



SEPTEMBER 2024

Forging Friendships



Mrs Downie, Director of Pupil Wellbeing

Another school year is upon us, and whether your child is joining us as a new pupil - especially as one of our Year 7s - or if they're returning to continue their education, you'll find that this new start can often get children thinking about what they want to achieve over the next months.

Pupils' choices and the people they spend time with will shape their future, so we always remind them how important it is to be surrounded with a strong and supportive community.

At Dame Allan's, we pride ourselves on having a wonderful group of young people under our care. The friendships forged here can and often do last a lifetime. So, how do we make sure they are creating good friendships, whilst respecting their own boundaries?

A great way for pupils to do this is to seek out fellow pupils with similar interests. That could be a sport, an academic subject they are interested in, a similarity in religious or ethical beliefs (such as a passion for the environment), or a hobby that they both enjoy. Our co-curricular clubs are great for making that first step and getting to know like-minded people.

We understand that young people, especially those in a new surroundings, may find it hard to avoid pressure to fit in and follow the crowd. It can sometimes be easier to stay quiet and not try new things, but this is not a route to success for your child or for their friendships! You'll hear us talk a lot at Dame Allan's about our 'Attributes for Success'. These are being respectful, being motivated, being strategic, and being a meta-thinker. These key behaviours are something we value and encourage all of our pupils.

As you know, friendships, like most things in life, take time and attention. It's important to reassure your child that, little by little, those tentative conversations on their first day - in the lunch queue, or as they leave their maths lesson - will often blossom into something greater.

However, keep in mind that we are all human, so inevitably young people will have conflict and fall outs with friends and the people around them. If they have any worries or concerns, about friendship or anything else, they can reach out to me or the pastoral team, chat to their Form Tutor, use our anonymous Whisper service, or get in touch with our Sixth Form Peer Mentors. More details on how to reach all of these are on page 5, but please know that there is always someone there for your child, and for you too as a parent.

Friendship FAQs

- advice for your child

I'm feeling a bit lonely and scared as I don't know anyone. How can I make friends?

The first thing to remember is that a lot of people will be in the same situation. Lots of people join Dame Allan's without knowing anyone else in their year! It's important to be brave and reach out; you'll find that most people are glad of a friendly approach. If you are in Year 7, the residential trip will be a perfect opportunity to bond with your new classmates. Otherwise, why not try out a new co-curricular club? With so much to choose from, you're bound to find something you love. Whether you choose dance, basketball, or computing club, you will find your people through these shared passions.

One of my friends has been talking about trying vaping, I feel like I'll be left out if I don't try it too.

Firstly, it is crucial to know that vaping and the use of any other nicotine products is absolutely not allowed at Dame Allan's. Peer pressure can be so hard, and when you see so many people turning to vapes and similar, it can feel like you are being 'uncool'. Remember to stick to your own morals - you know it is not right. You can also report anything like this anonymously via our confidential Whisper service, or speak to a member of the pastoral team.

Sometimes, you might realise that a friend you made early in your time at school (or elsewhere) is no longer the kind of person you want to be around. This is a very brave and mature decision; you are always allowed to reevaluate a friendship. The pastoral team can support you through this process if you need a little help or advice.

I'm worried that one of my friends isn't eating enough, they always have food left on their tray at lunchtime. How can I help them without damaging our friendship?

This can be such a worrying situation and it is very kind of you to watch out for your friend. This is what the pastoral team or your Form Tutor are for, so please do speak to them and they will make sure your friend is supported. You can do this anonymously too via Whisper, so your friend won't know it was you.

Sixth Form Students become Mental Health First Aiders



We are very proud of our latest batch of Mental Health First Aiders, who underwent a two-day training course, overseen by Mrs Downie, to learn the skills needed to support their peers through mental health challenges.

The Sixth Form students created personas to understand why people may struggle with their mental health, learnt about common triggers, and developed the tools to listen, reassure, and respond to those in mental health distress. They will offer a listening ear to fellow pupils, as well as take part in our Sixth Form Peer Mentoring scheme, which pairs an older student with a younger pupil who needs some additional support.





News from the School Nurse

School Nurse Mrs Procter

We have a lot of new starters at Dame Allan's as this edition comes out, so for those who do not know me I am pleased to be able to introduce myself and my role as the School Nurse. Prior to joining Dame Allans in 2017, I worked in the emergency departments at Newcastle General Hospital and the RVI for 11 years.

The role of an independent school nurse is a very special and privileged one. I work full time within the school

to support and promote our pupils' health and wellbeing. Although I have overall responsibility for all of our

pupils from ages 3-18, I am based at the Senior School. People often ask me what my role entails, and I find that question very difficult to answer. Each day is different and whilst I have some planned work to do at certain times of the year, a lot of my work is reactive and depending upon what needs a pupil has at that time.

I work across the pastoral, counselling, PSHE and SEN departments and would hope that my work helps each and every pupil to be happy, healthy and achieve their full potential.

I am a part of the School and Public Health Nurses Association task group, helping to create national guidelines on the role of nurses working within schools, with the aim that these guidelines will be endorsed by the Royal College of Nursing and help to standardise practice nationally..

