



The Dixie Grammar School
Nursery • Junior • Senior

This year has been full of enormous challenge in school and it has been inspiring to witness the mutual support of the whole Dixie community. I am proud of the manner in which staff, parents and pupils have risen to the unique challenges of 2020 and in the end of term reports at the Senior School, I was delighted to read reports of the fantastic academic progress made this term despite the many challenges. Remote access to and recording of lessons has enabled Dixie students from 3-18 to thrive, no matter what their circumstances. That we have largely remained unaffected by Covid-19 in school is testament to the vigilance and cooperation of parents, sensible behaviour and understanding of students and capacity, resilience and forbearance of staff – teaching and support. We will of course engage with the proposed testing in school in January, with its chief purpose to protect students' education and academic progress.

As Martin Luther King Jr said: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. Nothing worthwhile is easy. Your ability to overcome unfavourable situations will provide you with time to demonstrate your true strength and determination for success. Always set your standards high, your greatest achievements lie within the infinite feats you achieve in your life."

Dixie standards remain high and our School Development Plan lacks no ambition in light of Covid-19. Along with further exploiting opportunities offered by remote education, we have further invested in iPads at the Junior School, are redesigning the Year 6 curriculum for next year, have introduced a 2021 Diversity calendar through collaboration with alumni, are updating the Early Years outdoors space, are looking to introduce bee-keeping at the Junior School and are planning a new Sixth Form Centre for 2021.

Our website, Facebook and Twitter feeds are regularly updated with news and photos reflecting the vibrancy of Dixie school life. Alongside festive photos and updates, this newsletter includes important information relating to regulatory and other change.



I am delighted that our music department found a way to continue to give pupils the opportunity to perform - if you have missed any of the productions, the Senior [Christmas Spectacular](#), [Carol Service](#) and [Junior Christmas Concert](#) are available via the links. The Senior School [final assembly](#) of the term was filmed in real time on the last morning of term (Christmas Jumper Day for Action Homeless), switching from my front room to the assembly hall and broadcast to all classrooms in school. Thank you to the Sixth Form who joined remotely!

Non-uniform days are a valuable way to raise the profile of our chosen charities. Last half term I am delighted that thanks to your support, the Dixie community raised well over £1000 for local charities, including an impressive £629 for Alice's Arc and £412 for the Childhood Cancer and Leukaemia Group—both charities close to our hearts.



From Mrs Billington:

The Junior School and Pippins have had a different but wonderful Autumn term. Although existing in bubbles is so different to our normal school life, the children have adapted without question. Despite being unable to take part in the usual transition activities, they settled beautifully and quickly demonstrated their resilience and hard work.

Specialist teaching and learning has carried on and themes and activities have continued. The Reception children were delighted to start their school year in their new building which has lived up to our expectations as an ideal learning environment for the children. We have also had the addition of more iPad and iPad minis for use across the school - to date we have had green screen weather reporting and titanic reports to name a few.

Mrs Tedds joined us at the start of the school year as a Teaching Assistant across the school and is already very well known to the children - not least for her creative and artistic skills. We were also delighted to have Mrs Dockrell return as a permanent member of staff in Pippins and likewise Mrs Long.

Whilst the sporting calendar has been dramatically depleted regarding tournaments and fixtures, Miss Dicksee and Mr Vernon have been working with the children on their fitness levels and understanding. The Inter-House Cross Country still went ahead and Lancaster were victorious. Reception class certainly ran in the harshest weather conditions and any white trainers are white no more!

While trips and visits have been reduced I am delighted that Year 3 still managed to visit the Roman Lunt Fort and that Year 4 went to Skern Lodge. We hope that the next two terms will see many more educational visits return.



As we move towards Christmas I hope you have managed to find time to enjoy the Junior School and Pippin's Christmas Concert. Whilst we have greatly missed our Church service this year; watching the children perform carols using Makaton just shows how we have worked hard not to let restrictions hold us back. I am pleased that our youngest pupils still got to meet Santa via Zoom and our older pupils enjoyed the online Panto with ice cream in the interval!

The Dixie Community has not only come together to support one another this term but also other charities. We were overwhelmed by the sheer amount of items donated for the Food Bank and I am delighted to share that so far over £400 has been donated to our chosen Christmas Charities - a big thank you.



The Dixie Grammar School
Nursery • Junior • Senior





The Dixie Grammar School
Nursery • Junior • Senior





The Dixie Grammar School

Nursery • Junior • Senior

From Ms Young : Deputy Head, Senior School

As parents will be aware, there are a great number of policies and procedures which govern School life from Admissions to Whistleblowing and from Data Protection to First Aid. Every year new regulations are issued with regards to these policies and there is a continual cycle of reviewing and evaluating these policies to ensure that they reflect accurately our procedures in school and are up to date in terms of external standards.

