



Bishopstrow College - Term 1 Newsletter

Greetings from the Principal

No one will be surprised if I described this as an exceptional term. In some respects, it is a term unlike any other in my 30+ years of teaching.

It might surprise many people to learn that this term has been exceptional for being such a good term and, in many respects, as good as any other in my 30+ years of teaching! Whilst there have been some extraordinary challenges in redesigning the way we operate to cope with the threat of Covid-19, the changes we have made have resulted in a different, but still first-class educational environment at Bishopstrow.

As we reflect on the end of Term 1, I can say with great confidence that students at Bishopstrow have been happier, healthier, and enjoyed a standard of all-round education that compares with the best available anywhere, at any time. For those on campus, the restrictions we placed on travel, in order to minimise the chance of interactions with anyone carrying the infection, have created so much time where students have been able to enjoy other educational activities on the campus. They have been able to spend far more time learning outdoors, and have had far more fresh air, exercise and daylight, all factors that are known to contribute to improved mental well-being, as well as physical health. Fresh air and exercise have been recommended for generations, but there is explicit research evidence these days that supports both the psychological and physiological benefits. Here at Bishopstrow this term, I have no doubt that we have experienced them.

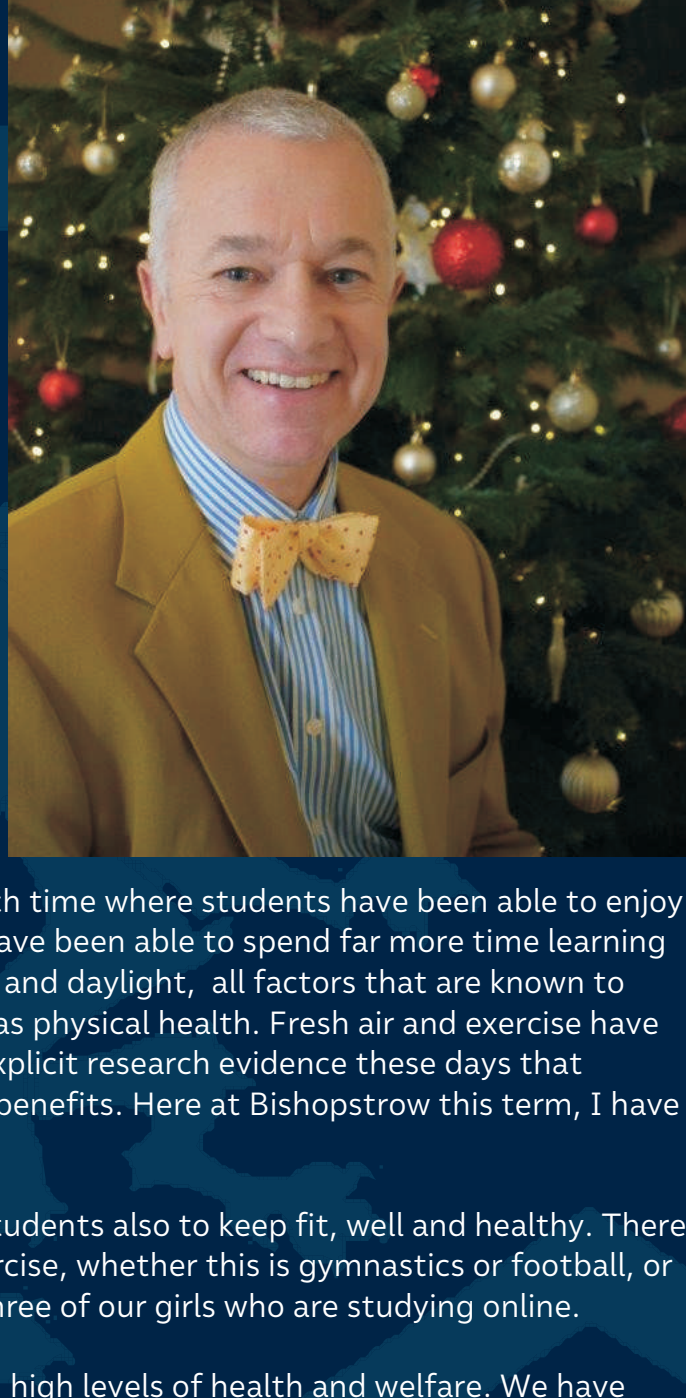
In the same way, we have encouraged our online students also to keep fit, well and healthy. There is also time in their school day for fresh air and exercise, whether this is gymnastics or football, or the passion for cricket that we know is shared by three of our girls who are studying online.

