



The Dixie Grammar School

Nursery • Junior • Senior

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The commitment and resilience shown by pupils this term has enabled rapid progress and fantastic achievements both in and out of the classroom. This newsletter is a glimpse of an incredibly busy term - a snapshot of the vibrancy of life at the Dixie. I am very grateful for the expertise, care, commitment and dedication of all Dixie staff in providing such an extraordinary range of learning opportunities for Dixie pupils. It is a genuine pleasure and privilege to lead such a talented group of colleagues.

The ambition of staff, support of parents and talents of pupils were again on full display in this most busy last week of term - a week which saw the wonderful costumes and performances of Year 5 in their show Aladdin, a narrow win for Lancaster in the 5-18 swimming gala, Head Boy and Head Girl interviews in the Senior School, a Pippins trip to Ashend Farm, Easter celebrations and competitions at the Junior School and a non-uniform day on Friday, raising money for Water Aid. Water Aid is a cause that is very close to Mrs Banton's heart as it was her late husband's chosen charity throughout his career as a Chartered Civil Engineer. In his memory Mike's family continue to fundraise for WaterAid and at the Dixie, we are proud to be involved as an indication of our ongoing care for them as a family.

This weekend, 90 pupils and 9 staff fly out on the school ski trip to Italy. We wish them a wonderful time away and a safe return a week later.



As you will be aware, this term also included a routine inspection by the Independent Schools Inspectorate of every aspect of a Dixie education, from 3-18. Seven inspectors were in school for 2 and a half days observing lessons, scrutinising policies, documentation and records provided by the school, interviewing staff and talking to pupils about their work.

Thank you for your engagement with the parent questionnaire - the results from which were humbling, and a joy to share with colleagues. To get an accurate representation of the views of pupils, we provided a dedicated slot for all pupils to take the inspection survey - from Year 4 to the Upper Sixth. Pupils' feedback was particularly wonderful to read.

The headline figures from the pupil, parent and staff questionnaires were incredibly positive; they set the scene for what was a wonderful week of feedback. The whole process was an affirmation of the progress we have made as a school since our last glowing inspection report in February 2022. I look forward to sharing the report with you as soon as I receive it after the Easter break.

From the
Headmaster



Staffing: September 2025

We are taking significant steps to increase the capacity of leadership roles in both the Junior and Senior Schools next academic year.

In the Junior School, both Mrs Baker and Mrs Mackenzie will have a significant reduction in their teaching timetables, to allow them even greater capacity in leading the pastoral and academic life at the Junior School. Mrs Mackenzie will add the role of Head of EYFS (Nursery and Reception Class) to her existing role as Head of Academic, and she will have the equivalent of two days of timetabled lessons reallocated to the wider team, allowing her more time for the overview of academic standards.

This strengthening of leadership is mirrored in the Senior School in which Mrs Banton (3-18 Safeguarding Lead, Head of Pastoral), Mrs Craig (Senior Teacher and Head of Upper School) and Mr Thirlwell (Head of Marketing) will have reduced teaching timetables, along with Mr Dixon (Head of Academic and Sixth Form). To make this possible, we have recruited for and appointed a new French teacher. We were delighted to have had 13 strong applicants from which we shortlisted 6 for interview. Mrs Mercier was the stand-out applicant and she joins us in September 2025 from Loughborough Amherst school to teach French to pupils from Year 3 to the Upper Sixth.

Provisionally, the following staff will be allocated to year groups in the Junior School:

Reception Class: Mrs Fennell, Mrs Mellors and Mrs Miller

Year 1: Mrs Bonner, Mrs Brining and Mrs Oncul

Year 2: Mrs Cardy and Mrs Maunder (2 classes)

Year 3: Mr Ward, Mrs Mellors/Mrs Brining

Year 4: Mrs Beamish (4 days)/Mrs Scrivens (1 day) and Miss Bracey (2 classes)

Year 5: Mrs Nightingale, Mrs Horsfall (3 days)/Mrs Scrivens (2 days), (2 classes)

In the Senior School, we will welcome Miss Fatima back from maternity leave in September and bid farewell to Mr Barot at the end of the Summer Term, who has taught History and RS this year. Mr Ward will spend an additional day at the Senior School next year, mostly spending time teaching Year 6.

