

DAME ALLAN'S Digest

MARCH 2021



Following the announcement from the Governors in February, we are excited to start sharing with you some of our plans for the North End development of the Schools.



Work on the £8million development will start in July 2021, and is expected to be completed in August 2022. This is the next major step in the development of the Schools, following the opening of the highly successful Junior School and Nursery in 2012.

The new two storey building, complete with a living wall, will see facilities for the art department, with three art classrooms, a print room for etching and screen printing and an

exhibition space for pupils to be able to showcase some of their work with some events being open to the public.

In addition there will be three physics laboratories, a new suite of offices for the Bursary, as well as additional classrooms, changing rooms for the gym and a dedicated sixth form space for DT. We hope that this Special Edition of the Digest will give a flavour of what the new facilities will provide and what they will mean, not just to current pupils, but to pupils in the future. Commenting, Chair of

Governors Ian Belsham said, "We are delighted that this new build is going ahead. The project was put on hold last year because we wanted to support parents with children in school who had been affected by the pandemic financially and we were pleased to be able to do that.

"The Senior School was built in 1934 and although we've spent a lot of money in the past, we know that it's time to update some parts of the building. This exciting development will bring our art department together finally, while the three new laboratories will create the perfect learning environment to support our many students of science.

"We've invested several million pounds over the last few years in upgrading facilities and we have further developments we would like to undertake in the future."

**If you have any questions about the new North End development, please contact enquiries@
dameallans.co.uk
or call 0191 275 0608**

The next transformative step in the future of our schools

Will Scott, Principal

When I first visited Dame Allan's Schools in September 2019, the project to transform the North End of our senior site had been launched and we were looking to break ground in July 2020. Unfortunately we then had to put the project on hold for a year due the pandemic. We emerge now, blinking in the sunlight, into a very changed world. Yet there is comfort in knowing we can finally start work this July on the development which will mean so much to Dame Allan's, now and in the future.



This exciting development will provide a much-needed increase in space and an upgrade to some of the more tired parts of our Fenham site. But it is far from being a vanity project. This is crucial work for us, to create the high quality facilities and spaces which our superb curriculum deserves.

The Schools have grown so much and our pupil numbers are going from strength to strength, rising from around 900 to nearly 1,200 during the past ten years. We are known for strong pastoral care and our range of activities in a broad education. We have a holistic approach to the way we develop and nurture every child who comes here. Academic results are important, but they are not everything.

With the new development comes outstanding facilities for our thriving arts curriculum. It will bring our wonderful Art department together around a light and airy exhibition space which will allow pupils to showcase their work and be inspired by others. I hope it will be seen as a sign of how much we value Art here at Dame Allan's, a subject which is so often linked with well-being and positive self-expression.

Elsewhere, new science labs will mean the best facilities to enhance the pursuit of STEM careers - and I know pupils will have great fun taking part in practical work in these surroundings too! While the arts and sciences are incredibly important

at Dame Allan's, this development will mean we can also build on our pastoral care by creating a dedicated well-being centre staffed by our excellent school counsellors and psychological therapist.

The North End development is a statement of intent and a vote of confidence, on behalf of the Governors and parent body, in the future of the school. I've enjoyed having a number of positive conversations with parents recently and I believe the development will provide a great opportunity to bring us together as we focus on the future.

For our staff and pupils, it's going to be exciting to see the building going up. There will be disruption, but this project will also act as an energiser for us all. Our last major development was the building of our Junior School and nursery ten years ago. Although we have seen some development since - the Reece Technology Centre and drama studio to name two - this is the next transformative step in the future of the Schools. It will bring our buildings up to the standard of our academic excellence and it's important that our pupils have facilities that will support and inspire their learning. More developments will follow in the years to come. For now, I hope you will join me in celebrating this great news for the Schools.

It will be a space where people feel they belong

Zoe Allonby, Head of Art



Recalling when I was at school, the art space was one which was vibrant, exciting and welcoming. A space where students would inspire and be inspired by others, where Year 9 could be wowed by what Year 13 were working on, encouraging them to raise their own expectations of what could be achieved in art. There was a real energy in the department and I've longed to work in a similar space. Now, with our new development, our vibrant art department will be delivering a dynamic, challenging and engaging art education together as a team working in one space for the first time in Dame Allan's history.

The space where we engage with art is incredibly important. Creating and viewing art is integral to space - how it enables teachers and students to work alongside each other, and how it interacts with its audience are key.