On campus, we have never known a term with such high levels of health and welfare. We have scarcely even had to open the medicine cabinet; we have had extremely low rates of minor ailments that keep people out of class and we know from monitoring the boarding house that students are sleeping better, and all of this has contributed to them learning most effectively, most happily, and most quickly.

So, Bishopstrow College in the Autumn of 2020 has been a fantastic time and it has been a delight to share this term with such delightful young people who have responded with energy and enthusiasm to all the additional educational activities that the constraints have ironically enabled us to provide. It has also been a pleasure to work with such dedicated staff who have offered such an enormous range of educational activities, throughout the week and at weekends.

With my best wishes for a very happy Christmas and for a healthy, safe and happy 2021.

Stuart Nicholson
Principal



The Act of Remembrance 2020

On 11 November, I took an assembly with all our students to explain to them about the annual Act of Remembrance that takes place at 11.00 am on 11th November each year in the UK, and in many former Commonwealth countries around the world.

I took with me some of the beautiful poppies that students had made for the striking art installation that was displayed at the entrance to the College during Remembrance Week. This installation of 100 individually handmade poppies was so impressive that it featured on the "spotted in Warminster" website and we even had visitors coming to Bishopstrow village to take photographs of the array of beautiful poppies. Our online students contributed in exactly the same way as our on-campus students, as their poppy designs had been scanned and sent to the College for printing, and their work was an integral part of the whole design.

I explained to our students how the Act of Remembrance had come to mean something to me when I had got to know well some "old boys" of another school who had been school students during World War II. I explained that the Act of Remembrance was about "not forgetting", and how clear it had been that these "old boys", who at the time I knew them were all in their 60s or 70s, had clearly never forgotten their school friends who had fought and died in the Second World War. Our students respectfully observed the two-minute silence and understood my request to them that they find a way in their adult lives of settling national differences without descending into war.

Stuart Nicholson
Principal

An Unusual Start in Boarding

This was certainly an unusual start of term, given the restrictions of the current coronavirus pandemic. The large selection of weekend extracurricular activities normally on offer at Bishopstrow College had to be greatly limited, and extra precautions put in place. The resident boarding staff created an outstanding programme of activities and excursions that provided great stimulation and enjoyment to all students.

At Bishopstrow we are blessed by being surrounded by natural landscapes of outstanding beauty and many important historical and geographical sites, with wonderful wildlife at our doorstep, ranging from squirrels and rabbits to pheasants and deer in the grounds of the College. Students have loved getting to know our stunning setting.

The traditional start of term walk at Bishopstrow is Middle Hill, a very popular destination for walkers locally. Our next walk took us slightly further afield to the Longleat Estate. We started at a well-known local beauty spot, called Shear Water Lake (Shearwater). When we reached the end, we went through to Heaven's Gate, which is a fantastic viewing point overlooking Longleat House (the residence of the Marquess of Bath) and grounds. After some refreshments and photographs, we jumped on to the minibus back to school.

Later in the term, we visited Cley Hill, which was once part of the Longleat Estate and was entrusted to the National Trust by the 6th Marquess of Bath. The students enjoyed extensive views of West Wiltshire and Somerset, as well as the fresh air and the opportunity to explore another part of Bishopstrow's local surroundings.

Finally, towards the end of term and on a pleasant Sunday morning, all the Bishopstrow residents headed out on a walk towards Warminster Lake Pleasure Grounds. The local park boasts a beautiful green area, tennis courts, children play area and a boating lake. Whilst admiring the Autumnal colours and the beautiful family of swans and cygnets, the students also had the opportunity to become more familiar with the local area.



