



**HERMITAGE  
ACADEMY**

# WINTER NEWSLETTER

December 2020

## Dear parents, carers and friends

It has been a momentous year for the whole country. At about this same time last year, we watched events unfold in Wuhan as the virus took hold. No-one imagined the catastrophic events that would overtake us. Now a year later, we are hearing news of a vaccine that brings us immense hope again for the future and we are grateful to those scientists who have been working tirelessly for this breakthrough.

Our students have been through a lot, and so much change has happened, that it is at times difficult to comprehend! Systems in school are very complex and controlled, yet our students are coping magnificently (although longing for normality). We are so proud of them.

When we reflect on the lockdown period, as difficult as it was for so many, we did feel that we were able to work very closely with you and build strong relationships. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for engaging with us during the turbulent period. Together we are working on establishing a culture where kindness and compassion are at the forefront of our relationships with each other. This is vital in the social media world, where things can rapidly become unkind and we thank those parents who are keeping a close watch on this difficult terrain!

This year we have celebrated the twelve days of Christmas with displays, carols, festive films, a craft

fair and a traditional Christmas lunch! Mrs McMullen, Miss Hall and Dr Willis have done wonders in creating a choir performance with one student filmed at a time! Some of our students have also participated in a local church virtual service. It's amazing what socially distanced things we have managed to get up to and the students have thoroughly enjoyed them.

There have been crimes against fashion as Christmas jumpers, ties and socks were donned to raise money for charity. Our local care homes, we hope, have enjoyed our students' lovely singing via our social media channels at a time when our students would normally be visiting the residents.

Fundamentally, Christmas is about family and a time for making memories, excitement, and fun. We also always remember those for whom it is a difficult time.

All those connected to Hermitage Academy are a crucial part of a wider family and we want to wish you all a very Merry Christmas, as we recognise and value every one of you, and hope for good health and happiness for all in 2021.

**Darren Stewart**

Head of School

**Dr Janice Gorlach**

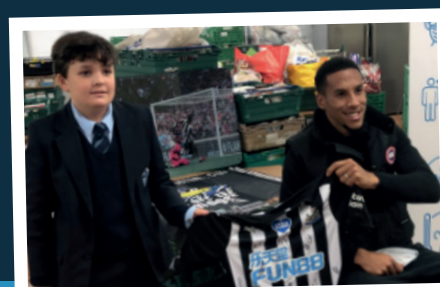
Executive Headteacher

## Thoughtful student cares for his community

**Earlier this year following a trip to Newcastle, Year 7 student George, asked for donations and Greggs meal deal vouchers for his birthday so he could donate them to the homeless people he had seen in Newcastle.**

During October half term, George and his family were able to deliver over £200 worth of vouchers to the Newcastle Foodbank. George bought some meal deals and gave them to some very appreciative people on Northumberland Street in Newcastle. Newcastle Foodbank contacted the family and invited them along to meet Newcastle United Football Club player, Isaac Hayden, who regularly donates to the foodbank.

We were delighted to hear the news, which once again shows how kind and caring our families are!



# Meet the babies

Meet our staff's little bundles of joy, born over the last academic year... bringing hope and happiness at such a turbulent time!



## We're social!

Follow our social media accounts to stay up to date with all of the latest news from around the Academy!



@hermitage\_acad



@hermitageacad

## IMPORTANT DATES for your diary

Due to the uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic, we cannot commit to any fixed school events at the moment.

Please keep checking our website and social media channels for the latest updates.



## Keeping our children safe whilst online

Due to increased time spent indoors, our children and young people may have been spending more time than usual online.

We understand that it is hard for parents and carers to keep up with the latest games, apps and social media, however the NSPCC have created a very handy tool to help stay informed of the risks involved.

It also includes useful information such as age rating as well as top tips for usage and staying safe.

[www.net-aware.org.uk](http://www.net-aware.org.uk)



## Our very festive kitchen staff really are providing the Christmas cheer!



With Christmas music playing in the dining hall and the smell of turkey in the air our students and staff have experienced a real festive treat.

Students and staff have had an amazing Christmas lunch this year and are so grateful for the opportunity to have a little get together (socially distanced and safely... of course!) Festive tablecloths were laid and decorations placed to really get everyone in the festive spirit.

Thank you to all those involved and for all your hard work during this turbulent period. We have all been well fed and looked after by our fantastic catering team and for that we are truly grateful!



## Student success!

This term, we have launched our 'Monday Marvels' and 'Great Eights' initiatives to celebrate the many successes of our brilliant Year 7 and 8 students.

The idea behind the Monday Marvels initiative is to celebrate the fantastic work our Year 7 students are doing both in lessons and in the school community. Monday marvels are students who give 100% effort in everything we ask, demonstrate fantastic behaviour and who are great role models to their peers.