Mrs Pike (Head of DT) will be heading away on maternity leave with our best wishes, and we have recruited a very experienced teacher of DT to fully replace her part time role.

Alongside our commitment to invest in people, we continue to improve our facilities year on year. We have started the Junior School play project, and thanks to our wonderful PTA, the Junior School front lawn and playground have new equipment, fresh painting and a new trim trail, with a huge

and exciting play project to unveil later in the year. I am thrilled that the front lawn is bearing the scars of play time and hope that it continues to be used for fun at break times throughout the Summer Term!



The Dixie Grammar School

Nursery • Junior • Senior

From the
Headmaster

Staffing





This summer, our wider plans include:

1. Relocation of the Senior Music Department to new dedicated teaching spaces;
2. New front entrance to the Senior School through the old bank building by Back Lane. The existing school reception moves to the Music room and the Finance Team to upstairs in the music block, along with other administrative staff;
3. Creation of a new Home Economics laboratory in a partially upgraded Science Building;
4. An expansion and refurbishment of the Sixth Form House to allow Sixth Form pupils much needed use of the whole building.

The work above will be completed for September 2025 alongside our routine rolling programme of site upgrades.

Before then our INSET day for all staff on Wednesday 23rd April will include a focus on alternative post-16 pathways, the use of Little Wandle in the early years, safeguarding training and a session led by Mr Ward for all staff focusing on incorporating the outdoors in our curriculum plans for the summer term.

As a reminder:

- Term starts on Thursday 24th April;
- Can I please ask that Junior School parents do not use their mobile phones whilst on the Junior School site for anything other than an emergency;
- You will be notified separately regarding our Summer holiday playschemes, which are running for three weeks this year: the week beginning 14 July: Playscheme; w/b 21 July: Forest School/Mini explorer week (following a wonderful 3 day trail last year), w/b 4 August: Playscheme.

I will finish this section with my best wishes to you all for a relaxing Easter break and some pictures of Easter celebrations at the Junior School. One parent asked where my Easter rabbit onesie was—I will leave fancy dress to the indefatigable and fearless Mrs Baker!





The Dixie Grammar School
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From the
Headmaster

Easter



Thank you to all parents for your magnificent support of our Easter –themed activities and competitions at the Junior School. The Easter bonnets provided a spectacular splash of colour on the last day of term and were worn with pride. Thanks too to Senior School Head Boy and Deputy Head boy Charlie and Freddie who had the unenviable task of judging.



The Dixie Grammar School
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Pippins enjoyed a beautiful day at Ashend Farm.

Pippins



Pippins loved making fruit kebabs, all part of our healthy eating week.



Building, digging, painting, and learning! Pippins children have been busy with a variety of activities, all while explor-

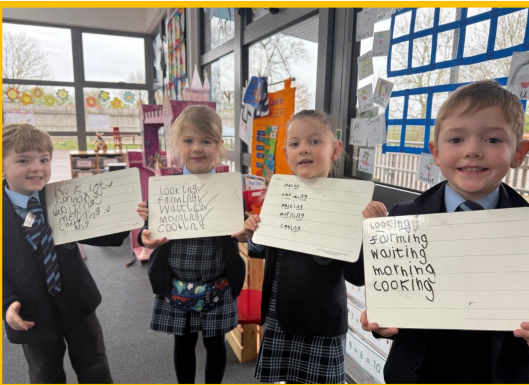
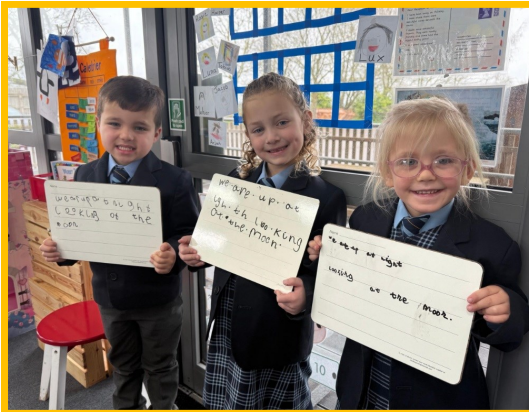




The Reception class explored the wonders of the sea at the Sea Life Centre in Birmingham, connecting their experiences to their topic, "The Snail and the Whale".