Lockdown Fun

As England entered a 4 weeks lockdown period between 5 November and 2 December, the already limited possibilities of travelling outside the College, were reduced further. But this did not stop the fun! Our resourceful resident boarding staff created an array of amazing activities for the students. Mr Botsford and Mr Ravenhill taught the students how to construct a bonfire on a secure location in the College grounds (a tradition reminiscent of Guy Fawkes Bonfire Night, which was sadly cancelled this year due to the lockdown), and Mr Dando hosted an amazing Ping Pong tournament which ran during the whole lockdown period.



The newer members of the boarding team, Miss Abrahams, Miss Boldy and Miss Grist rose to the challenge of creating ever more complex and fun activities for the pupils, including a recycled fashion show, a variety of quizzes and verbal challenges, and exciting movie nights.

The students also embraced the opportunity to spend more time relaxing and revising; enjoying time together and getting to know each other better. All of this contributed to a very happy atmosphere in boarding. A great win-win situation, and an amazing silver lining during these difficult times.

Sketchbooks and Family Trees

Junior and Middle College students were given sketchbooks at the start of term to fill with drawings that represented who they are. Led by our artistically gifted Miss Boldy, students began by decorating front covers and then created their own family trees and self-portraits. These activities were a fantastic way for the students to open up about their families, their hobbies and get to know one another better.

Yoga, Zumba and Dance Moves

As part of the evening extra-curricular programme, students have been introduced to a variety of alternative physical activities. Many participated enthusiastically in Zumba and Yoga sessions led by the boarding team. On Tuesday evenings, Middle and Senior College students had the opportunity to join Miss Grist and Miss Abrahams in some relaxing yoga. At the weekends, the Senior girls got involved in dance, which the boys soon discovered, deciding to join in the fun. Dance moves were put to the test at the Christmas Party dance competition later in the term.

Reading - Weekend Extended Reading & Juniors' Bedtime Reading Hour

Each week, students have been encouraged to develop their English skills by reading books during the weekend. Students were provided with a large range of level and age appropriate books on a variety of topics. Supported by the resident staff, students loved the relaxed quiet opportunity to discover the many classics.

Our younger students have been entertained at bedtime with some of the most beloved British bedtime stories, including Donaldson & Sheffler's 'Gruffalo', the 'Gruffalo's Child', and 'Zog'. The last week of term was dedicated to 'Stick Man', which has a very Christmas feeling to it, featuring a friendly Santa Claus. The children loved reading the stories, getting to know the characters, picking up the rhythm of the rhymes and finally watching the beautiful animated films. A real homely treat for all, with students and staff loving the experience.



Bishopstrow Core Values - A Day in the Life of ...

As the term progressed and some students were growing a little tired of each other, our own Acting Head of Sport and Resident Boarding Tutor, Mr Fleming reminded the students how to put in to practice the 5 Virtues of the College: Being Kind, Polite, Hard-working, Organised, and a Team Player. In a fun and interactive session, Mr Fleming walked the students through a Typical Day in the Life of Mr Fleming, where all the virtues of the College were amply displayed, offering students ideas for self-reflection and opportunities to understand how to apply the College's core values to their own daily routine.

Later in the term, Mr Dando, our Deputy Head of Boarding, delivered a moving session on universal values of respect, acceptance and inclusiveness, featuring his own blended family. Focussing on our international group of students, coming from a variety of countries and backgrounds, Mr Dando discussed the appropriate ways to use language and informed the students of unacceptable words which sadly are still present in some films or slang in society, but which have no place in a civilised, kind and respectful society, like the one we foster and support at Bishopstrow College.

Team Building Activities: Orienteering & Marshmallow Tower Challenge

For one of the very first team building activities of the term, the Juniors and Middles took part in a 'Bishopstrow Orienteering Challenge'. They were put into teams of mixed ability with the aim of using maps to find letters that would form school-related words. The best teams shared their tasks efficiently in order to find and complete their words within the time limit. We hope to do some more orienteering in Term 2, when we can make the most of the good weather and the students can build upon their map reading skills.

