, disbelief... The memories of a surreal existence...

And then it began... The fastest hurricane year we could ever have imagined. Whether we have consciously processed it or not, this has been a year of more pressure, more stress, and a race to "catch up" in all departments... Every. Single. One. Work, school, sports, relationships, life...

Though not intentionally aware, perhaps hopeful that the busier we are, the more readily we will forget... the more easily we will undo the emotional tangle... the more permanently we will wipe away the scarring wounds...

We can't.

And attempts to re-create some semblance of "normal" on steroids while disregarding that for almost two years our sympathetic nervous systems were on full alert, has left our collective mental health in tatters. Our children and teens are not exempt. The natural by-product of fighting a hurricane is complete and utter exhaustion...

So, before you begin questioning the absolutely depleted and wrung-dry state you are in- Pause. Breathe. Remind yourself of who you are and what you have endured. And then remind yourself of what you have overcome.

Despite it all, you're still going. (Even on the days you stumble and find yourself face down in a pile of dirt).

Understanding brings compassion...

Most of the world's citizens are in need of a little extra TLC at the moment. Most are donning invisible "Handle with care" posters around their necks and "Fragile" tattoos on their bodies...

Instead of racing to the finish line of this year, tread gently. Go slowly.

Amidst the chaos, find small pockets of silence. Find compassion. Allow the healing. And most of all... Be kind.

There's no human being on earth who couldn't use just a little bit more of the healing salve of kindness. "

Naomi Holdt - Psychologist and Speaker

We are experiencing difficult times, with rising inflation, trying to keep warm and making ends meet but remember to cherish yourself and your loved ones. This newsletter contains articles about events that took place during the Autumn term and other information including scarlet fever and strep A. There is further information from Brent LA in the letter enclosed, which gives guidance about what people need to do if they suspect their child is not well.

It has been a long and busy term, we are all looking forward to the Christmas break, our staff team and I would like to wish you all a very peaceful holiday and look forward to seeing our pupils in the New Year on **Tuesday 3rd January**. Finally, reminder that the Spring parents evening/afternoon will be on **Wednesday 11th January from 2.30pm - Ranjna Shiyani**



Creativity Project



in Maths and English:

This term, the students were involved in a creativity project in Maths and English lessons. This was initiated by an organisation called A New Direction who work with teachers and schools to provide young people with opportunities to develop their creativity. Our project incorporated five teaching for creativity principles for learning: collaborative, inquisitive, persistence, discipline and imagination which have been a hook both in GCSE English and Maths.

MATHS:

In Maths, the key priority is always to excite pupils and fire their curiosity in a subject that many of them see as binary and very far from a creative enterprise. What began in our planning as something that would start or end a lesson as a standalone 15-minute task, has taken flight into full research projects and presentations in assembly.

Our catalyst was the **Support Your Claim** activity and students could pick from a variety of maths topics up for debate – concepts, opinion or philosophical.

Pupils collaborated in their enquiry and all students presented a talk to the whole school on one of the following topics:

'What can't we divide by zero?'

'What is a number?'

'Is 0 a number?'

'Do students need to learn times tables?'

'What will replace the calculator?'

We have been so struck by their motivation and how this has affected their concentration and motivation in the core requirements.

ENGLISH:

For pupils in GCSE English, the use of 'taster cards' have opened up a raft of entry-points into core assessed requirements and tapped into a motivation that wasn't visible before. Where the English syllabus for many can feel so overwhelming, these activities have paved the way for fuller explorations 'by stealth' – writing a **Two-Sentence Horror Story**, taking on a **Repetitive Doodle**, or a **Step Inside** 20-minute activity has shown that so much can come from so little.

One activity, **Music is My Muse**, prompted a collaborative poem in 15 minutes, that was then taken on individually in crafting, improving, and editing to the point of project work and display. One pupil reflected *'It's the first time I've ever written anything I've ever been proud of.'*

A well-used entry-point that professional writers and poets use is the 3-minute **Freewrite** that has been a particular favourite in our classes, and we have developed this to a regular 15-minute task. Pupils now each have their own special Freewrite book which they decorate to make distinct and separate from their GCSE work; this is viewed as artwork in its own right.

Jazz *(Creative response to the music of Pharoah*

Sanders)

I feel the music surround me,
like it's entered my brain.
The walls are closing in,
as squashed as a narrow lane.