At present we have three individual classrooms in three different parts of the school. This development will enable us to share good practice. It will lead to investment in new equipment, allowing us to develop existing techniques as well as bringing in new ones, creating installations and pushing boundaries to work collaboratively using the space. Engaging in art is about much more than painting a pretty picture - it is about pushing the limits and finding your voice, it should facilitate conversations around art and culture.

The development will comprise three art-specific teaching rooms with a partial glass ceiling and big windows to maximise natural light which will impact on how students work, and potentially have a positive effect on mind set and well-being.

There will be a print room for etching and screen printing, and a Sixth Form workspace so when students are not on timetable, they can embed themselves in the department. The classrooms will be accessed through the gallery space providing an opportunity to showcase work to different age groups inspiring

students and visitors. Accessing the gallery space in this way will push students to expand their ideas and provide an opportunity to view their own work outside the classroom setting. Students enjoy the feelings of achievement and pride from seeing their work displayed and may start to consider how they can be part of the creative industries - industries that contribute almost £13m to the UK economy every hour. Whether a student's ultimate focus is creative industries, medicine, politics, business etc. an art education develops vital skills such as critical thinking, resilience, and a growth mind set valuable in all career paths and areas of life - the outliers in all fields are the most creative thinkers. Art and cultural production is deeply embedded in humanity, the very heart of society and to understand your cultural and visual history is to understand your identity.

Research has shown that the arts have a positive impact on mental health and many people have turned to art and other creative pursuits during the pandemic, perhaps because being creative forces us to use our brains in a different way and we have enjoyed the distraction this brings alongside a sense of engagement and achievement. Self-expression allows us to think beyond what we already know, it's a world full of possibility and engaging in the arts can be used to build capacity for managing our mental and emotional well-being.

I'm a big believer in using art as a platform to visually communicate what we believe in and to reflect on what is going on in the world. Year 9 are currently working on a project inspired by Black Lives Matter and African American contemporary textile artist Bisa Butler. For me, art teaching is about fostering growth - encouraging people to open a dialogue, to question what they think they know and to process how we feel about the world around us.

The development is very exciting. It will take the department back to our time at art school and reignite the fire in our bellies. I look forward to seeing that same sense of belonging in the students who are passionate about art and those who want to explore what art has to offer them.

“ I think the new facilities will impact on how much people will want to do Art for GCSE and A Level. ”

Harry



“ I’m really excited about the development. There will be so much more space which will allow for a lot of opportunities to explore different mediums and to inspire more people to take up Art. ”

Juliette

“ The new space will be great for artwork but also I think it will be a good place to work in generally. More space will definitely be better! ”

Alfie



“ I’m considering a career in art, along with other possible careers. I think it’s really exciting that there’s going to be more space for art and I think it will mean that our work is better too. ”

Ciara



**£8million
development**

**2200 square
metres**

16 classrooms

**multi functional
exhibition space**

**3 new physics
labs**

The North End Development represents much more than the creation of state of the art facilities for our students, it exemplifies positivity, a belief in the future of our children and our establishment.

Menisha Gela, Director of Development.

“ Science makes the world easier to live in. But it’s art that makes the world worth living in. ”

I’ve heard this comment (or a variation of it) a number of times over the past few years and it’s one I find myself returning to as I consider the latest development at the Schools. Art and science have historically been viewed, for the most part, as distinct subjects. Yet when you start to look into it more closely, the reality is that incredible things tend to happen when the fields of science and art merge.

In fact, despite assumptions that the two are almost polar opposites, neither field has strictly defined boundaries in practice. However, within traditional education systems, there is a tendency to view the pursuit of scientific learning as having greater value. At Dame Allan’s we recognise the importance of giving our students a wide range of experiences and the opportunity to learn in new and innovative ways.

The reality is that at the intersection of both fields, science and art are able to influence and shape each other in incredible and valuable ways. Many people are well aware of the continual push to encourage students to take STEM subjects. But even whilst the issue of getting students involved in such areas is being addressed, another group are pushing further still, looking for such support to be



expanded to the wider STEAM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Maths).

Teachers working in cross-curricular STEAM settings often see their students making connections between concepts and solving problems in new and exciting ways. And it is precisely this innovation and creativity that lies behind our approach to the North End Development. Our new project is an important step in our plans to continue to build on the educational excellence provided by Dame Allan’s Schools as well the creation of facilities that can help us work more closely with our communities.

If you want to learn more about the building or our exciting plans for the future and how to get involved, please do not hesitate to contact me on mn.gela@dameallans.co.uk or call 0191 275 0608



DAME ALLAN'S SCHOOLS
building the future

t: 0191 275 1500 e: news@dameallans.co.uk www.dameallans.co.uk  