



The Dixie Grammar School

Nursery • Junior • Senior

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Dear Parents

In this newsletter, you will find updates from various year groups and departments, showcasing the diverse range of experiences our students have enjoyed this half term. From exciting trips and engaging lessons to sporting achievements and personal growth, there is much to celebrate. We are particularly proud of the progress we have made in embedding our school values – Respect, Resilience, Courage, Commitment, and Care – into all aspects of school life. These values are not just words; they guide our interactions and shape the character of Dixie pupils.

Teamwork is central to so much of what is achieved at the Dixie; the success of Dixie Fest 24 and the German exchange this term, as examples, showcase the coordinated efforts of parents, pupils and staff. There are many such examples illustrated throughout the term and this newsletter; as always, we value your active partnership in your child's education. Please share your best photos and videos with the school office via email and we will compile these and share with all parents.

Key Updates:

- **School Values:** We have successfully integrated our core values into our rewards and sanctions system, promoting positive behaviour and recognising students' achievements.
- **Epraise System:** Our new digital platform allows Senior School students to track their house points, achievements, and participate in school activities. Parents will soon be able to access Epraise to stay informed about their child's progress.
- **VAT on Tuition Fees:** We understand the concerns regarding the introduction of VAT on tuition fees. We are closely monitoring the situation and will communicate any decisions regarding fees as soon as possible.
- **Deputy Head Reflections:** Our new Deputy Head shares her positive impressions of the school's environment, students, and staff.
- **Call for Parent Businesses:** We're expanding our network of work experience placements and potential contractors. If you're interested in offering opportunities to our students, [please complete this online form](#).
- We have completed lockdown drills at both Junior and Senior sites which went very smoothly. We do this as part of our statutory practice—not as part of any perceived threat.



- Junior School Sports Kits: We are seeking sponsors for new football and hockey kits for our Junior School. If your business is interested in supporting our students, please get in touch.

Other News:

- Forest School: We are expanding our Forest School offerings next year. Stay tuned for dates and details.
- Design Studio: Our new Design Studio, a collaboration between the D&T and Computing departments, provides a cutting-edge space for student creativity and innovation.
- Theraplay: We're pleased to offer Theraplay sessions at the Junior School, promoting social, emotional, and intellectual growth.

We hope you enjoy reading about our school's activities. As always, thank you for your continued support.

Pippins

This half term, Pippins have been settling in, making friends, and strengthening existing bonds. They've enjoyed outdoor adventures in the Pippins garden, engaging in climbing, building, and water play. Nursery rhymes have been a focus to build a foundation for phonics, and music lessons with Mrs Jarvis have been full of excitement, especially when using colorful scarves and playing interactive games. The children have also been developing their fine motor skills and culinary talents, creating apple crumble and delicious bread. We look forward to starting our Nativity practice after a well-deserved half term break.





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Reception

Reception has had a fantastic start to the year, adapting well to new routines. Through circle time activities and games like 'roll the dice,' the children have been getting to know each other. Forest School sessions on Thursday afternoons have been a highlight, with children enjoying hide-and-seek in the woods, teddy bear treasure hunts, and minibeast discoveries. In the classroom, 'Little Wandle' Phonics lessons have begun, and children are working hard on their sounds and reading skills in group sessions.





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Year 1



Year 1 has been immersed in their first topic of the year, 'The Tiger That Came to Tea.' They have developed their English skills by writing instructions for making sandwiches and creating invitations for a tea party. A memorable WOW day tea party included biscuit decorating, sandwich making, party games, and even a visit from a real tiger!



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Year 1 had a super day at the farm.

Mrs Rothen showed many different habitats: in fields, trees and hedges. We explored the forest school area for minibeasts and their microhabitats and even found some snake skin. Feeding the cows, and making friends with the pigs and sheep was a highlight for all!



Year 2

Year 2 has delved into history, learning about the Great Fire of London. They have explored the fire's origins in Pudding Lane and the subsequent events as it spread throughout the city. Children have written expressive poetry on the theme of "If I were a fire" and created diaries from the perspective of Samuel Pepys, an eyewitness to the fire. A highlight was setting fire to Tudor houses created in Art lessons, providing a real-life understanding of how the fire spread.