The bells are like silk,
washing over me like waves,
but suddenly it's rough,
like rocky, jagged caves.

The deep red is blood,
like dark, scarlet rain.
But beautiful still;
it will never cause me pain.

**A NEW
DIRECTION**
We create opportunity

By Skye and Daniela (Year 11)



EQUINE THERAPY

The students worked with the horses during the Autumn term. Within a few sessions, most of the horses became familiar with our students and were relaxed around them. So relaxed, that they even tolerated being turned into creatures from Lord of the Rings as Maggie, Danni and Tasha practiced their hair-braiding skills!

New students joined the sessions during the term, they too quickly felt at ease around the horses and were able to work with them comfortably. It is amazing to see the change in the students and in the horses as both parties worked closely together. As well as gaining experience of working with horses, they developed greater empathy of working with animals. All students received certificates of achievement for their efforts, however, it is clear that they gained much more than this in terms of the development of their self-confidence and resilience during this programme.

Frank Ofori-Sampong



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

We are all at the centre of a big network of relationships; with family, friends, acquaintances, teachers, and all sorts of other people. Our relationships can bring joy and also challenges to our lives. This term, Ashley College students benefitted from sessions run by Brooke Advisory.

" The sessions were really good. I learnt a lot"

" That was actually really fun. Can (the speaker) come back?"

" 11 out of 10 "

Due to the positive feedback from so many students, we have increased the number of hours that we are contracting Brooke for and their work will continue in February during our PSHCE sessions.

Many thanks to Amara from all the staff and students at Ashley College, for running such informative sessions. We look forward to welcoming you back in the Spring!

Anne-Marie Mika

OUR VISION

Our vision is that young people's lives are free from inequality, rich with opportunity and enriched by happy, healthy relationships.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to equip young people for life's challenges.

A Culture of Reading at Ashley College

Renaissance Accelerated Reader

At Ashley College, we want to create a culture of reading. All studies show that students who read more perform better in all their academic work and have better mental health. Our aim is to encourage the students to develop their love for reading by providing access to books that interest them but which are also appropriate to their reading age and enable them to progress.

To this end, we have introduced a new learning platform, Accelerated Reader. The students have already completed their reading assessments using the platform and the results have generated a reading list for each pupil. In the Spring term, we will facilitate opportunities for all students to read regularly whilst at school and we will also have the expectation that they will read at home. We look forward to observing our students develop a true love for reading.

If you would like to find out more information about Accelerated Reader, take a look at their website: <https://www.renaissance.com/products/accelerated-reader/>

What do the National Literacy Trust say about reading habits?

Reading enjoyment: Fewer than 1 in 2 (47.8%) children aged 8 to 18 said they enjoyed reading in 2022.

Reading frequency: Fewer than 3 in 10 (28.0%) children and young people aged 8 to 18 said that they read daily. (*Annual Literacy Survey from children and young people aged 5 to 18, National Literacy trust 2022*).

Impact of reading on wellbeing

Research from the National Literacy Trust has found that “children who enjoy reading are three times more likely to have good mental wellbeing than children who don’t. Among adults, research has found that regular readers for pleasure are less likely to experience feelings of stress and depression than non-readers”. (*National Literacy Trust, 2018*)

Safer Schools Officer

All secondary schools have an appointed Safer Schools Officer (SSO).

Ashley College's SSO is Nick Garner. Nick has worked with us for 2 years. The role of SSO is designed to:-

Develop positive relationships between young people and the Police.
Provide visible reassurance before, during and after school.

Work alongside the school and parents in early intervention, preventing young people becoming either victims or perpetrators of crime.

Liaise with partners and other policing departments to deter young people becoming involved with any negative influences that might be within the local area. Encourage young people to use their leisure time wisely.

Nick's work with the students at Ashley College complements our PSHCE programme by offering a legal perspective. This term, he delivered a session on consent that linked to the work Brook Advisory did on the same topic under the 'Healthy Relationships' remit.

We look forward to welcoming Nick back in the Spring term when he will support the work we are doing on the dangers of drugs, bringing in the legal perspective.



An infographic titled 'Tackling tough times together' with a teal background. It features a large white pound sterling symbol (£) in the center. Surrounding it are several circular callouts: 'SUPPORTING YOU WITH THE COST OF LIVING' (top left), 'Six tips to help with rising costs' (bottom left), and 'Tackling tough times together' (right). A QR code with the text 'SCAN ME' is at the bottom left. At the bottom, it says 'Find out more at: www.brent.gov.uk/costofliving' and the Brent logo is in the bottom right corner.

