

Easter 2022

THE BAC

Blackfriars Academy Chronicle



Foreword

Every new term, I have the pleasurable task of determining the anchor and the key themes that I hope the classes will investigate. This Spring term, I have been amazed at the work that has been undertaken in our collective quest to understand more about 'Leaders and Followers'.

In our 'Launch' assembly, I had asked our students to spend the term thinking about who is a leader and who is a follower. Classes took this request very seriously and have spent time researching the lives of some really inspirational men and women. From the past, they have investigated figures such as Mary Seacole, Florence Nightingale and Rosa Parks but then we have been brought right up to date in Moorcroft and Middleport by looking at the life of Captain Tom, a real modern-day inspirational leader. Students have been considering the qualities and skills of what makes a great leader in order to develop and practise those skills for themselves.

For students in the Immersive Pathway, we have been concentrating upon the importance of having a voice and a means of communicating needs and emotions so that we can work with the people that help and support us. By having a voice, we can Lead on our own Independence at whatever level that is.

In the following pages, you will read about lots of occasions where our students have exemplified both leadership and followership because, as part of our 6 for 60 celebrations, we set ourselves the target of taking students from every single class on a Residential (we still have Spode's visit after Easter and unfortunately, Wedgwood's visit had to be cancelled due to Covid). In this edition of the BAC you will be able to read all about how our students learnt to safely 'Follow' the instructions of the Outward Bound leaders and to become 'Leaders', showing the staff how to negotiate the zip wire or climbing wall!

The photographs show quite clearly how all of our students expressed their emotions – joy, terror, excitement and exhilaration at overcoming their fears

In PSHE, this term, we have been looking at 'Relationships and Managing Feelings' and 'Changing and Growing' As a secondary school, we have to do lots of work on puberty, teenage emotions, and, as students progress through the school, on sex and relationships. This is, of course, all age and stage appropriate but our key message for all of our students has focused upon safety, that sometimes it is appropriate to be a follower, but sometimes not, and that consent and the ability to say, sign or indicate 'No' is very important. Take a look at the article all about PSHE for further details.

Next term, our anchor is 'Stories' and as part of the work that we will be doing, we will be trying to

give as many of our older students an opportunity to hear the stories of people who are in the workplace and we may even be able to provide work experience for some students.

We are so excited about our first Jobs Carousel morning since Covid restrictions which will be held on **Wednesday 11th May at 10:30am – 12noon**. This creates fantastic opportunities for our students to meet people from different places of work and ask questions.

If you are able to support our community by joining us on this valuable day, please contact the school. The Jobs Carousel works a little like speed dating (or so I am reliably informed!) where a small group of students with a TA move from desk to desk and listen to and ask questions. It would be a chance to share with all of our students your story of your workplace – what is it like to be a? What qualities do you need? What skills and qualifications? What is a working day like? Do you wear a uniform? What is the hardest thing about your job? What do you like the most about your job? All previous participants have loved the morning and we truly appreciate people's efforts to enrich our students' understanding of the world of work.

We look forward to reporting back to you in July on the 'Story' of the summer of 2022 at Blackfriars Academy.

- Alison



These 7 eggs are hidden throughout this newsletter, can you find them all?

Dudson

Dudson class have had fun this term with our sensory story "Going to the circus." We all decorated the classroom inside and out, and looked at all aspects of the circus and everyone in it. We all had a go at dressing up as the ring master with a red coat and hat then as a clown with Jess (TA) being the leader. We had coloured wigs, big shoes, and squirty flowers, George (TA) showed us how to fly across the classroom like a trapeze artist. We had lots of red & white material for the big top, sand in buckets for the floor and popcorn for the smell which then became the taste of the circus!

We had all our parents in for an afternoon to catch up after not seeing anybody for so long due to Covid. It was great to see so many parents: we had coffee, gorgeous cakes baked by Beth (TA) and lots of catching up. We will be doing it again shortly if only for the cake!

