

DAME ALLAN'S Digest



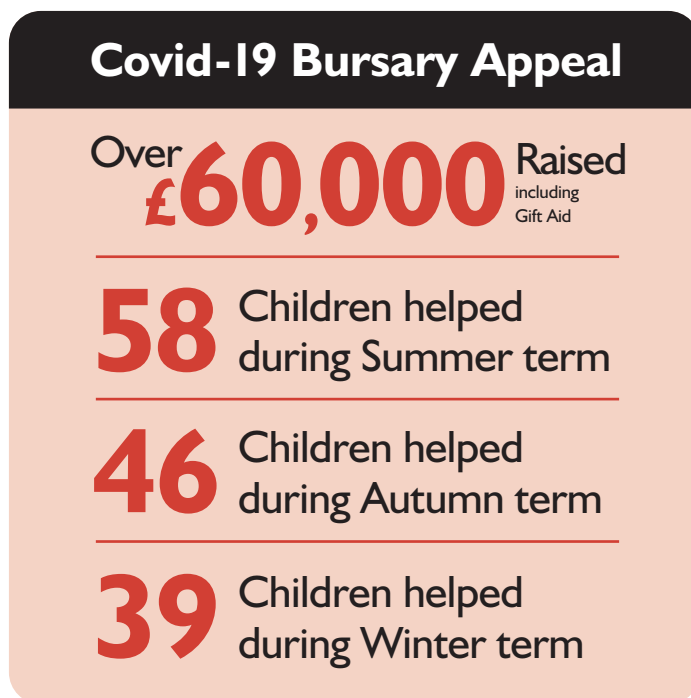
FEBRUARY 2021

Investing in the present and building the future

Following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic at the beginning of 2020, the Schools' community found itself in unprecedented circumstances. In particular, some of our families saw their income severely impacted by the lengthy lockdown measures from March to July with more to follow through subsequent restrictions in place ever since. As such, these families were unable to pay fees and were having to consider the difficult decision to remove their children from Dame Allan's.

We knew that losing these children would have been devastating - not only for them and their families, but for the whole community as other students would be losing their friends and valuable members of the Schools. The Governors and staff were determined to maintain stability for all of our pupils so made the decision to create a funding programme, supported by existing school funds of £250,000, which would ensure the Dame Allan's family remained whole.

We launched our Covid-19 Bursary Appeal and reached out to you, the wider Dame Allan's Schools community, to ask for your help and support. We did so with no prior expectation of how much the appeal would achieve, but within days of launching the campaign, so many of you came forward to donate.



Thanks to your generosity, the Covid-19 Bursary Appeal has raised over £60,000 to date, including Gift Aid. This means we have been able to help 58 children in the summer term, 46 in the autumn term and 39 during the winter with the average bursary covering an average of 40% of fees.

Unfortunately, the effects of the pandemic are far-reaching and, with no real end in sight, applications for bursary assistance are ongoing. The Schools are committed to continue assisting these families until the end of this academic year with a view to reviewing in summer 2021.

In the months before the pandemic, the Schools had already committed to developing the north end of the Senior Schools and the building work was to begin during summer 2020. This was a large financial investment,

but a fantastic opportunity and something we knew would be of great benefit to both current and future students. Following the national outbreak, we immediately put our plans on hold with the intention of resuming the build in due course. As you are now aware, the build will go ahead this summer with more details to follow in the coming weeks.

In our ethos, we say 'Dame Allan's exists to provide a first rate education for young people from all cultures and backgrounds within a supportive environment'. As such, we are committed to assisting families in need, but in order to keep providing first-rate education for all students, we must continue to develop our facilities.

We ask you to help us achieve these aims. Please consider making a donation to our Covid-19 Bursary Fund.



A welcome from the Principal

What a difference a few weeks makes! In my previous welcome for the December Digest, I talked of looking ahead to the Spring term and a return to extra-curricular activities, sports and out of school trips. Alas, the Prime Minister's announcement on 5th January put paid to those plans and placed us back into the all-too-familiar territory of distance learning. I would like to take this opportunity, once again, to thank all of you for your overwhelming support, patience and flexibility in dealing with the sudden changes.