Reception



Sentence writing and subtraction on a number line.

Our Year 5 children helped their Reception buddies to create a special Mother's Day surprise.





Year 1 had a very special science lesson. To help us with our learning all about the human body, Mrs Rothen came to show us what the heart and lungs of a cow were like and how they compared to a human's.



Year 1



Making dragon eggs and learning programming on the iPads to make digital magic happen!



During Year 1 science, we embarked on a "senses walk." We compiled a list of everything we could observe, hear, smell, touch and taste!





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Year 2



Year 2 and Pippins - Mobile Planetarium

Year 2 enjoyed a wonderful day exploring the planetarium with Pippins. They made rockets, ate 'astronaut food,' and talked about the essentials for surviving in outer space. They proudly demonstrated their impressive knowledge about space and also discovered some new facts!



Forest school sessions in Year 2. The children have enjoyed making and eating s'mores. Followed by plenty of den building, teamwork and games in the glorious sunshine.





Strings concert—Year 3 treated parents and carers to a fantastic strings concert. Congratulations to all the young musicians on a great performance!

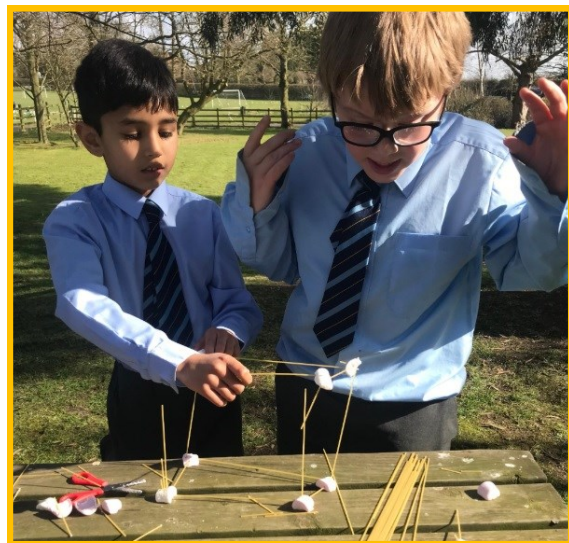


Below:

STEM challenge - who can build the tallest pyramid out of spaghetti and marshmallows!

A huge thank you to Mr Vessey for visiting Year 3. The children really enjoyed talking about what they have learned so far and further developing their understanding of Christianity and The Easter Story.

Year 3





Year 4 have been exploring the fascinating world of Artificial Intelligence in their ICT lessons, discovering how data is used to train AI. They have completed a project on Fairtrade and created art influenced by Pop Art.



Year 4



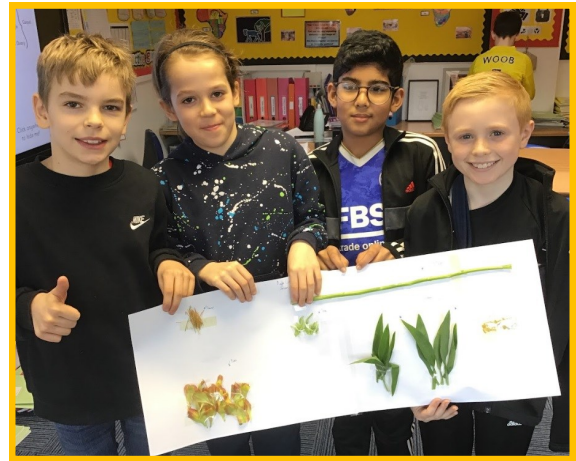


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Year 5

News @ The Dixie Easter 2025

Year 5 have been exploring the world of plants Labelling plant diagrams and discovering the different parts of plants as part of their science topic on Living Things and their Habitats.