In the month of March as a class we have asked our parents to support us in a sponsored walk. Beth, our class TA, is doing 50 miles walk/run for SANDS. It is a charity very close to her heart and as a class we wanted to support her and help her complete her miles. The students have all been walking in support of Beth and have all benefitted from the extra exercise.

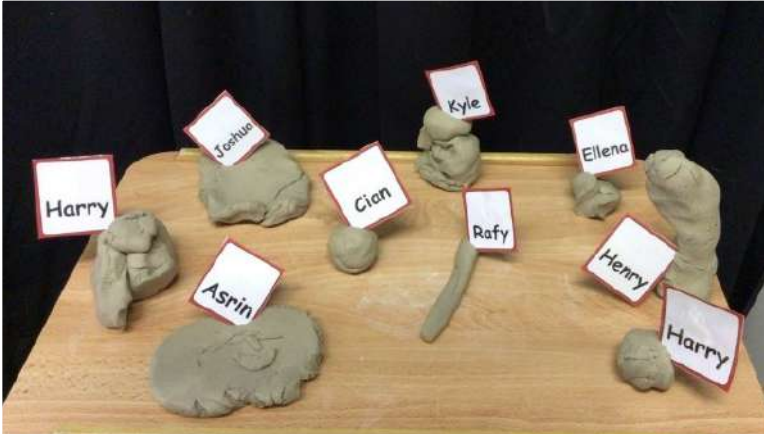


Clarice Cliff

Clarice Cliff took part in a wonderful clay workshop with Artist Shaun Doyle from London. This was part of the PSHE topic day 'Changing and Growing'.

It was a real sensory experience where the pupils explored the clay through manipulation and touch. The pupils were able to change the shape of their clay and see it growing into a creation. It was an opportunity to use their communication skills to indicate their likes and dislikes and follow instructions.

The pupils showed great curiosity, interest in the clay and they created some real masterpieces!



Wedgwood

Wedgwood have been enjoying getting out and about in the local community this term. It has been great to recommence

our shopping trips to Morrisons, going for the first time since before the pandemic. Students had listened to Mrs Parr's assembly about fair trade and so were able to look out for the labels on items in store. Other places visited have included Lyme Valley and Brampton park, students took litter pickers to help do their bit for the environment.

Finally, it was lovely to have Dan and George over to visit us from the Belong Centre. Students enjoyed taking part in an exercise class led by George (Belong Gym Instructor).



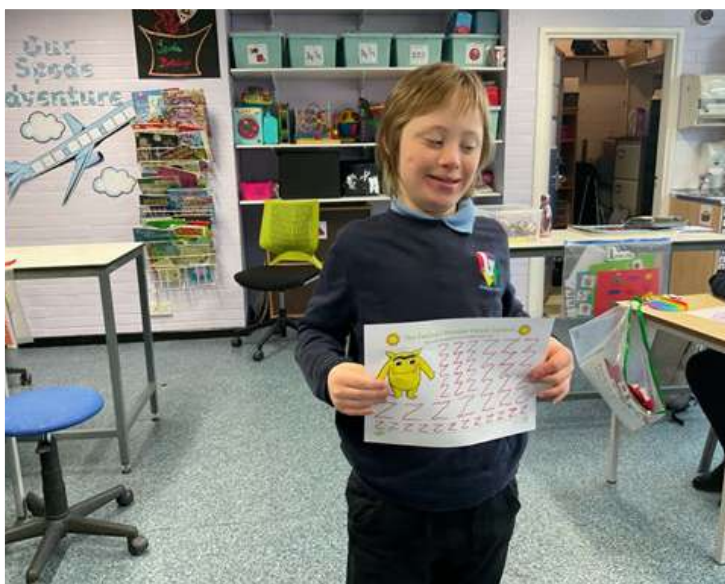
Spode

This term Spode have been very busy taking part in a range of activities and lessons. Students have worked so hard towards their goals and showed growing resilience and PRIDE.