Our key policies are published on the website and can be found [here](#). This term 14 policies have been reviewed with a further 10 to be completed before the end of the academic year. The policies reviewed this term are: [Accessibility Plan](#), ICT Acceptable Use for [staff](#) and [students](#), [Anti-Corruption & Bribery](#), [Anti-harassment](#), [Concerns & Complaints](#) (July 2020), [Drugs, Smoking & Alcohol](#), [Educational Visits](#), [EAL](#), [Equal Opportunities](#), [EYFS Use of Mobile Phones & Digital Photography](#), [Fire Risk \(Prevention\)](#), [First Aid](#), [Permanent exclusion](#) (July 2020) and [Safeguarding & Child Protection](#).

The most significant changes have been to the policy and programme for **Personal, Social and Health Education**. Whilst PSHCE has been compulsory in Independent Schools for many years, this subject became compulsory for the first time in the Maintained Sector in September 2020 and a new curriculum issued, although its official start date has been delayed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. At the Dixie we have always believed that it is as important to develop young people's character and personal qualities as it is to develop their academic profile and as such have had an extensive PSHE curriculum for very many years. This year we have re-named this aspect of school life Personal and Social Development (PSD) in recognition that it covers any aspect of preparing a young person for a healthy, successful adult life. This area of School life is overseen by Mrs Cormack in the Junior School and Mrs Hillier in the Senior School and includes our approach to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). Both Mrs Cormack and Mrs Hillier have been working hard throughout the last year to review the current provision, understand the extensive demands of the new legislation and to develop a 3-18 programme appropriate for Dixie students. Whilst many aspects of the new PSD programme remain essentially unchanged from earlier years, there are new aspects which have been introduced. We understand that, as parents, you will want to know and understand the content of this crucial area of School life and as such we invite you to read the [PSD policy which can be found here](#).

If you have any queries about either the policy or the proposed programme please do email cormackc@dixie.org.uk (Junior School) or hilliera@dixie.org.uk (Senior School) – we will be holding a parental event early next term to provide you with an opportunity to have any questions answered and to discuss further the reasoning behind the programme should you wish to do so.





The Dixie Grammar School
Nursery • Junior • Senior





The Dixie Grammar School
Nursery • Junior • Senior

From Mr Dixon—Head of Sixth Form

Despite the new methods of working and the restrictions that Covid-19 has placed on us all, I hope that life in the Sixth Form has felt relatively normal this term. With both Lower and Upper Sixth forming a single 'bubble', social and working life in the House has carried on much as before - with the exception that Mrs Goode has sadly been unable to serve break time toast!

Our new Lower Sixth - including two students learning remotely from Africa - have settled superbly into both their academic studies and the increased freedom and responsibility that the Sixth Form brings. Life for the Upper Sixth has continued apace, with UCAS applications submitted, offers being received and preparation for the Mock exams in January.

Inevitably, some things have had to be curtailed or postponed. We are proud of the extent to which our Sixth Form interact with our younger students - through our 'buddy' programme, Peer Mentoring, Sixth Form Leaders Awards and lunchtime academic support sessions. Whilst we all look forward to these being able to restart as soon as possible, there have still been opportunities for the Prefect team and others to show leadership - taking assemblies, guiding prospective parents around the school on Open Morning and acting as positive role models to younger students. Particular thanks to the Head Boy and Girl, Lewis Jagger and Katy Hurst, and their Deputies, Ben Hemsworth and Helena Brown, for the invaluable help and support that they have offered this term.

The Future - Redevelopment

You may have heard from your son or daughter that we have ambitious plans for the redevelopment of both our facilities and our academic and extracurricular provision in the Sixth Form.

Plans are still at a relatively early stage, but the hope is to construct an entirely new Sixth Form Centre that will allow us to design both study and social areas that will better meet the needs of our students. The House has served us well and we certainly want to keep its friendly and welcoming atmosphere, but some of the facilities for both work and socialising are limited by the very nature of the building.

Alongside the physical infrastructure, we are also reviewing all aspects of Sixth Form life at Dixie, from the academic curriculum to Enrichment. We want current Sixth Formers to be involved in this process, alongside Year 11 - from January, I will be meeting regularly with a 'working party' of students and their input will directly shape how the project develops. This is an exciting time for the Sixth Form at Dixie and I will keep you informed as plans progress.

Diversity

We very much hope that we offer a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment at Dixie and one where each individual is valued for who they are. We recognise, however, that there is always more work to do in this area and throughout 2021 we will increase the visibility of how the school celebrates diversity.