YEAR 3

Year 3 have spent this term becoming Roman soldiers, learning all about this period of History through their Romans topic. They kicked off the topic with a visit to Lunt Fort, where children were able to see the archaeological site of a Roman fort, examine some real Roman artefacts and also have a Roman battle with shields and swords! Year 3 have also been looking at Roman mosaics and in Art lessons they have been applying their fine painting skills to create a mosaic design of their own.





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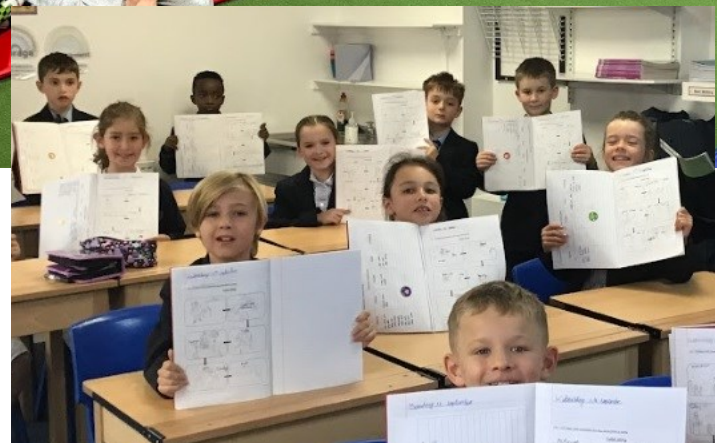
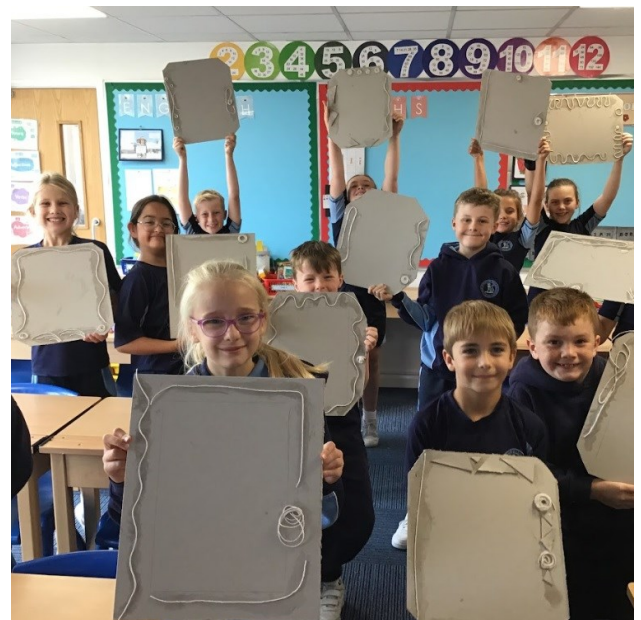
Year 4 started the year with an exciting 3-night residential trip to Pioneer Outdoor Centre in Kidderminster. Children embraced new challenges, participating in high ropes, caving, raft building, abseiling, and more. Days were filled with activities, while evenings included a movie night and a campfire. Back at school, the 'Tudors' topic began with a Tudor WOW day featuring impressive period costumes. Children have been developing their artistic skills by creating Tudor portraits and decorating frames with string patterns from the era.





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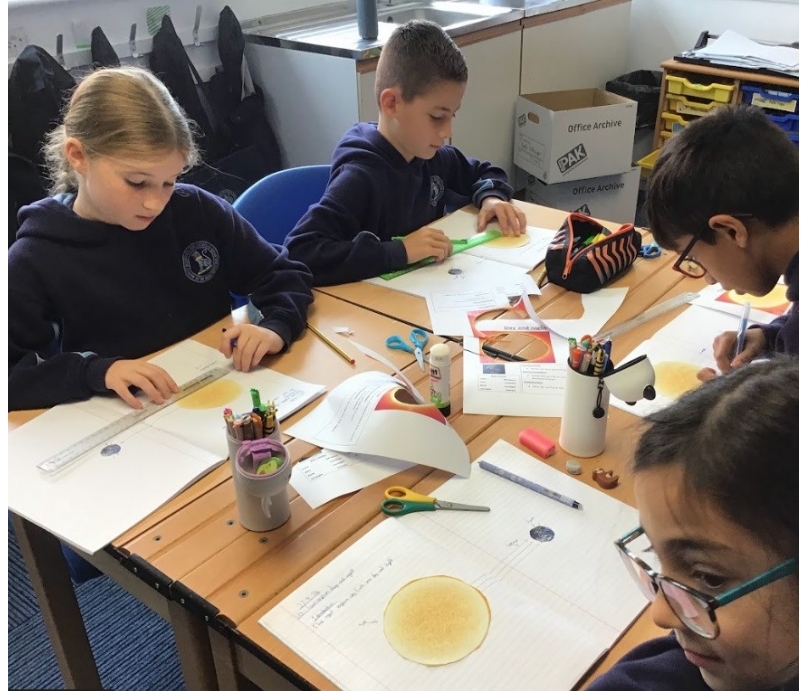
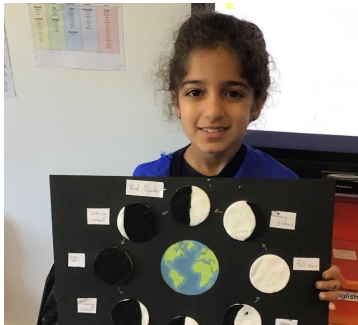
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YEAR 5

