



DAME ALLAN'S Digest



DECEMBER 2024

Praise for Peter Pan!

Our Junior School pupils put on a magical performance of Peter Pan as this year's Christmas show.

Years 1 and 2 wowed audiences with their portrayal of classic characters, with Sam and Annabelle leading the cast as Peter Pan and Tinker Bell. There were musical numbers galore, and well as lots of fantastic dancing.

Well done to Mrs Brinn, Miss Rowe and all of the staff members who worked so hard to make this a huge success!



Christmas Card Winners

Our annual Christmas card competition returned to the Senior School, with pupils from Years 7 - 9 being challenged to create a design around the theme of stained glass. Pupils were encouraged to think about the light, pattern, and colour that all work together to create a stained glass design. The standard of entries were so high that we have three winners this year, well done to: Okiki (Y9), Zarah (Y9), and Naomi (Y8).



A welcome from the Principal

This final half term of 2024 has seen lots of festive fun across our schools, with everything from reindeer visits and Santa Claus, to Christmas card and bauble competitions, seasonal drama performances, and our much-loved annual Carol Service.

Community spirit has also been high. We've enjoyed some fantastic events, including our Christmas Fair, kindly organised by our parents' association DASPA, plus we have seen wonderful charitable work from our Sixth Formers, who have been supporting a local food bank and volunteering for various local causes. We've also welcomed the return of our annual London Drinks, for Allanians based in the capital.

We've had lots of reasons to be proud across the co-curriculum as well. Our resident Combined Cadet Force excelled in their annual inspection, whilst music and drama too have taken centre stage. Pupils and staff alike worked hard to bring us fantastic events including the Autumn Concert, Year 7 Christmas Extravaganza, and the heartwarming Reception production of the classic Nativity story.

The cold also didn't put off our sports teams, with four cross-country teams taking part in the regional finals, with plenty of excellent performances across rugby, hockey, rowing and much more besides.

Beyond the classroom, pupils have enjoyed trips both near and far, with our Year 6 pupils braving a sports tour to Edinburgh and our Sixth Form dance, history and politics students heading to London on their own exciting trips.

It has been a pleasure to see pupils of all ages finding joy in their many pursuits at this special time of year.

I wish all of you a happy Christmas and look forward to welcoming you back on Tuesday 7 January.





Nativity Performance Warms Hearts

Our Reception pupils bravely took to the Junior School stage to perform a classic telling of the Nativity story. From Mary and Joseph, to camels and shepherds, every pupil gave it their all and it was a delight to see them take pleasure in performing. Thank you to our Reception staff who offered excellent support to our young actors.



Special Festive Guests

On 10 December, bells were heard outside across the Junior School as some very special guests arrived to meet young pupils. Firstly, they were greeted by a real reindeer!

Kindly funded by DASPA, it was a magical moment for pupils - and staff - of all ages. Afterwards, pupils headed to the Yurt where they met Santa Claus himself! Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to arrange these surprises for our Junior School pupils.



Christmas Extravaganza

On Monday 2 December, our Year 7 pupils put on a show-stopping Christmas Extravaganza for an invited crowd of parents. There were Christmas classics, Santa hats and antlers, and even some audience participation to enjoy!

Well done to Mr McGregor, Miss Medway and all of the staff who worked to make this concert such a success.



In conversation with... Mrs Coggon, Junior School Counsellor

Can you tell us a little more about your role?

Of course, I am an integrative Psychotherapeutic Counsellor for children and young people. Being an integrative counsellor means I can tailor my support to meet the needs of each child; this might be using creative tools like clay, sand and drawing, or using a more verbal approach to explore the difficulties the young person is experiencing.

I support children from Reception to Year 6 at Dame Allan's Junior School with any mental wellbeing issue they may have. It's a really wide scope but this can be anything from helping with grief, to supporting children with their self-esteem. I'm based in the Schools' dedicated wellbeing area, The Cosy Snug.

Can you tell us a bit about your career before coming to Dame Allan's?

I run my own practice, Stepping Stones Therapy, alongside my work at Dame Allan's. Before that, I worked with children's charity Barnardo's - coincidentally with another Dame Allan's Counsellor, Ms McRae!



What were your first impressions of Dame Allan's?

I thought the school was lovely! I joined earlier this year and everyone has been so nice. I think it's great to see the priority given to pastoral care and children's mental health at Dame Allan's and I love having The Cosy Snug to work from.