My passions are naturally first aid, having come from an emergency background, teaching pupils and staff CPR and other life saving skills, supporting pupils with emotional and wellbeing concerns and fostering positive relationships with our pupils by attending as many co-curricular activities and trips as my time and family allow.

If you or your child have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available on email at la.procter@dameallans.co.uk and aim to get back to you as quickly as I can.

Be aware of: Nicotine Pouches

A concerning trend amongst young people in the UK is the use of nicotine pouches, derived from traditional Swedish snus - a tobacco product contained in a sachet. Nicotine pouches are placed under the lips, between the gums and teeth, for up to an hour, releasing nicotine. Often, they are flavoured with fruit or mint and packaged in a way to appeal to children. As they contain no tobacco, they can legally be sold to under-18s and are easily purchased online. Common brand names include 'Nordic Spirit' and 'Velo'.

Nicotine pouches are addictive and can cause dizziness, vomiting, headaches, shortness of breath, increased blood pressure and more.

It is important that children are aware of the dangers of using these products, we can offer additional support to help should your child be impacted.

You may find it useful to share this [BBC article](#), from former England Goalkeeper David James, around the harm that snus and nicotine pouches can cause.

An interview with...

Ms Lopes-Mulhearn

We are delighted to welcome Ms Lopes-Mulhearn to Dame Allan's as our new Assistant SENDCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator).

What was your last role before coming to join us at Dame Allan's?

Before joining Dame Allan's, I was a Personal Development Coach at Newcastle Sixth Form College. When I was not teaching lessons on Social and Emotional Wellbeing or Academic and Professional Progression, I was guiding and coaching individual students in diverse ways: from supporting their mental health and wellbeing, to guiding them in optimising their revision, providing career and progression advice and making pupil support referrals! I thoroughly enjoyed the tailored 1:1 support I was able to provide at such an important time in my pupils' lives.

Why did you choose to work with children with SEN?

I have a great passion for art and communication, which led me to study at a Drama School in Portugal, where I am originally from. During my studies, I was particularly interested in learning how to utilise art as a tool for empowering communication. As a result, I was exposed to incredibly impactful research about the connections between art and empowering people with SEN. After moving to Newcastle as part of the ERASMUS programme, I took part in a Physical Theatre workshop with neurotypical and neurodiverse participants. The way neurodiverse people thought, created and communicated in that safe and creative environment left me in absolute awe. I then knew I wanted to dedicate my career to working in education with children with SEN and that is all I have ever done since!

We're really excited to have you in the team, do you have any areas of specialism that you're keen to focus on?

Absolutely! I have completed a Master's Degree in Autism, where I researched the role of art in bridging the gap between autistic and neurotypical communication. I have also worked as Outreach Lead for an Autism Additionally Resourced Provision and as an SEN Teacher at an Autism Specialist School. So, I would love to use my experience to support



students in this area of SEN. However, what I am most passionate about within SEN is the promotion of equity and the empowerment of my wonderful pupils' voices: having worked closely with students with Autism, social, emotional and mental health differences, Dyslexia, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, hearing differences and physical disabilities, I have always focused on putting my pupils' voice first in order to tailor my approach to each individual. I am really excited to continue to do this at Dame Allan's Schools!

What are you most looking forward to about your new role?

Having heard wonderful things about Dame Allan's Schools' pupils, I am definitely most looking forward to meeting them all!

When you're not at work, what do you get up to?

When I am not at work I am probably doing something artistic... I love painting, crocheting, making pottery, and reading! I also love running and hiking in nature. Oh, and I travel a lot with my husband: we have been to 21 countries so far and hoping to continue our travels! There is so much to see and so many incredible people to meet around the world.

What's the best piece of advice you have ever received?

The first book I ever read, and my favourite book to this day, *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupery, taught me a very valuable lesson: it is the time you give to something that makes it precious. So, being present in every moment, enjoying the journey just as much as the destination and appreciating all the intricate processes behind everything that brings me comfort and joy every day is something very special to me, and a piece of advice that I will always give to anyone.

How to access Pastoral Support

For Pupils:

Whisper

This is an anonymous way to contact the pastoral team, which means you can get help completely privately online or via text. Whisper can be found on the pupil wellbeing site, which is accessible by all pupils.

Talk to your Form Tutor

They are there to help! Reach out in person or via their email address. No concern is too small.

Access The Snug

The Snug offers a range of support to pupils, including sessions with dedicated counsellors, learning support services, and even the support of therapy dog Heidi.

Ask the Pastoral Team

You can reach out to them directly in person, or via email. It's likely you will be taught by one of the team, but if you are not sure who they are, any member of staff will be able to take you to them. You can speak to Mrs Downie or Ms Shaw.

Seek Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring is offered to younger pupils by our Sixth Formers. They are a lovely group and can help with anything from settling-in nerves to academic support with a particular subject. Ask your Form Tutor, who can put you in touch with the Peer Mentoring Officers, Abdul and Sophie.

It can be accessed by all Senior School pupils who may be in need of additional support, and is a purposefully private space.

For more information on accessing services in The Snug, pupils should reach out to their Form Tutor, Mrs Downie.

For Parents:

Contact The Pastoral Team

The pastoral team can be contacted via enquiries@dameallans.co.uk, or call the schools directly on 0191 275 0608.



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