The Dixie Grammar School
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Pippins
and
Chinese
New Year

World
Book Day
and book
exchange
day





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Easter 2025



Pippins





The Dixie Grammar School
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Junior Sport



Congratulations
Lancaster on
winning the
first Junior
School
House Chess
competition

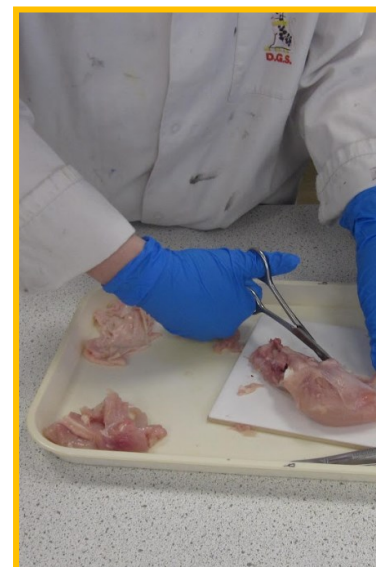
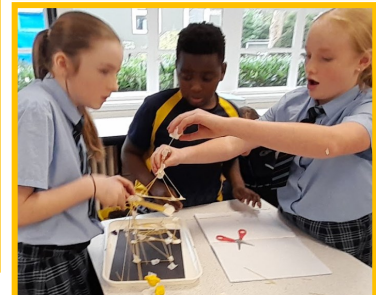
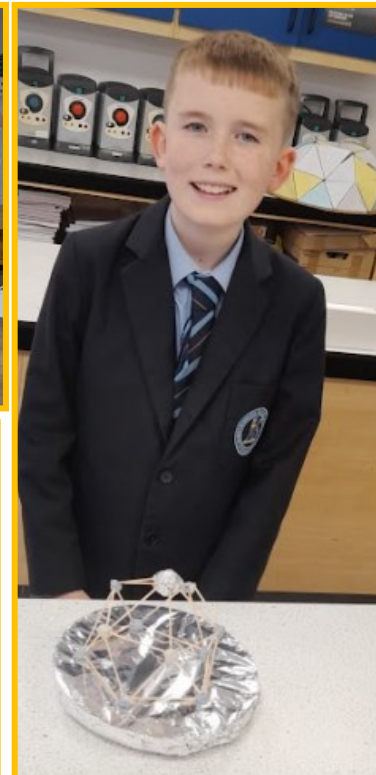




A focus on Science.

It is unusual to have Year 6 in a senior setting, but pupils are ready for the challenge of individual sciences and are taught by scientists with degrees in their subjects. From the beginning of Year 6, the focus is on acquisition of skills that will be of benefit at GCSE, A level and beyond, including dissection. As part of their science lessons this term, Year 6 students have been exploring the world of structures and put their knowledge to the test by building geodesic domes for a homework project. Dr. Ketchion was 'blown away' by their resilience and the variety of materials used.

Year 6





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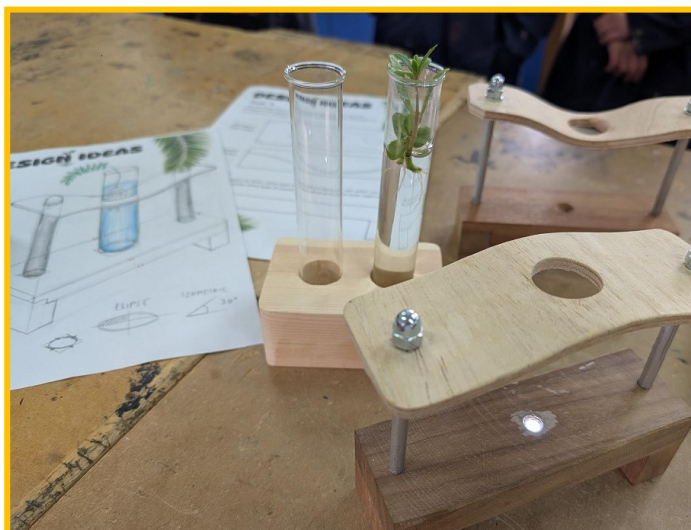
Year 7

News @ The Dixie Easter 2025

Y7 students participated in their first dissection of a chicken leg. They examined a hinge joint and then dissected it to reveal tendons and ligaments. All students



Our Year 7 Physics students travelled to the National Space Centre as part of their Space Exploration topic. They attended a rocket science demonstration and visited the planetarium to experience astronaut training. It proved to be a truly engaging and immersive experience.