Sparx Maths

I am delighted to announce that we are now using Sparx Maths (<https://sparx.co.uk/>) as our new homework platform for mathematics homework for the remainder of this academic year.

Sparx is similar to our current platform, Hegarty Maths but provides students with more personalised practice to improve and challenge their mathematical thinking depending on their current level. Each homework will consist of current knowledge and skills being studied in class as well as revisiting previous learning.

Students have been introduced to Sparx in their maths lessons and were shown how to log in and use the platform. Each student has been given a Sparx Maths homework book in which their homework should be completed. It is vital that students show their written work for their homework.

Students will be expected to complete one hour of compulsory maths homework each week. There is also the opportunity to complete additional homework called 'XP boost' and 'Target'. There is also the option for students to access independent learning where they can access work on any topic they choose whenever they wish.

Students are rewarded for effort regardless of the level they are working at. We will be closely monitoring the Sparx Maths leader board and providing rewards for students who show outstanding effort and achievement.

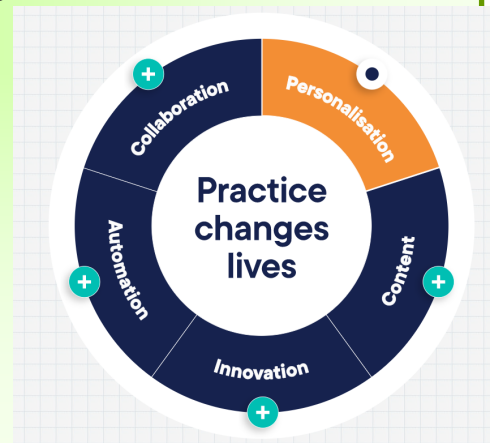
Please see the links below for more information about Sparx Maths.

Parent video

https://f.hubspotusercontent30.net/hubfs/5530880/KB%20Resources%20Summer%202021/Parent%20video_v2.mp4

Student video

<https://f.hubspotusercontent30.net/hubfs/5530880/KB%20Resources%20Summer%202021/Sparx%20Homework%20for%20students.mp4>



End of Term Trip

The pupils chose to see Matilda as their end of term trip. An event enjoyed by all.

*I enjoyed the trip as it was the first one since 4 years
I also enjoyed the film as it was a musical and
teaches us about the value in school Druv*

*I had lots of fun at the cinema trip, and it was really
nice to get a relaxing trip at
the end of term. I also thing
it heled me with being plac-
es I haven't been to before.
Dani*

*This musical an outstanding experi-
ence. The music and songs were fan-
tastic! Tasha*

*It was fun, I never went on a trip
at my mainstream so I enjoyed
this one. Raliya*

*I enjoyed going to the cinema and watching the movie.
The trip was entertaining and it was nice to be with the
others in comfortable seats with the snacks and drink.
Would be a good trip in the future to see an action mov-
ie for a change. Chris*

*I enjoyed the cinema a lot it was very
fun. I am very grateful for the popcorn
and drink that the school got us. Thank
you! Skye*



Wellbeing Activities for Staff and Pupils

This term our Office Manager, Christine, delivered a wonderful wellbeing session for staff, making Christmas wreaths or table arrangements. This activity was appreciated by all. Staff thought it so good that the following day we decided to run a session with our pupils as well. Pupils and staff took their creations home and gifted them to their friends and families



'I really enjoyed the flower arranging. It made me feel very positive about my college courses, and it took my mind off my worries. I really liked that we were guided through it, but still given space to make it our own.' Dani



A great staff session! Teacher



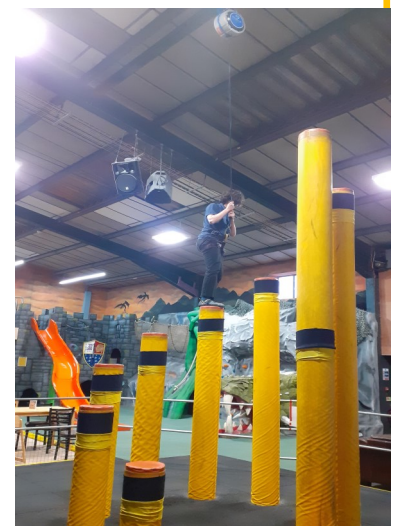
It was therapeutic and soothing, really satisfying and cheered me up a lot! Teacher

Harrow Climbing Wall

The climbing wall is an incredible way of helping students push personal boundaries and overcome fear in a safe, supported environment. Our students, sometimes reluctant to participate at first, have done very well this term and you could be mistaken for thinking they were giant spiders, not Ashley College pupils! Thank you to our marvellous instructor!