Our Year 5 students have embraced their leadership roles as Reception buddies, spending time each week reading and writing with their younger counterparts. In Science, they've been learning about the moon and planets, creating informative posters on the phases of the moon using cotton wool pads.





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Forest School





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ISA NATIONAL SKIING EVENT 24



U10 Mixed Hockey Festival





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Theraplay

As part of our strategy for actively promoting mental health, we are delighted to have started offering Theraplay sessions at the Junior School.

Theraplay is a group involving children in active, enjoyable activities. The sessions are designed to build relationships, allowing children to grow socially, emotionally and intellectually. Every activity helps to develop our children's self-esteem, sense of belonging, ability to trust, care for

themselves and others. It provides challenge, nurture and engagement in a structured setting. These sessions take place on a Monday afternoon and will be offered to all pupils as a matter of course during the coming years. More than anything, we have fantastic fun!



Theraplay
30.9.24

PIC-COLLAGE

The Bushcraft Trip

Year 7 embarked on an unforgettable 3-day adventure with The Bushcraft Company at Boughton Woods in Kettering. Students learned valuable survival skills like shelter building, ponassing, first aid, and trap building. They spent two nights in tented camps, immersed in nature, cooking on open fires, and sleeping under the stars. The trip fostered teamwork, self-confidence, and new friendships within tutor groups. Students received high praise from camp leaders for their respectfulness. Special recognition was given to students who exemplified our Dixie values.





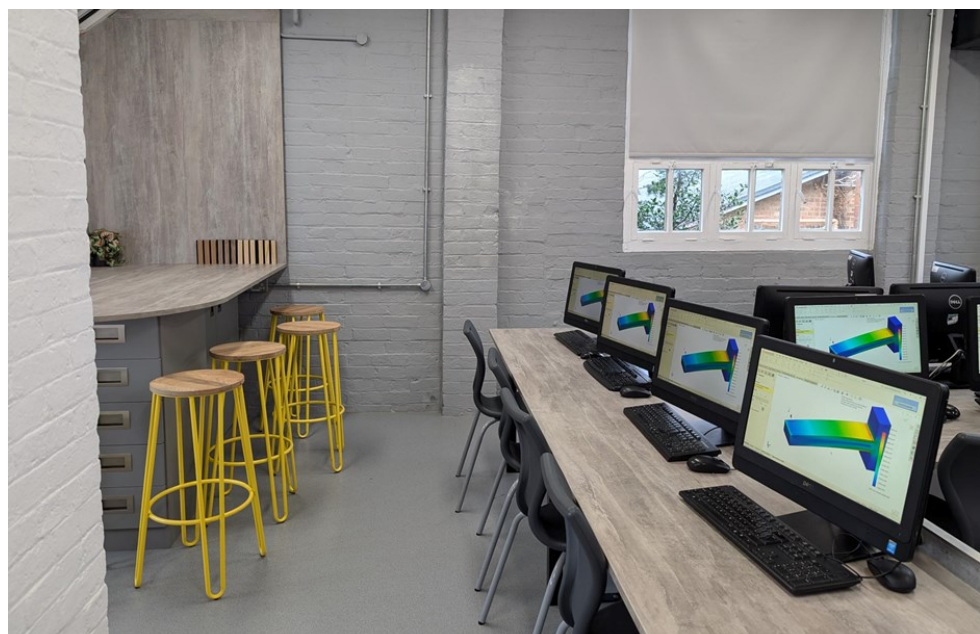
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The Design Studio

The D&T and Computing departments have collaborated to create a new Design Studio at the Senior School, blending technology and a creative learning environment. Designed using VR headsets, the studio features a collaborative workspace, a dedicated CAD/CAM area, and a state-of-the-art Ultimaker 3D printer. Feedback has been positive, and we're excited to continue enhancing the space with new resources.