This term, our staff at both the Junior and Senior Schools have been working hard to continue providing the fullest possible range of experiences for our pupils, who in turn have adapted quickly and engaged extremely well with this new way of working. I commend all of them for that. Over the coming weeks, you can expect virtual music, dance and drama events; outdoor learning awards such as John Muir and Duke of Edinburgh; participation in the Young Engineering Leaders Award; various sports challenges and so much more.

To ensure we continue to provide the very best distance learning and extracurricular activities, we've enhanced our online provision this year, such as with the use of 'breakout rooms', polls and quizzes, which is aimed at helping children to connect and engage with their learning and their friends who we know they are missing so much.

Promoting good mental health is a priority for the Schools at all times, but we are particularly aware of the exceptional challenges our pupils and families have faced over the last year. We continue to provide remote access to our counselling and support services and promote activities to help them develop awareness of mental wellbeing.

As is traditional at this time of year, we rededicate ourselves to the service of Dame Allan's foundation over 300 years ago with our Founders' Day service on Friday 12th February. As with our Carol Service, this video will be accessible via YouTube from 10am.

I wish you a very restful, well-deserved half-term break.

If you would like to make a donation, please go to dameallans.co.uk/covid-19-bursary-appeal or email our Development Officer: t.elandar@dameallans.co.uk

Supporting good mental wellbeing

During the challenging and somewhat isolating times of the last 12 months, we are particularly aware of the strain this has placed on our pupils' mental health.

Good mental health is supported by good physical health and so our sports staff across the Schools have been posting regular fitness challenges. Added to which the music and dance departments have worked tirelessly to ensure students can take part in activities away from their screens.

During Children's Mental Health Week this half-term, teaching staff engaged some pupils across the Schools in activities which aimed to encourage and destigmatise speaking out about mental health concerns - not just their own, but if they felt others around them were struggling, too.

The theme this year was 'Express Yourself' and some pupils across the Junior School took part in a range of activities to help them do so, including 'Dress to Express'.

At the Senior Schools, the theme was 'Make Time To Talk'. Students looked at ways to communicate in these digital times and how to broach conversations when sometimes a simple 'how are you?' can be difficult to answer.

We also shared tips via social media to help look after mental health and compiled some useful resources on our website: dameallans.co.uk/coronavirus

The wellbeing of our students is as important for us as developing their academic learning, which is why we continue to invest in our mental health services at the Schools. Thanks to a new addition in the Autumn term, we now have three counsellors and a psychological therapist on staff. Please get in touch if you feel your child would benefit from this service.





In conversation with... Mr Kirkbride, Estates Manager.

Tell us a little bit about yourself and your team.

My name is Mr Kirkbride and I am the Estates Manager at Dame Allan's Schools. I was first employed in September 2007 as the Schools' Caretaker before being promoted to Estates Manager in April 2016. The Estates team consists of Mr Hopper, Junior School Caretaker; Mr Burns, Head Groundsman; Mr Findlay, Assistant Groundsman/Caretaker; and Mr Newbery, Assistant Caretaker. Mr Burns has worked at Dame Allan's for 34 years, keeping the sports field in pristine condition.

The overall responsibility of the Estates team is ensuring the smooth running of the Schools and keeping the whole school community safe and warm. The list of duties that entails is endless! To name a few:

maintaining the heating systems with regular safety checks on the boilers as well as the water, gas and electricity systems; overseeing cleaning procedures; dealing with Health and Safety issues; and ensuring the security of both school sites. We also operate and maintain the Schools' mini-buses, transporting pupils between the two schools.

Many of our duties are what you'd call 'unseen' tasks such as portage. If you've ever attended an event in the Newsom Hall, we will have set up the room and pack it all up once the event has ended. School holidays are some of our busiest times coordinating contractors to carry out repairs and refurbishment.

You've been part of the Dame Allan's family for a long time. What made you want to work here?

My son was a student at Dame Allan's in 2001-2008 and loved his time here. Knowing it was such a fantastic school, when the position of caretaker was advertised, I immediately applied.

As a parent, I valued the ethos of the school and will always be

grateful for the bursary my son was awarded. It meant we could give our son an excellent education that we otherwise could not have afforded. He went on to study chemistry at Heriott Watt University in Edinburgh, where he now lives and works as a Principal Engineer.

What are your favourite things about what you do? Any challenges?

The best thing about my job is meeting and working with such a wide range of people and knowing that no two days are ever going to be the same. The more challenging thing is definitely being called out in the middle of the night when alarms activate. The most recent was 4am on Christmas morning due to a technical fault with the fire system!