I really enjoyed the climbing wall because I'm afraid of heights and it helped to build my confidence. I also think it helped get better at dealing with unfamiliar situations, like the caves and having the people change often. Dani



We had lots of fun. I would highly recommend for anyone any age. It was very organised, very safe, everyone had a lot of space because it was huge. The staff were really nice and they made me feel happy. Tasha



Supporting parents and carers

Our quick and effective snowflake activity can help families display how they are feeling then reflect and discuss this together. If you are experiencing loss this Christmas, visit our Parents A- Z guide for information and advice.

[Visit their Parents A-Z guide](#)

You will also find some activities that you and your child can do over the holidays, inside of this newsletter.

Parents A-Z guide to support

Our A-Z guide gives you advice on how to help your child with their feelings and behaviour, as well as mental health conditions and life events. We'll also show you where you can get help.

CW+, the official charity of Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, has recently launched **Best For You**, a new patient-centred model of care to help the increasing numbers of young people and families requiring urgent mental health support. Best For You combines and integrates specialist medical and mental health care with community services and digital tools to provide comprehensive, rapid and long-term care in a way that best meets the needs of the individual and their family.

<https://www.cwplus.org.uk/best-for-you/>

BEST FOR YOU



Healthy London Partnership

Healthy London Partnership (HLP) has launched a campaign to raise awareness among young people and their families of London's free NHS mental health crisis lines. The campaign has been developed with feedback and input from young people and parents, and will be largely based on social media, and for use in education and community settings, GP surgeries, etc.

In response to an increase in number of young people needing urgent mental health support, every mental health trust in London has put in place a free crisis line, supported by trained mental health advisors and clinicians which is open 365 days a year.

A toolkit of the social media assets, posters, and articles for school's own publications and website can be downloaded here. <https://www.healthylondon.org/our-work/resources/>

Brent's Holiday Activities and Food Programme!

The Christmas Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme is taking place in Brent throughout the school Christmas holidays in 2022.

The programme is funded by the Department for Education and aims to support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, by providing free places at school holiday provision, alongside a healthy meal each day, to Brent children and young people in Reception – Year 11 who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals or who have been identified as otherwise in need of the programme. Details on eligibility, available activities, and booking information can be found on [Brent's HAF website](#).

Most HAF eligible families will receive confirmation of their eligibility via their school holiday supermarket voucher email. Professionals working with eligible children and young people can also refer eligible children to the programme directly, by providing them with written confirmation of eligibility. For further information on eligibility criteria and referring children and young people to the programme, please visit the following page: <https://www.brent.gov.uk/haf#providers>.

If you have any questions or queries related to the programme, please contact HAF@brent.gov.uk



Building Confidence for the Future

Important dates for the Spring Term

Wednesday 3rd January 2023 - Students return to School.

Wednesday 11th January 2023 - Parent/Carer Progress Review and Target Setting Day @ 2:30pm – 6.30pm.

HALF TERM : MONDAY 13TH FEBRUARY – FRIDAY 17TH FEBRUARY

Wednesday 1st March, 2023 - Year 11 Parents' Evening. @ 2:30pm – 6.30pm.

END OF SPRING TERM : Friday 31st March 2023

For Activities over the holidays and outside of school hours for pupils with ASD please visit the BOAT website:

www.brent.gov.uk/boat

Or contact them :

boat@brent.gov.uk



NSPCC 
HELPLINE
0808 800 5000
help@nspcc.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK
REBUILDING LIVES TOGETHER

Support and advice from bereaved young people, for bereaved young people.

Tel: 0800 02 888 40

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/get-support>

ASHLEY COLLEGE

ASHLEY GARDENS

WEMBLEY HA9 8NP

Tel: 020 8937 3330

Email: admin@ashleycollege.brent.sch.uk

ChildLine
0800 1111 

When there is adverse weather, don't forget to check our website for information about school opening at:

www.ashleycollege.brent.sch.uk

Wishing you all a peaceful holiday and a happy new year. We look forward to seeing you all on :

Tuesday 3rd January 2023