Alongside Year 7, we have launched Great Eights, a weekly celebration of students who have demonstrated consistently high standards of work in lessons and who have gone above and beyond with a particular task or been a great ambassador or role model for their subject. We awarded our first Great Eights in November and look forward to celebrating more students each week. We will be launching more initiatives very soon!



## The show must go on!

**It has been a challenging year for all of us and the drama and dance department have had to be particularly imaginative in creating practical lessons that are fun, purposeful and covid-safe.**

We love running extra-curricular clubs and activities for our students and were devastated when we had to cancel our planned 2020 production of Hairspray. We have been limited in what we can offer in the way of extra-curricular activities this term, however, we are delighted to say that we have been able to take some tentative steps towards re-starting our drama and dance clubs for our younger students.

We have trialled the clubs for Year 7 and 8 students this term with numbers kept strictly limited and year groups kept separate. The studios are well-ventilated and activities do not involve close contact or movement which requires deep breathing.

Drama clubs have been exploring improvisation and dramatic styles and dance clubs have been working on a Christmas themed dance which we hope to film and present on the school website – look out for it!

We would like to extend clubs to include Year 9 students in the new year, but this will depend on available space at lunch times. We hope to work towards drama and dance films and, fingers crossed, begin plans for a live production for the summer.

If you have any questions about the clubs please contact Mrs Johnson or Mr Lauder.

**A big thank you to everyone who took part in the Christmas cake raffle, we have raised £125 for the local hospice! Thanks so much for Ms Carruthers for organising (and her mum for baking the delicious cakes!).**



## Christmas crafts

**Every year group has been busy in the run up to the end of term creating some seasonal Christmas crafts to get in the festive spirit!**

Each year group had the opportunity to come to the library after school and make some tree decorations and festive cards. Our Year 7 students really got into the Christmas spirit and made some lovely pieces to take home to family and friends.

Mrs Dixon would like to wish all of our crafters a very happy Christmas!

## Christmas card competition

Our students really showed off their artistic talent in our 'Twelve Days of Christmas' Christmas card competition. The entries came flooding in and it was extremely difficult to narrow them down. We have some very talented artists at Hermitage Academy, that's for sure. The students really loved being involved and it was a pleasure to review so many thoughtful ideas.



## It won't be lonely this Christmas...

**Normally at this time of the year our students are found singing their hearts out at our local care homes and making the day of many elderly residents. Sadly, this year we are unable to do this, but we still wanted to find a way to reach out.**

Students across all year groups have very kindly written some messages of good will to the residents. Some letters included poems and the students shared funny stories to bring a smile to the faces of the residents. We really hope they enjoy the letters and we promise to be back singing just as soon as we can!

## Creative writing

**As part of our 'Twelve Days of Christmas' activities, the English department ran a creative writing competition entitled 'Christmas of the Future'.**

Students were tasked writing the opening of a short story describing what Christmas might be like in 2050. The responses were amazing!

It was so difficult to select the winners but a huge congratulations goes out to: Jumanha in Year 7, Leah in Year 8, Molly and Adanna in Year 9 and Jordan in Year 10!



## JOKE CORNER

Who tells the best Christmas jokes?

Reindeer. They sleigh every time.



# Say hello to our new members of staff!

## Miss Stevenson

I have joined the science department this year. I studied equine science at university and spent part of my degree studying abroad in Pennsylvania. Since then, I've spent some time with horses and then with a primary Year 6 class. I'm a biologist and have a fascination with anatomy, which is made even more interesting when you get to chop things up! I look forward to seeing you all in science soon!

## Miss Wolland

I have joined the MFL department, teaching both French and Spanish. Before starting my teaching career five years ago, I was lucky enough to spend some time working abroad. I worked as an English language assistant in Malaga and also as a holiday courier working in the north of France. I have really enjoyed my time at the Academy so far and I look forward to sharing my love for languages with you all.

## Mr Teasdale

I have been a teacher of ICT and computer science for over 12 years. During that time, I have spent 10 years as a teacher at Prudhoe Community High School and two years as a head of ICT and computer science at Seaham High School. Computer science has always been a passion and led me to study internet computing at Northumbria University. Since graduating I have also completed a PGCE at Sunderland University and a M.Ed in practitioner enquiry at Newcastle University. Computer science and ICT are such exciting subjects to teach. The digital landscape is always changing it is becoming increasingly important to be confident using digital technologies in a range of situations and environments.

## Miss Taylor

I am the new ICT and computer science teacher here at the Academy. I have spent the past six years in schools whilst working for the North East Learning Trust, working in the communications and marketing department. I have really enjoyed my first term at Hermitage especially getting to know my students (special shout out to my form class 7H who are just wonderful!). I look forward to continuing to share my love of technology with all my students and (hopefully) making ICT/computer science one of their favourite lessons!