In Design and Technology, Our Year 7 students have begun making their propagation stations, learning about the differences between hard and soft woods, as well as various joining methods. They have been using tools such as tenon saws, try squares, and the disc sander, all while demonstrating great enthusiasm, care, and respect. Well done, Year 7!



At 8am on the 27th Y8 set off to Hartington in the Peak District for an 8km walk and to gain some experience for DofE next year. The weather was amazing and despite a bit of an eventful journey on the coach we made it to Hartington at 10.30 and set off on our walk.

Navigators in each group were responsible for tracking our route and using OS maps to ensure we stayed on track. We stopped along the way to investigate a few caves and to cook lunch using Trangias. Vanya was a little disappointed he wasn't allowed to cook the steak he bought, but enjoyed his pot noodle. Year 8 were fantastic, no one got lost and we were blown away by the amazing scenery of the Peak district. It was a great way for Y8 to finish their forest school and DOSE provision, and we hope they all take part in DofE next year.



Artwork from
Barnaby (Left)
and
Marcus (Right)



Year 8 have been working on experimenting with different artists' styles and techniques by reproducing sections of artists' work. Year 8 have shown great resilience whilst tackling tricky techniques and challenging drawings and I have been so pleased with their work so far. Pupils have produced FANTASTIC drawings and rendered them in coloured pencils to produce hyper-realistic images.



Year 9 Wheelies' Engineering/CAD/CAM Project

Our Design and Technology department, alongside computing deliver essential technological skills to our students. The newly refurbished design studio was designed by our DT team and installed by our Year 9 students have been working hard on their latest CAD/CAM project, 'Wheelies', developing essential design and engineering skills. They have begun by learning how to create Orthographic Projection drawings, a fundamental technique that prepares them for designing their own vehicles using SolidWorks, an industry standard 3D modelling program.



Dixie pupils are taught by teachers specialist in their own fields. At the National Space Centre, at the top of the rocket tower, you'll find the work of our very own Mrs Pike. 14 years ago, she spent 6 months creating a Lunar Module, using orthographic drawings provided by NASA to ensure it was both to scale and visually accurate. It moves up and down and is a focal point on the top floor!



Year 9



Romeo and Juliet

Year 10 students attended a production of 'Romeo and Juliet' for their GCSE course-work. This experimental version included Shakespeare's original language, combined with modern English songs and elements of spoken word and rap. There was an immersive experience with props in corridors and foyer, and newspapers sum-



Year 10 Drama class performed a few short scenes in preparation for their GCSE per-

Year 10



Year 10 & 11 Enrichment

Some pupils in Year 10 and 11 spent their enrichment time helping at the Junior School. It turns out you are never too old for a game of "What's the Time Mr. Wolf"!





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Year 10 and 11

News @ The Dixie Easter 2025

On Monday 31st March a team of Year 10 and 11 girls travelled to St Dominic's School to compete in the annual U16 netball tournament. Historically, this tournament has always been tough, but the girls were focused and determined to do well. The day started successfully with the team beating St Doms 26 - 1, which started the winning streak. For the first time ever, Dixie found themselves in the final. With some positive words in the team talk by captain Dara and some excellent displays of skill, the girls were victorious, beating Stafford Grammar 31-12 and were crowned Midlands Champions. A huge well done to all in-



In the middle of a busy inspection week, I was grateful to have had the chance to meet, chat to and eat breakfast with a group of Year 11 pupils. They spent their hard-earned House points (awarded for Respect, Resilience, Courage, Commitment and Care) in the online Epraise shop and each purchased the breakfast opportunity with 350 points. They spoke about techniques for coping with the pressure of exams, how they feel they are progressing in their studies and their plans for the Easter break. I thoroughly enjoyed their company and good conversation = forty-five minutes absolutely flew by!

Whole School Cross Country





Lower and Upper Sixth

Physics Visit

Sixth Form Physics students travelled to the Diamond Synchrotron located near Oxford, a particle accelerator vital for intricate studies in chemistry and materials. The visit's highlights featured a guided tour of the Synchrotron while it was inactive, to closely examine the magnets that steer high-velocity electrons along the 750-metre track. Additionally, the students engaged in discussions with scientists about their diverse research initiatives.