To connect with our anchor this term of 'Leaders and Followers', we have been focusing on the topic 'Our Community Leaders'. We have enjoyed learning all about the people both in our community and at home who help us to stay safe and happy. Spode enjoyed our linked Sensory Story – The Jolly Postman! Kyle especially enjoyed dressing up as the Witch in the story. We talked about Postal Deliverers and how they help our community. We also learned about how Police, Doctors and Fire Fighters help us to stay safe. Our second story, Charlie the Firefighter, featured some fantastic new Makaton signs for us to learn too!

We enjoyed a lesson where staff demonstrated how we can ask for help to stay safe (Some students especially enjoyed watching Hannah pretend to fall over when demonstrating how NOT to cross the road!). We are looking forward to practicing our safety skills at our upcoming trip to Standon Bowers! Spode have also been working hard on their Preparation for Adulthood skills both in the special new room and in our new Breakfast Club on a Wednesday.

Well done Spode for a fantastic Easter term!



Moorcroft

Over this half term, Moorcroft have explored the school anchor 'Leaders and Followers' in a range of ways across the curriculum. The students in Moorcroft identified a range of leaders who they know (the most common suggestion was Mrs Parr, the leader of Blackfriars Academy!) and the qualities of a good leader.

The students identified being respectful, positive, helpful and confident were all qualities of a leader. They then discussed what it means to be a follower and the qualities associated with them – such as,



listening, showing PRIDE and following instructions.

Moreover, we have had a change in Moorcroft this term as we have had a new student join our class! Everybody welcomed our new student wonderfully and put their interpretations of leaders and followers into practise. Students displayed the importance of kindness and set good examples for others to follow – ensuring we are all showing PRIDE when welcoming our new student to the class.

During Preparation for Adulthood, Moorcroft have practised reading and following instructions to develop independence in living skills, using the Preparation for Adulthood room to support this. For example, following step by step instructions to make toast and hot chocolates. These lessons have definitely been a firm favourite amongst our Moorcroft

students!

Within English, we started the term with the fictional story Treasure Island where students found two leaders - Long John Silver and Jim – the students decided not all leaders should be followed, but also not all leaders were always positive and that feeling a range of emotions was also a positive sign of a good leader. We used role play to help us to remember the plot of the story and to decide who the leaders were. We have since moved on to explore some influential figures within history using non-fictional texts, including Sir Captain Tom Moore and Rosa Parks, discussing and writing about how they showed positive leadership and the impacts their actions had on others around the world.

'Leaders and Followers' has been the core to our Music curriculum. Students have explored using a range of instruments to practise listening to others and following their lead in playing a different number of beats.

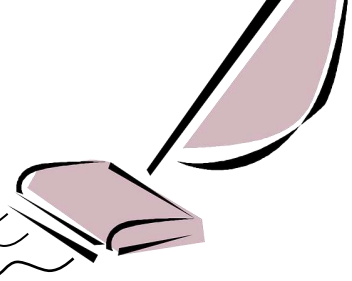


Some students have also volunteered to be the leader, creating the beats and playing them clearly for their followers to hear.

Moorcroft have thoroughly enjoyed the anchor of 'Leaders and Followers' and the variety of activities we have taken part in, both inside school and out in the community.

We also went on an amazing residential to Standon Bowers where the students have been able to experience a wide range of interesting activities and experience many new things such as archery and climbing.

Preparation for Adulthood Room



Students from several classes have started using the new Preparation for Adulthood room this term. They have been able to practise a range of independent living skills including making the bed, cleaning, enjoying their leisure time and preparing simple drinks and snacks. It is proving a very valuable new resource for the school and our students!



Student Voice

The student council were at last able to meet together and have their voices heard. The council consists of one pupil from every class and we discuss topics of interest to the students and also issues from current affairs.

The council decided to do a collection for the Ukrainian Appeal. The Class Reps collected items for the appeal and, with the support of Bridgewater class, boxed, labelled and delivered them to a drop off point.

Our labelled boxes were seen on photos on social media in Poland!

Well done everyone!