Students also put their teamwork and construction skills to the test with the Marshmallow Tower Challenge! The Juniors and Middles paired up to create their towers, using only marshmallows and spaghetti. This was a great success, with the tallest tower reaching 78 cm!

Physical Education Lessons

This term, students were able to participate in a variety of traditional British sports. We remained on campus for the whole term which meant all students had use of the extensive onsite sports facilities and College grounds. This however resulted in the students having to contend with the typical British weather for this time of the year; not surprisingly, they did so with joy and enthusiasm! The students were also able to revel in competition, participating in 2 weeks of thrilling inter-house competition, culminating in the Sports House of the Term. We would like to thank all of the students, who have contributed to this term being "one of the best" for sport at Bishopstrow!

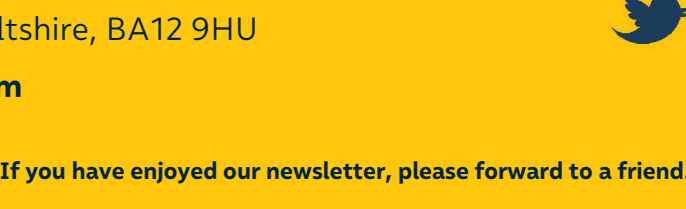
Christmas at Bishopstrow

To end the term on a high and happy note, all students joyfully enjoyed the last weekend of term by participating in many fun activities. Some of our gifted musicians learned how to play Christmas carols and the music resounded in Barrow House for several weeks!

As tradition intended, the Christmas tree was decorated on the first Sunday of Advent. Students used all the amazing decorations they had produced during the past couple of weeks to adorn the stunning 8 foot fir tree placed in the reception area of Barrow House. The beautiful tree started a season of celebration, and it certainly added to the festive spirit.

The Great Christmas Bake Off!

In the run up to December, students were given a taste of traditional gingerbread biscuits baked by the little school mascot, Thomas, the 3 year old son of Mr and Mrs Ravenhill. Infused with the Christmas spirit, and wanting to eat some good goodies, students jumped at the opportunity to bake their own delicacies. To celebrate the first Sunday of Advent on 30 November, all students rolled up their sleeves and embraced baking Christmas spiced cupcakes, inspired by British and Swedish traditions! Mrs Ravenhill and Mr Botsford led the keen happy bakers, who all displayed amazing baking skills, and produced moreish delectable cupcakes. The fragrant products of their effort was a resounding success with all, and a welcomed addition to the students' evening and snack time. Even the staff had an opportunity to sample some cupcakes to accompany their morning cup of tea!



Kindness Advent Calendars

Inspired by our own Bishopstrow core virtues, the students designed and produced their own advent calendars, focusing on small acts of kindness. In the run up to the end of term and continuing until Christmas Day, students will have the opportunity to reflect on their own actions of kindness. Students loved the crafting activity and enjoyed planning the countdown to the end of term and the holiday season.

Christmas Dinner

More Christmas celebrations were afoot by the time the last week of term arrived. On the last Wednesday, on the eve of their departure for the holidays, students were treated to a formal 3 course sit down traditional Christmas Dinner.

Created by our exceptional resident chefs, students sampled traditional turkey and trimmings, "pigs in blankets", Yorkshire pudding and traditional seasonal Christmas pudding. Christmas crackers, mince pies and jolly Christmas carols, in addition to the Boarding Alternative Awards, contributed to a wonderful festive celebration, ending a couple of weeks of great festivities on a high note.

Place Availability for Term 2 - Term 4

We still have some availability in Terms 2, 3 and 4, and on our Academic Summer Programmes across all age groups, although space is now limited.

Our Programmes have English language at their core, but are also complemented by a varied programme of other core subjects, creative arts, sports, social programmes and excursions to ensure that students have a stimulating and rewarding experience with us.

We will continue with Bishopstrow Online until the end of Term 3 for those who are unable or unwilling to travel to the UK, so please do ask if you have any questions and we would be delighted to assist.

Please contact Mark Jeaynes, on enquiries@bishopstrow.com who will be delighted to help.

We would like to take this opportunity of thanking all those who have supported us over the last year and hope that you all stay safe and well, have an enjoyable break and prosperous 2021.