Some of the ways we run Dame Allan's has changed since the outbreak of COVID-19. How has your team adapted to these new measures?

Covid has proved to be challenging for the whole Estates team, but I am proud of my team for all their hard work and

ingenuity over the last twelve months. We've had to be able to adapt very quickly as time spent in lockdown then being in school adhering to strict social distancing measures requires very different approaches. The cleaning programme at both sites was made even more robust and topping up the hand-sanitiser dispensers has been a never ending process! We were also heavily involved in developing the one-way system at the Senior Schools for the return to school. I am confident that we are ready to open to Schools' whenever the government lifts current restrictions.

How does this differ from what you had planned for the 2020-21 academic year?

We expected to be working around the new development at the Senior Schools this year. Unfortunately, this was put on hold because of Covid. It is fantastic that it has been announced work will begin this summer. Such a large and exciting project brings with it new challenges for the Estates team, but all of us are looking forward to the project starting and can't wait to see the new facilities!



The Allanian Society

February 7th marks the centenary of the schools officially adopting the moniker Dame Allan's Schools. Whilst acknowledging our founder goes back to the inaugural anniversary sermon, preached in St Nicholas' church in 1718, this year Allanians around the globe are looking forward to an online commemoration of Founder's Day.

Recently, the Allanian sense of community was very evident when Junior School pupils, through DASPA's support, created bookmarks to send out to Allanians born before 1940 as a token of the Dame Allan's family. Extending the warmth of fellowship in the cold of winter lockdown shows Eleanor Allan's spirit of compassion and generosity

continuing at the schools which bear her name. She was inspired by her Christian faith to take the resources with which she was blessed and make them a blessing to others, and such contemporary acts of kindness demonstrate that today the schools bear not just her name, but her nature. Stephen Davies, *Chairman of the Allanian Society*

Contact us

If you are interested in joining the board and helping to shape the future of the Allanian Society, please contact the Development Office: 0191 275 1500
e: alumnirelations@dameallans.co.uk
We are also on Facebook, find us [f](#) The Allanian Society

Get Up and Go!

Getting outside offers not only great physical benefit, but also supports good mental health. In today's world of virtual learning and national lockdowns, time outside in the fresh air away from screens and sensory overload is crucial. Back in the first lockdown of spring and summer 2020, we were blessed with good weather which certainly helped to motivate us to get outdoors. Fast forward to the present day and the cold, wet weather seems a little less inspiring. Thankfully, our fantastic OLED team has launched their 'Get Up and Go!' competition to help encourage students to get active every day.

To enter, just email Mrs Cookson with a photo of you taking part in any outdoor activities. This can be anything you like, from walking to den building to future adventure planning. You can enter as many times as you want. Mrs Cookson will add a raffle ticket with your name on it with every photo submission.

With a prize draw of outdoor goodies worth over £500, we're sure this competition is just the motivation you need to 'Get Up and Go!'



Developing our distance learning

We continue to invest in our digital provision for distance learning. Recently this included updating our Google Workspace. Alongside live lessons via Google Meets, this includes:

Breakout rooms

Where appropriate, Senior Schools teachers can now use breakout rooms to facilitate small group discussion or group work. Pupils can be separated into smaller 'rooms' to discuss their responses to a task and then the teacher can bring the rooms back together for full class discussion or activities.

Polling

Teachers can now set up a poll and get live responses to the question in real time. They can use these to see if the class has grasped a concept before moving on, or to help identify misconceptions.