Notes from Parent Briefings—end of September

Culture

As those of you who have been part of the Dixie for a while will know, but for the benefit of those who are new to us, the project to define our school culture began just over two years ago. We began by surveying all members of the Dixie community and having listened to pupils, teachers, support staff, parents and governors, we agreed that Respect, Resilience, Courage, Commitment and Care are the five core values at the heart of what we stand for here at the Dixie.

Last year was about beginning to understand what each of these means in practice and what each one might look like in terms of how we behave towards each other in school. This year is all about making our values visible in all areas of school life, so you will begin to see them represented visually in key places around school, and we will shortly be taking delivery of banners to be displayed here in the Hall at the Senior School, in the Junior School Hall and in other places around school - you certainly won't be able to miss them!

But making our values visible is also about making sure that our behaviour and our interactions with each other display them too. The main way we aim to achieve this is through our rewards and sanctions system and through the course of last year, Student Council and then the wider student body through PSD lessons, had the opportunity to have their say. We felt very much that our previous rewards system had



focused too heavily on academic achievement and didn't provide sufficient opportunity for us to reward our core values. We therefore added some key appendices to our behaviour & discipline policy that set out in detail how we will reward children, both at the Junior School and the Senior School and these can be found on our website. We felt that the existing systems in place at the Junior School could be adapted to facilitate the rewarding of our values

We have renamed our Merit and Dojo points to House Points to ensure a consistent 3 - 18 approach. These are awarded to celebrate and reward children for the work they do both in and out of the classroom. Our Values have become part of our daily conversations, not only during assemblies and PSD lessons but in all areas of school life and these are regularly reinforced and celebrated. As well as being displayed in the Hall and Sports Barn, children will see them displayed in classrooms. Children are awarded House Points to acknowledge and reward them for demonstrating the Values. During our Gold Book assemblies we continue to hand out Merit Badges for the highest number of House Points achieved that week and Gold Book certificates. We have introduced Values certificates to highlight and reward the children who have demonstrated particular Values that week. It is lovely to hear the reasons why children have been awarded these.

Here at the Senior School we have launched a new system to support us in rewarding students for all the ways they demonstrate our values, be that in the classroom, or in their involvement in co-curricular activities, or even their commitments outside school.

We have invested in Epraise, a web-based system where students are able to see the house points they have been awarded, see how they are progressing through our milestone awards, record special achievements, review accolades they have received, such as Snow Leopard Awards (formerly known as Da Vincis) and many more features. Students can check their timetable, sign up for clubs and activities and even start to create their own biography where they record details about their interests, achievements, goals and ambitions, all of which can help when it comes to writing a CV or personal statement.



The system also records when things haven't gone so well, for example if a student has to be asked more than once to focus in a lesson, or doesn't have the correct uniform after being asked to put that right or any of the other things that sometimes occur that don't match our expectations. These are called demerits within Epraise and also appear on each student's profile. In time, there will also be a rewards shop where students will be able to trade in some of their house points for treats and we are working closely with students through Student Council and PSD lessons to make decisions about what those items should be. As parents, you will have noticed that there are no paper student planners this year at the Senior School, apart from for our Year 6 pupils. Homework is all being set and recorded in Google Classroom and recording what is going well and not so well has been replaced by Epraise. In due course, you will be invited to log on to Epraise as parents, however, you will understand that with a brand new system, we are phasing the roll-out to check all is working as it should. If you haven't already done so, do ask your child to show you their profile - it has been wonderful to see the enthusiasm of all students for earning house points and I am happy to say that the flip side, the demerits, are very few and far between at the moment! Mrs Cormack will explain more.

One aspect of Epraise that has been of real benefit has been the increase in student to staff engagement and the regular conversations and input from students I have had recently about new ideas and ways of working with Epraise. Students have a keen awareness for fairness and consistency and we have received some very well written emails and thoughtful conversations feeding back about how things are going from a student point of view. These have resulted in direct changes and triggered discussion during weekly staff meetings. There is also the facility on Epraise for students to suggest ideas of what goes in the Epraise shop and we already have a long list of great ideas. There is also the wellbeing concern facility where students can inform us of any concerns they have regarding their own or another student's wellbeing. This is in addition to all the other ways that they already have of communicating any concerns.