## Mrs Barnes

Taking on the role of head of English has been everything I expected and more - staff have been welcoming, students are motivated and inquisitive, and I've even managed to make my way around the maze of corridors without getting lost (well, not too often). I look forward to working with staff and parents alike in the coming years to ensure that the English department supports every student to achieve and flourish on their academic journey.

## Miss Hannon

I'm the new second in science. I moved up to the North East this summer from near Sheffield. I'm really excited about living close to the seaside as it has always been about three hours away everywhere else I've lived! I studied physics at university for three years and one of my favourite topics to teach is astrophysics (space!). I'm looking forward to seeing you all in the science corridor soon!

## Mrs Turner

I join the Academy after being assistant headteacher at a school in Hartlepool, head of sixth form in Essex and head of business studies in West Yorkshire. As assistant headteacher, I am excited to be part of a great team, working together to shape the future of Hermitage Academy. My role focuses on developing teaching and learning at the school. I have the privilege of visiting many classes and seeing a variety of lessons across all subjects. Everyone has been so welcoming, and I feel part of the community already.

## Miss McKenzie

2020 was a year of big changes for me. I was supposed to be moving house, starting a new job and getting married. Unfortunately, only 2/3 things happened due to obvious COVID situation (still Miss for now!) but, luckily, starting at Hermitage Academy was one of them. After working at Teesdale School for the last three years I have enjoyed the transition to a bigger community at Hermitage Academy. As well as being a maths teacher I am very musical and in my spare time enjoy playing the piano and trombone as part of a band.

## Mrs Armstrong

I started my teaching career at Thorp Academy as an NQT 16 years ago. I have experience working within pastoral and also as second in department. I decided (after hitting the big 40!) that this had to be the year I jumped into a new chapter of my career. What a change it has been, but I have felt so welcomed by the staff at Hermitage. I feel excited by the opportunity to help develop our Hermitage maths department and I am looking forward to being part of the future successes that are to come.

# Keep making MUSIC!

## Christmas community carol service



The parish of St. Mary and St. Cuthbert held a contemporary carol service on facebook, on Sunday 13 December. We are delighted that recordings of our students singing were used in the service.

Well done to every musician who has worked hard to prepare and record a piece. A special mention for Year 8

student, Rebecca Meacher, who was selected to deliver one of the readings about the story of Christmas.

## Year 7 musicians!

Year 7 students have shown real enthusiasm for music this term and we have seen a lot of young talent in our fortnightly lessons.

Working safely in bubbles, students have performed many pieces of music on the keyboard, learnt more about the different elements of music and created their own pieces using the Ignite programme to edit their work. Here are some of the things they have said...

**Marcus:** "I love the keyboard and it has inspired me. I now love music and can read some notes."

**Casey:** "The best thing in music is when you can show the class what you have learned during the lesson."

**Aisha:** "I love my lessons because making your own music is impressive. I never thought I could do it before now."

**Oliver:** "My passion is music. I now understand so much more and I like listening to different music and learning to do more."

**Cameron:** "It's fun coming into lessons and learning music."

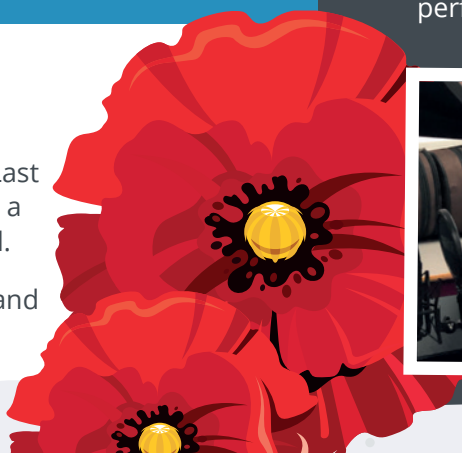
**Olivia:** "I get to play the piano which I love and it has boosted my confidence in playing."

## Remembrance Day

Remembrance Day was particularly poignant this year for everyone. One of our talented Year 13 students, Sarah Heeley, delivered a stunning

performance of the Last Post on her cornet in a central part of school.

The school was still, and we remembered.



## Violin lessons

We were delighted to have some fabulous violins donated to school during the summer. Our violin teacher, Mr Stokoe, has started violin lessons with a small group and we are looking for more students to begin lessons in January. If you are interested, please see Mrs McMullen or Miss Hall.



## Live music making!

We can't wait to all be singing again, the time will come soon! In the meantime, we have been rehearsing with some super soloists and socially distanced small groups so that we can continue with our 'live music making'.

A special well done goes to the Year 10 and Year 11 GCSE music students who have produced some quality performances!