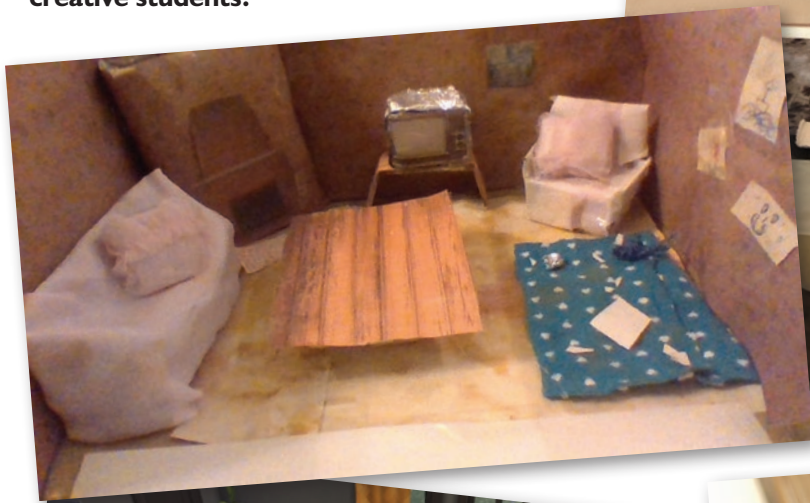
Q&A

Teachers can post questions in a Meet so all pupils can see this and consider their responses, rather than just relying on pupils hearing a question the teacher asked. Students can also ask questions using this feature and then 'upvote' each other's questions so teachers can see what pupils want to know/find out.

Setting the scene

In their drama lessons, Year 9 and 10 students have been exploring Theatrical Design as part of their study of 'Blood Brothers' (Year 9) and 'Noughts and Crosses' (Year 10). Ordinarily, set design would be something only done by Year 10 as part of the GCSE programme, but Mrs Clarke thought it would be a fun, creative task for Year 9 to get them away from their screens and thinking about design.

As you can see, we have some very creative students!



Next
half
term...

We've got lots of really great things coming up over the next few weeks:

- Virtual Jazz Festival
- The whole of KS3 is taking part in the BBC Young Reporters Festival
- The Junior School Talent Show
- Senior Schools' Public Speaking Competition
- House Dance competitions at both the Junior School and Senior Schools

Before then, we hope you have a lovely, restful half-term break!

DASPA

DASPA had some great activities towards the end of last term. Our raffle was won by a member of the Senior Schools science department and the Family Christmas Quiz was won by a family in the Senior Schools. The DASPA AGM was really well attended and we would like to welcome all the new members of DASPA who have joined our committee. The reindeer visit at the Junior School and Nursery was a big success, too!

Unfortunately the lockdown has meant we have had to postpone our planned Fun Friday activities at the Junior School and postpone our will month fundraising drive with Kingswalk Law in Gosforth. These activities will commence as soon as we're able.

The Junior Committee is looking at ways to help our younger students to socially engage virtually in this lockdown and will be in touch with parents with possible ideas. If any parents have any ideas or if you would like to join the Junior WhatsApp groups, please email us at the address below.

We would like to thank all the students for their amazing bookmark designs in our DASPA Bookmark Competition. Some of these beautiful bookmarks have been sent to reach out to some Allanians and others to local care homes. Many thanks to Laura Percy and Tove Elander for their work on this project.

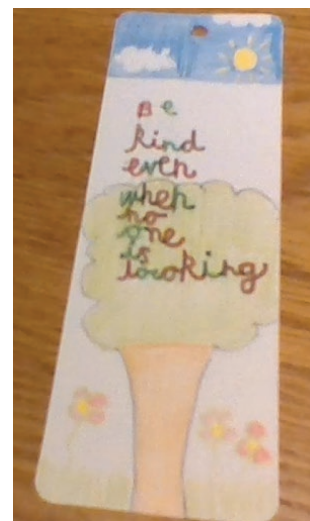
DASPA is continuing to seek ways to support the Schools and the wider Dame Allan's community during this pandemic. Until we can resume 'normal life' activities, our focus will continue to be friend-raising with various virtual activities. We also have a LinkedIn group, it can be found by searching DASPA then group, it's open to all to join and we hope it could be a great place for parents to connect informally.

Looking ahead to the next half-term, we will be marking what would have been our DASPA Family Ceilidh with a quiz so look out for that. We will also launch a virtual pet show, so please capitalise on any pet photo opportunities over the half-term break!

We really welcome any ideas of ways we can engage with the community during lockdown. If you have anything to share, please do get in touch.

Wishing you all the very best.
DASPA Committee

Contact us at daspa@dameallans.co.uk



And finally...

Something to make you smile!



Safeguarding at Dame Allan's

With all of us spending more and more time communicating via screens at the moment, it has never been more important to make sure we're all safe online.

Safer Internet Day was on Tuesday 9th February. Its founder shares lots of really helpful resources, hints and tips on their website, all divided into age-appropriate categories.

www.saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/safer-internet-day-2021/safer-internet-day-2021-top-tips



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