We are also slowly adding to our collection of digital awards which appear on student profiles. This includes accolades and achievements such as Duke of Edinburgh, student prefects, music grades, student council and many more.

The old Da Vinci awards have been replaced with Snow Leopard awards. Students can be nominated for these in the categories of Academic, Performance, Sport & Wellbeing, Kindness, Charity, Leadership and Clubs. Students are awarded a digital badge and 20 points for their first nomination in each category followed by 5 points for each subsequent nomination. There is also a Gold Snow Leopard for achieving a Snow Leopard in all categories.

Epraise and our work on school culture is an ongoing and dynamic process but we are already seeing huge benefits for all students. It is already addressing many of the issues that were raised 2 years ago at the start of this process and we are very excited about the potential effect that ongoing positive culture change can have on every single member of our school community.



Mrs Banton—Designated 3-18 Safeguarding Lead

Here at The Dixie we take very seriously our statutory obligations and how important it is to ensure that all our pupils across the 3 - 18 age range understand both how to stay safe online and behave online. We do this through our curriculum, for example PSD, Form and class time activities and assemblies as well as through our Behaviour and Discipline and Safeguarding and Child Protection policies. We want to equip our children and young people to make the best use of the internet and their technology and devices in a safe, respectful and age appropriate way.

You will be aware of our change this academic year to the rhythm of the Senior School day with pupils in Years 6 - 11 now leaving their phones in our care for the full day. We continue to encourage social interaction - those all important face to face conversations - which in turn offers respite from the pressures of social media and fosters vital social and communication skills. The online world develops and changes at a great speed with opportunities and risks appearing all the time even for our youngest of pupils. Sitting behind our curriculum are our filtering and monitoring systems, protecting the school network from unwanted access and ensuring our pupils are not accessing inappropriate sites, indeed pupil use of the network is checked on a daily basis by a member of the safeguarding team. This half term we have also offered two parent workshops. "Left To Their Own Devices", a video based resource which also incorporates discussion time, covered areas from gaming to pornography as well as addressing the challenges we face as parents including navigating screen time and online bullying. It also offered practical tips on nurturing a positive attitude and culture towards digital media at home.

Attendance

Research has shown that regular attendance and good punctuality are crucial factors in pupils achieving their full potential in education as well as maintaining positive mental health and building resilience. It has also been recognised that the maintenance of high levels of attendance will maximise the opportunities for our children and young people. We do, however, recognise that some pupils may find it harder than others to attend school, and will work with those pupils and parents to try to remove barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

In cases of illness, medical appointments or other unavoidable absence, parents/carers should continue to contact the school office to report absence on a daily basis. Applications for authorised leaves of absence will only be considered if made in writing to the Headmaster. A leave of absence is granted at the Headmaster's discretion, including the length of time for which the pupil is authorised to be absent.

Lockdown drills

Our school conducted a successful lockdown drill on the final day of the term, aimed at enhancing safety protocols and providing a realistic simulation of a lockdown scenario. Students and staff promptly followed established procedures, demonstrating awareness and cooperation. Students used great imagination to barricade themselves into classrooms.



Throughout the drill, everyone maintained calm and order, showcasing resilience and composure. Teaching and support staff communicated effectively and identified areas for improvement. The drill's success reflects our school community's dedication to creating a safe and secure environment for all.

Mrs Banton and the pastoral team have been answering immediate questions pupils in years 6, 7 and 8 have had about the lockdown. Should your child have further questions over the half term please sign post them to:

Mrs Banton— pastoral@dixie.org.uk

Junior School Playground

Student Council have met and decided what they want painting on the playground. We are now awaiting final quotes from the preferred contractor on playground markings and new equipment.

From the Bursar—VAT

It has been encouraging to see the increased media coverage in respect of the introduction of VAT on tuition fees from January 2025, since the parent briefings at the end of September.

It was interesting to watch the debate on this policy in the House of Commons on 8 October, but it was frustrating that only one government minister attended the debate and failed to address the concerns raised by MPs across all parties. A highlight of the sixth form's recent trip to London was a visit to Parliament. They were able to watch a debate in the House of Lords on the introduction of VAT to Private Schools, but sadly missed our local MP, Dr Luke Evans, [deliver this speech in the House of Commons](#) (including name dropping Dixie).