What's your favourite part of your role?

My favourite part of my role here is definitely spending time with the children

and helping them to see that counselling can be fun, not something to be worried about.

What advice would you give to a Junior School parent who may be worried about their child's mental health?

The best thing to do is to make sure that their class teacher is aware of any issues that may be going on. They can then refer the pupil to the pastoral team, who will be able to offer help and advice. I'd say to all parents not to be shy in asking for help and support, it is what we are here for.

Charity Champions

Our community has made us proud with charitable and volunteering endeavours this half term:

Feeding Families

Our Sixth Form Charity Officers organised a Christmas foodbank collection for local charity Feeding Families. Thank you so much to everyone who contributed.



Junior Choir Spreads Christmas Joy

Our Junior Choir has been spreading the joy of the Christmas season by visiting local care homes to sing for residents. Led by Music & Drama Coordinator Mrs Brinn and complete with Santa hats, our young pupils did a great job at bringing smiles to lots of faces.



Sports Round Up

Junior Sport

38 Year 6 pupils enjoyed a rugby and hockey tour to Edinburgh, where they played against The Mary Erskine School and Stewart's Melville College.

Loretto hosted pupils and staff for lunch and the second fixture on Friday. Unfortunately, the weather stopped the rugby and

hockey, but pupils were able to enjoy getting to know each other in the playground and they kindly lent us their Sports Hall. The children represented the school extremely well throughout the tour and also took part in the Edinburgh Vaults Tour, bowling and trampolining. Junior School pupils finished the autumn term with more hockey and rugby, with every child in KS2 having the opportunity to play in fixtures against RGS.



Cross Country

Four teams qualified for the Regional Finals, which were held in Middlesbrough at Stewart Park on Thursday 7 November.

Whilst none of the teams managed to qualify for National Finals this year, it was a close call with the Junior Boys missing out by only five points! Well done to all who took part, as it was a competitive field with some excellent club runners participating.

Rugby

The 1st XV, U15 and U14's all bowled out in Round 4 of their respective national competitions to top quality opposition, it was a great effort across the age groups to get to this stage of the competition.

Since the exit from the National Vase, the 1st XV have been on an impressive unbeaten streak with wins against RGS, NSB and Harrogate Grammar.

The U12A and B teams played at Kingston Park Stadium with a crowd on a Newcastle Falcons game day against NSB. It was followed by the 1st XV vs NSB under the floodlights. This was a fantastic experience for all teams with three wins from three and also many pupils' first experience of playing in a Premiership Rugby Stadium. It has been great to see the love for rugby grow within the school. In particular, the crowds this year have been entertaining, creating a real culture across the sport.

Well done also to Charlie OB, Annabel R, Siân and Tilly R who have all been selected for U18 Northumberland County rugby squads!

Rowing

We held our first indoor house rowing competition, led by Rowing Coach Miss Mileham. Pupils of all ages took to the rowing machines to test their skills against the other houses and competition was fierce!

A big well done to Manor who took the crown, and well done to everyone who took part - it was especially nice to see some novice rowers getting to grips with the sport.



The Allanian Society

Richard Holmes Memorial Rugby Match

Our Annual match was a little different this year, as Allanians, parents, pupils, and friends of Dame Allan's were invited to watch the Dame Allan's 1st XV vs Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation.

It was a wonderful event, with some excellent rugby on display, plus refreshments and some very generous donations to Marie Curie. Thank you to everyone who helped us to honour Richard's memory.



London Drinks

Thank you so much to everyone who attended our London drinks event on Thursday 28 November, it was fantastic to see so many of you gathered at the Lansdowne Club. Drinks flowed and memories were shared!

Allanian Dinner 2025 Early Bird Offer

Our Allanian Dinner returns on 22 March 2025, with the theme 'A Celebration of Sport'. Buy your ticket before 1 January 2025 and save £10.

To book, scan the QR code or call Development Manager Katherine Leonard on 0191 275 0608.



Date for your Diary

- **Allanian Coffee Morning**

Wednesday 12 February Dame Allan's Senior School, 9.30am - 11.00am

School Trips

Sixth Form - London and Edinburgh

Our Sixth Formers have enjoyed varied trips this half term, with our dance students heading to London alongside our Y12 history and politics students - who attended a conference with speakers from Labour, Conservative, SNP, Green, Reform and the Speaker of the House of the Commons.