The Dixie Grammar School
Nursery • Junior • Senior

We will shortly publish a Diversity Calendar that will be available on our website and which outlines the key events throughout 2021 that we intend to mark as a school. These will include dates associated with equality in gender, race, disability and sexuality - alongside important dates in the calendars of major world religions. Activities to mark these events will vary, but will include assemblies, form time activities and curriculum provision. It is our hope that this demonstration of the Dixie's commitment to diversity both in the school and in wider society will enable all members of our community to feel recognised and valued.

From Mrs Banton—Lead DSL and Director of Student Care, Senior School

2020 has been, undeniably, the most unpredictable and uncertain year for all our pupils and their families from Pippins through to the Sixth Form. In a medical emergency, naturally focus will always be on the NHS, but there are many other organisations that have had to step up during the Covid-19 pandemic. Schools up and down the country have shouldered a huge responsibility to support young people in ways that might previously have been thought impossible.

Ongoing changes to our own method of working, uncertainty around what happens next, isolation from friends and family and exposure to risk are all factors that can impact on our mental health. With this in mind, we have all worked hard across both the Junior and Senior settings to support our pupils – whether they be in school or studying remotely - and minimise the negative impact on our pupils' learning experience and levels of wellbeing.

We could not have done this without the cooperation, understanding and resilience of our student body. As this term has progressed, the intensity of living and working in year group bubbles has begun to show, but our pupils have continued to respond positively to the challenges we have faced. Participation in the recordings of the Christmas Spectacular and Carol Service is an excellent illustration of how pupils have continued to rise to the challenge of continuing Dixie traditions despite the current restrictions.

Heather Miller, a former colleague, will be joining the Dixie Pastoral team after Christmas as a therapeutic counsellor. She has been a counsellor in training since September 2017 and is due to fully qualify in summer 2021. Senior School students will be able to access this additional support via our Director of Student Care.

As we find time to recharge our batteries during the Christmas break, the following *Positive Mental Health Habits, regularly reinforced in school, may also be helpful to you:* <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/En-oEBnXIAAN42W?format=jpg&name=large>

In recent months social media has undoubtedly become an important way of keeping in touch with friends and family and we continue to work with pupils in school to keep them safe online. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you details of the new Family Pairing feature on *TikTok that can help parents ensure that their child is using this app safely. To find out more, please go to:* <https://swqfl.org.uk/magazine/tiktok-update-parental-controls-with-family-pairing-feature/>

As the festive season approaches and 2020 draws to a close, I would like to wish you all a safe and restful Christmas and New Year. Students in need of urgent support over the two week break can contact a member of the Safeguarding team by emailing pastoral@dixie.org.uk





The Dixie Grammar School
Nursery • Junior • Senior

Finally, as we bid farewell to 2020, a quick look ahead to the holiday period and start of term.

As reminder please, for parents and staff [to log all and any Covid-19 activity online](#), including if tests taken are negative. Years 6, 11 and Upper Sixth are returning to the school site on Wednesday 6 January. The start of term for all other years will be on Wednesday 6, but with lessons accessed remotely. These year groups will return on Monday 11 January at the latest, with further detailed plans to be communicated before the start of term.

Mock examinations commence for Year 11 and Upper Sixth on our return in on Wednesday 6 January—the timetables for which were published before the end of term—[available here](#). Upper Sixth examinations will take place in the Library and Year 11 in Rooms P1 and P2. There are no timetabled lessons for these year groups whilst exams are underway, and students may, with parental permission be on study leave. Alternatively, supervised study rooms are available in school.

Staff changes

At the end of last term we welcomed Mrs Deacon, Head of Maths in the Senior School back from maternity leave. Consequently there are changes to the maths department timetable, with Mrs Walker extending her teaching in the Computing department.

As was announced in the July newsletter, Dr Ketchion has moved up to take on the role of Head of Science and I am very grateful to him for combining this with the Head of Lower School role for this last term. Miss Entwisle is promoted to Senior Teacher, Curriculum and consequently from January, Mr Mellors will be Head of Lower School (Years 6,7) and Mr Macqueen Head of Middle School (Years 8,9). Congratulations to them both.

Mr Thirlwell is taking on and developing his marketing and outreach role as Senior Teacher. He has liaised with Gracie Brooks, last year's Upper Sixth who has designed, filmed, edited and published our recent promotional videos—the first for the [Whole School](#) and most recent for the [Sixth Form](#). Gracie's talent is undeniable and we very much look forward to a Nursery/Reception production early in the New Year. Thank you to all students who have shown such willing in front of the camera and spoken so warmly about the Dixie. I am delighted that our website and promotional films give prospective parents such a clear impression of the Dixie Difference!

Finally, all that remains for me is to thank you for your support of your children, the Dixie and its staff throughout 2020. I wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and healthy New Year.

Richard Hyman