At the parent briefings, the Bursar reminded parents that the final legislation is set to be announced on 30 October at the Budget. This will be reviewed and discussed at a governors meeting in November, where a final decision will be made on fees. Naturally this will be communicated to parents as soon as possible. We understand that this change is unsettling, we want to underline our commitment to shield parents as much as we are able.

At the briefings the Bursar also gave a brief summary of some of the key consultation responses from sector associations, tax experts and economic think tanks, who were calling for the policy to be postponed until September 2025 to mitigate the impact of this in-year change but also give time for proper impact assessment to be undertaken.

Mr Frost also gave an overview of some of the possible legal challenges that have been mentioned in the media. One such challenge is that this policy discriminates against children with special educational needs and disabilities, and that it could be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights. He encouraged parents who attended the briefings to write to their MPs to explain how the policy could impact them personally but also ask their MP to write to the Government calling for the policy to be postponed pending a full dynamic impact assessment.



The briefing also gave parents the opportunity to ask the Bursar questions. Notable questions included:

Q: What will be subject to VAT?

A: The tuition fee and music tuition fee.

Q: Will sibling discounts and scholarships be subject to VAT?

A: Fee remissions will be deducted from the net tuition fee before VAT is applied.

Q: Will other charges be subject to VAT?

A: Transport is expected to be zero rated, Catering, Before and After School Clubs, and the Summer Play Scheme are expected to remain exempt. The draft legislation was silent on trips but professional advisors have advised that the VAT treatment on trips shouldn't change.

Q: "Can we still enter into a Fees in Advance Scheme"

A: "Anti Forestalling legislation was introduced on 29 July 2024 that means VAT has to be factored into any new Fees in Advance Schemes. The School will continue to offer Fees in Advance Schemes for future academic years, these are entered into during the Summer Term in advance of the following academic year."

It is important to note that the answers provided above represent our best understanding of the draft legislation as things currently stand. Naturally answers may change when the legislation is finalised.

On 10 October 2024 HMRC published guidance for schools on implementing VAT on school fees. Whilst this has clarified certain aspects of the draft legislation, it has also caused confusion on other parts. So much so, the Independent School Council (ISC) and other associates [wrote this letter to the Treasury and the Department for Education expressing their disappointment at the poor quality of guidance.](#)

Ms Kazem—Deputy Head & Head of Staff: Reflections

It has been a joy to reflect on my first half term at the Dixie Grammar School. I was aware of so many aspects of excellence throughout the school before I started my role in earnest. What has taken me aback are the 'pockets of gold' which I did not know I was about to find.

I was originally drawn to the Dixie by the learning environment that it offers to its students; the excellence it attains in its value-added; the academic tailoring that it offers to the individual student; the highly committed staff; and the expertise of the leadership.

I did not anticipate that I would find a student body that is so well self-regulated, and that has evident passion and pride in its school. The students, like the staff, are unendingly helpful and considerate.



I am also finding that the culture of embedding the school values into the pastoral programmes of the school is forging a truly innovative school environment in which these values are manifested as high-level academic outcomes: whether that be excellence in the autonomy of the learner, the learner's approach to the lesson, or the dynamic that is created between teacher and student. I have been fortunate enough to observe some superb lessons. As I have gone about my days, I have found that the staff member who is truly committed to, and inspired by, their field - whether that be their own subject, or the application of that in 'Teaching & Learning' - is a norm at the Dixie. They hide their lights under bushels, quietly going above and beyond in all manner of ways. I feel fortunate indeed to be here and to be able to contribute wherever I can.

Governor News

The Board is delighted to welcome Mrs Debbie Jones as our newest member and, like four other members of the Board, is a Dixie parent. In our recruitment, we seek to broaden our knowledge and Mrs Jones's work as a District Judge brings new expertise.

As from our Annual General Meetings on 28th June 2024, we have 11 full members and 2 co-opted members. We would like to thank Mrs Alison Breadon for chairing Finance, Facilities and People last year and look forward to her continued involvement as a co-opted governor. We welcome back Miss Grace Brooks, alumna, as a co-opted governor on our Marketing, Brand and Culture committee. This committee was known as Marketing and Communication but has been rebranded to reflect our work embedding our Dixie values of Respect, Resilience, Courage, Commitment and care. You can read all about us on the [website here](#).