Meanwhile, our Philosophy students travelled to Edinburgh to visit the Museum of Illusions and the National Museum of Scotland.



Junior School visit to Northern Stage

Pupils from Years 1 - 6 enjoyed a festive trip to Northern Stage, where they watched the production of the Charles Dickens' classic, A Christmas Carol. A perfect festive treat!

CCF Inspection

Our Combined Cadet Force (CCF) underwent their annual inspection recently, which is a hugely important milestone for our cadets and leaders. Major Johnstone first met with Principal Will Scott, CCF Lead Mr Wildsmith, and Sixth Form cadets Warrant Officer Bennett (Y12) and Colour Sergeant Swinbourn (Y13).

A tour of the School followed, which culminated in a full parade in the Boys' Yard. Major Denham (Y13) led the parade and introduced Major Johnstone to the squad. Holding perfect form whilst braving freezing temperatures, every cadet made us proud!



DASPA

A big thank you to everyone who supported our DASPA Christmas Fair on 30 November. It was a great community event which welcomed pupils, parents, carers, grandparents, staff, Allanians, local residents and friends. We had over 400 people attending with over 50 volunteers on the day and raised over £5800.

We are very grateful to the volunteers who helped on the day and leading up to the event, with special thanks to our Sixth Form Officers, who were once again dressed as the eponymous Polly Bell or in top hats! Thanks also to Mrs Anderson and her team who fed everyone deliciously, Mr Finlay our caretaker, who looked after us so well and Mr Davidson for his tech help. A special note of thanks also goes to Mrs Brinn, Ms Medway and Mr McGregor for ensuring everyone was entertained with our festive choirs.

We were very pleased to welcome external stallholders and Santa to our fair too! We were also proud to support our school Enterprise and World Challenge groups, alongside some charitable organisations at the event.

This half term, the DASPA Junior Committee have also been very busy helping the Junior School to celebrate Christmas. They have arranged a Christmas Bauble Competition, Christmas Party for Year 5 and a surprise visit at the Junior School from Santa and a real life reindeer.

DASPA has also been busy supporting the Senior School with Jump In events this term, and have supported with refreshments for the Autumn Concert, the Christmas Extravaganza and Sixth Form play. A well done as well to DASPA Co-chair Laura Percy, who is organising an art project to spread Christmas cheer among Allanians and local care home residents.



We have had some great uniform sales this term too, so many thanks for all of your donations (which we continue to collect for Senior School at reception). We are pleased to announce our next sale is on 7 January at 8.45am at St James' and St Basil's Church in Fenham.

Thanks for all of your support this year, we hope to announce some exciting purchases for our Schools in the new year!

Safeguarding: How to Handle Online 'Dare Culture'

As educators and within the media, we are seeing a sharp rise in the trend for children and young people to take part in online dares or challenges. Whilst this may seem harmless to them, they can result in serious injury, or tragically, even death.

With the long Christmas break approaching and perhaps increased access to time on social media, it is important to know how to address these challenges, and why children might do them in the first place.

Most of the young people who are looking at taking part in these dares are likely in their early teens, but younger children can also be impacted. Social media algorithms will continue to 'feed' dare content to viewers once they have engaged with it, so the risk does increase with more time online.

There are several steps that parents and families can take to combat the rise of online dares or challenges:

- understand why young people might take part: a sense of curiosity, the need to seek a thrill, peer pressure, and a desire for attention can all feed into the desire for young people to engage in harmful online dares. It's also important to consider that the part of the brain responsible for understanding long-term consequences isn't fully developed in teens. This can make them more focused on the immediate reward (e.g., laughter, admiration) rather than potential risks (e.g., injury, embarrassment)
- encouraging positive outlets for curiosity and thrill-seeking, like sports, creative arts, or safe competitions, can be a powerful way to discourage teens from indulging in dares in order to reap these 'rewards'

- reinforce their self-worth: for young people who may be feeling low or lacking confidence, making sure to build their self-worth through praise and other positive reinforcements can reduce the need for them to seek external validation elsewhere - for example, the attention a foolish dare might earn
- talk about why: take the mystery out of these dares by asking why children would want to try the challenge? What would it bring? Curious and open-ended questions will encourage young people to think more critically about their actions
- further reading: The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt gives a useful insight into the dangers of phone and social media use in young people, including how it can lead to greater risk-taking behaviour that children would otherwise not take part in.



DAME ALLAN'S SCHOOLS
building the future