Sixth Form Volunteering at Lower Farm Academy

Going to Lower Farm over the last few weeks has been an amazing experience and it has taught us so much. Some of the things we learnt included how to communicate with adults and younger children and how teachers manage a classroom full of younger students. Another important thing we learnt was how to manage different students and how to adapt your language depending on the year you were in, to benefit their learning in the best way possible. We also had so much fun at lunchtimes playing different play-

NEXT visit

Our sixth form students had the pleasure of welcoming Lizzie Kelk, Early Careers Recruitment Business Partner at NEXT PLC, for an engaging session on careers in buying and merchandising. Lizzie provided a fascinating look into NEXT's progressive culture and answered numerous student questions about entry requirements and essential skills. She also gave practical tips on creating compelling CVs that highlight a passion for fashion.





Mandarin

We are very proud of our provision in languages and our Mandarin department. With three native Mandarin speakers on our staff, we are proud to be the only school in the area with Mandarin on the curriculum from Year 5—Upper Sixth.

A group of 34 Mandarin students visited Chinatown and the British Museum earlier last half term. In Chinatown, they indulged in their favourite zhen zhu nai cha (bubble tea) and everyone all ate a delicious lunch. Of course, shopping for souvenirs was an essential part as well.

At the British Museum, they conducted research on the Silk Road Exhibition and interviewed Chinese visitors in Mandarin. The students felt very proud of overcoming the challenge of speaking Mandarin with strangers, an experience they found valuable despite initial apprehensions.

Mandarin





Charity

During our 3-18 Mental Health Awareness Week, pupils at both the Junior and Senior School took part in a non uniform day. They raised a total of £710 for the Laura Centre <https://the-laura-centre-fundraising.raisely.com/donate>

Comic relief at the Junior School raised a fantastic £296.55—thank you for your support.

Two of our Senior School pupils, Evie Howard and Izzy Mansfield participated in the 75 Hour Netball Marathon. Players took on the challenge in 3 hour slots to contribute to the 75 hour challenge, raising over £55,000 for The Kids Village Charity, building the UK's first respite holiday village, here in the Midlands, for critically ill children and their families.



Charity



As well as a number of parents running the London Marathon, our very own **Mrs Nightingale** is running to raise funds for Stickler Syndrome UK. [Her fundraising page can be found here](#)—we wish her every success!



Post-Inspection celebration

Children young and old (!) enjoyed the fantastic ice-cream so generously donated to the school by former Governor and owner of [Suncream Dairies](#), Rebecca Davies.

We are very grateful to Suncream Dairies for helping us to celebrate a wonderful week in which Dixie staff and pupils shone—along with the sun!



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Ice Cream



Music

Junior School students performed 1 or 2 songs each for an audience of parents, with one group piece at the end. All students sang confidently from memory.

We were also joined by 3 Senior School students, each singing 1 song to inspire the younger singers and also gain some valuable performance experience.



Years 6-8 students who have singing lessons sang in a short casual concert. Years 9-12 students who have singing lessons also sang in a separate concert, each singing one song to gain performance experience. This was followed by a few members of Dixie Staff singing an acapella version of *And So It Goes* by Billy Joel with William Taylor as soloist.





Dixie Equestrianism

Huge congratulations to the Dixie Equestrian Team for their outstanding performances this term. Thanks also to our wonderful parents for all their support, and our inspirational Team Manager Suki.



Equestrianism
and
Young
Enterprise

Young Enterprise

On Friday, March 21st, the Young Enterprise team, Post & Plant, had the opportunity to present their seeded envelope greetings cards at the Governors' meeting.

They delivered a clear explanation of their business concept, provided a financial update and were able to outline future plans, as well as make a number of sales! The team is now preparing for the competition at Harington School in Oakham on April 30th.

POST & PLANT
"SEND A CARD GROW A MEMORY"
1 CARD FOR £2.50
OR 3 CARDS FOR £6



FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM
@POSTANDPLANT

MADE BY THE DIXIE GRAMMAR SCHOOL





The Impact of Smartphones: Prioritising Our Children's Wellbeing Online

At Dixie, the online safety and wellbeing of our pupil is a paramount concern. We are increasingly aware of the profound impact smartphones can have on our children and young people, and it is vital that we work together to navigate this digital landscape effectively.