Would you like to offer your time and experience? We are seeking someone with particular expertise within Health and Safety and IT Networks. The well-being and productivity of students, staff, and visitors is directly linked to these areas in school. If you would like to find out more please email the Chair of Governors parkesj@dixie.org.uk.

Senior Leadership and Management and governors are a committed and resilient team. We enjoy working together to enhance The Dixie Grammar School for everyone, with care for our pupils at the heart of all we do.

Work experience / database of parent businesses

Calling All Parents - Share Your Business Expertise!

We're seeking to expand our network of potential contractors and work experience placements. Your business could be a valuable resource to our school community. By sharing your details, you're helping to provide our students with opportunities to learn from industry professionals and gain practical experience. [Please complete this online form](#).



A Successful German Exchange: Building Bonds and Memories

We are delighted to share the wonderful experiences from our recent German exchange programme, which took place from September 24th to October 1st, 2024. This initiative not only strengthened our ties with Jade Gymnasium but also provided our students with invaluable opportunities for cultural exchange and personal growth.

Our German guests arrived on September 24th, and from the moment they stepped into Market Bosworth, it was clear that this was going to be a memorable week. The students from both schools behaved impeccably, demonstrating the best of their respective institutions and creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and camaraderie. During their stay, our German visitors attended lessons alongside their English partners, enriching the classroom experience for everyone involved. This interaction not only enhanced language skills but also fostered a deeper understanding of each other's cultures.

The exchange was punctuated by exciting outings to Birmingham and Drayton Manor, where students enjoyed the vibrant sights and thrilling rides. One of the highlights of the week was the traditional football match: JaGy versus Dixie. After two years of draws, this year saw JaGy triumph with a 3-1 victory, much to the delight of the German team!

We cannot thank our host families (both students' and staff) enough for their warm hospitality. Families went above and beyond to ensure their guests felt at home, creating an environment filled with kindness and generosity. The positive feedback we've received through heartfelt emails from students and families underscores the success of this exchange and the bonds formed during this time.

As we bid farewell to our German friends on October 1st, there were certainly tears shed—both from the students and their families. It was a poignant reminder of the connections that had been made and the memories created during their stay. Looking ahead, we are eagerly anticipating the return visit in September 2025. Such exchanges are vital in broadening our students' horizons, fostering international friendships, and promoting understanding between cultures. Thank you to everyone involved for making this exchange such a huge success; we look forward to more shared experiences in the future!





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Quotes from parents and students:

"I just wanted to say thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to do the exchange. I have had such an amazing week and definitely made a friend for life. I am definitely inspired to get better at German for next year."

"We had the best experience. (my son and his partner) are now firm friends for life and planning their next visit."

"...I know (my son) had a great time and has learnt so much from the experience. He's already looking forward to visiting Germany next year!"

"We absolutely loved having (our German guest) to stay - I personally see these exchanges as something which the whole family can benefit from and (my daughter) is bereft at her departure!"

"We have had a fabulous time and really loved having (our guest) stay with us. She has been an absolute pleasure to have in our home. (My daughter) and (her partner) have bonded very well and hopefully improved on her German! The week has flown by and we all felt emotional saying our goodbyes this morning. (My daughter) is already looking forward to heading over to Germany next year."



Former Dixie pupil and final year medicine student Chloe Vinestock kindly gave up some time on 17 October to put our aspiring medics through their paces in interview. Year 9 litter picking as part of the volunteering section for their Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.





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On the 16th of October the Sixth Form travelled down to London for two days, embarking on a range of different cultural activities. A particular highlight was the guided tour around London telling the story of Jack the Ripper; which was incredibly interesting giving an insight on the history of the first ever recorded serial killer.

Being able to visit the Freud Museum and seeing the famous couch and works relating to the early development of child psychology, and the National Gallery where Art students got to engage with the works of Van Gogh were both beneficial to our studies.

The next day included a visit to Westminster Abbey and The Houses of Parliament which were fascinating. Being able to sit in on the House of Lords discussing the addition of VAT to private schools was a great experience.

Having walked over 13 miles over the two days we were all tired, however, the trip provided us with a number of enriching first experiences that we will never forget. Thank you to the teachers for this wonderful opportunity.

By Lexie West, Isabella Marsh and Dan Hillier