Beyond the well-documented risks of exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and online grooming, we must also pay close attention to the potential effects of excessive smartphone use on our pupils' mental health.

We encourage all parents to consider the amount of time their children spend on their smartphones and to support them in establishing healthy boundaries. Research from King's College London highlights important links between what they term "problematic smartphone use" and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and insomnia in teenagers. [You can read more about this research here.](#) [Compass has also published an article](#) on what effects mobile phones can have on children.

To help our students develop a balanced and healthy relationship with technology, we recommend:

Open and Honest Conversations: Talk to your child regularly about their online activities, both the positive aspects and the potential challenges. Create a safe space for them to share any concerns.

Establishing Screen Time Limits: Discuss and agree on reasonable limits for smartphone use, particularly before bed and during study time. Consider utilising built-in parental control features or third-party apps to support this.

Encouraging "Tech-Free" Zones and Times: Designate certain areas of the house or times of the day (e.g., mealtimes, family activities) as phone-free zones.

Promoting Offline Activities: Encourage participation in hobbies, sports, arts, and social interactions that do not involve screens.

Leading by Example: Be mindful of your own smartphone usage and demonstrate healthy habits.

We understand that smartphones can be valuable tools for communication and learning. However, it is crucial that their use is balanced and does not negatively impact our pupils' mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. If you have any concerns about your child's online safety or their relationship with technology, please do not hesitate to contact their class teacher or form tutor, the pastoral team, or myself directly. We are here to support both you and your child.

Understanding Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Its Implications for Our Children

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly evolving and becoming increasingly integrated into our daily lives. Simply put, AI refers to the ability of computers and machines to learn and perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. Familiar examples include virtual assistants like Alexa and Siri, as well as chatbots such as ChatGPT and My AI on Snapchat.

While AI offers many potential benefits, it also presents new challenges and risks that we must be aware of, particularly concerning the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people.



The Dixie Grammar School

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Safeguarding Whole School

Parent Businesses

Alumni



Alumni QR Code

Potential Risks Associated with AI:

Inappropriate Content through Chat Apps: A quick search for "AI Chat" in app stores reveals a multitude of applications, many of which carry age ratings of 17+ and are therefore unsuitable for children. These apps may expose them to inappropriate conversations, harmful content, or potentially dangerous interactions.

Image Manipulation and Safeguarding Concerns: AI tools now exist that can be used to digitally alter images in harmful ways, including the removal of clothing. This raises serious safeguarding and privacy concerns and could be misused to create and share inappropriate or exploitative content.

Deepfakes and Misinformation: AI can generate realistic but fake videos known as "deepfakes." These can be used to spread misinformation, create harmful narratives, or even impersonate individuals, potentially leading to distress and reputational damage.

Protecting Our Children in the Age of AI:

As always, safeguarding our children and young people online requires a proactive and collaborative approach between home and school. Here are key steps we can take:

Enhancing Digital Literacy: It is crucial to educate our children and young people about the capabilities and potential risks of AI. Help them understand that not everything they see online is real or trustworthy and emphasise the importance of critical thinking and verifying information from reliable sources.

Implementing Parental Controls: Utilise parental control features on devices and broadband to filter content and manage access to age-inappropriate apps and websites. Explore settings within specific AI-powered apps where available.

Open and Ongoing Communication: Maintain regular conversations with your child about their online experiences, including their use of AI tools. Encourage them to come to you or another trusted adult if they encounter anything that makes them feel uncomfortable, confused, or worried.

To further support you in navigating AI safety, the [NSPCC offers very useful safety tips for parents](#) and **Internet Matters** [has also produced a helpful parent guide](#) that you may find of interest.

We are committed to staying informed about the evolving landscape of AI and its implications for our pupils. By working together, we can empower our children and young people to use technology safely and responsibly.

Mrs Banton, Whole School Designated Safeguarding Lead

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 click on the below link to complete the form.

[Parent Business Contact Questionnaire](#)