Bridgewater Rabbits

Bridgewater had delivery of the Rabbits back in October. We researched how rabbits should be kept and then proceeded to build a shed. Parts were checked against the instructions (yes there were some parts left over) As a team we put the shed up watched over with a careful eye from the caretaker. The class have developed skills for grooming and cleaning the rabbits out but most importantly they are learning to be responsible for another creatures life.



The Rabbit hutch has been extended and the class have made an outside run to keep them safe and secure.



The rabbits have a great appetite. Students from other classes have been bringing treats for them as they come to learn about how to hold the rabbits and how to care for them. In maths we have been weighing and measuring their food out.

In half term staff made a rota to come into school and clean them out. At Christmas Jack's family kindly had them for the two weeks. Watch this space for the rabbits' adventures!



Rabbit Facts!

A baby rabbit is called a kit, a female is called a doe and a male is called a buck.

Like cats, happy rabbits purr when they're content and relaxed.

Rabbits perform an athletic leap, known as a 'binky', when they're happy — performing twists and kicks in mid air!

A rabbit's teeth never stop growing! Instead, they're gradually worn down as a rabbit chews on grasses, wildflowers and veg so they never get too long!



Standon Bowers

Back in January the country was slowly beginning to open up again, as the COVID restrictions eased and Royal Doulton were really lucky to go on a residential to Standon Bowers. The trip had been booked before Christmas and we were to be leaders and trail blazers for a series of residential trips from Blackfriars throughout this term. It was with great excitement that we left school, on that frosty Tuesday morning, in one mini bus and our luggage piled high in another. Trundling through the Staffordshire countryside you could feel the excitement levels rising! A surprise awaited us when we arrived at Standon Bowers to find that we had all the facilities to ourselves as we were the only school there. They too were opening up as the COVID restrictions eased. So, we really were Leaders!

The students' first job on arrival was to become familiar with the accommodation, make their beds and unpack their belongings. We had a tight time frame for this as the first activities beckoned. After much, fun, laughter and confusion the task was done and we were off to lunch and to begin the activities.



As we were the only party at Standon Bowers we were able to eat in the main refectory,



choosing from a varied menu of delicious food served for breakfast, lunch and dinner and had total access to the games room all day. Our students had a fantastic time playing table tennis, table football, billiards and sitting chatting during free time.

From Tuesday afternoon to Friday lunchtime the days were full of activities that stretched and challenged our class, - both students and staff. The experience built a real sense of community as we bonded with the Standon Bowers staff and drew on our value system of PRIDE to ensure we took full advantage of the opportunities the residential offered.

Determination ran through our student's veins as they faced their fears and conquered the rock-climbing wall, the high ropes and the tower. The enjoyment and enthusiasm shines in their smiles and faces as the pictures show. Abdullah's resolve to jump from the tower and his powers of persuasion led to the staff agreeing to follow his lead. Noah became the teacher as he tutored and encouraged Mrs Martin to conquer

the crates, while Caitlyn sealed her title as Queen of the Adrenalin Rush. Indeed, for Noah, Caitlyn, Abdullah, Henry and Aimee-Leigh there really was no limit to the heights they climbed. The respect and encouragement the students gave to each other ensured fears were faced and defeated and the sense of achievement spurred everyone to action so Imogen and James conquered the wall, navigated the bridge, and with Danny and Joshua embodied a strong team player ethos in the activities that required strategy.



The insight gained into bush craft included building a fire and baking bread, conservation was the theme while making a bug hotel and increasing our respect for our environment and the night time scavenger hunt tested our powers of observation. Archery ensured the students hit the target while testing their mental maths skills.

The hot chocolate and biscuits served for supper every night, and as the week progressed help to settle us all down for a good night's sleep. The care, consideration, resilience and determination our students showed was commented on by the Standon Bowers staff and filled our staff with a deep sense of pride. Royal Doulton you really are remarkable leaders!



Portmeirion and Gladstone next!

A combined group of students from Gladstone and Portmeirion went to Standon Bowers on the 25th of January,



Archery was an activity where everyone enjoyed taking part, including the staff, although our experts and archery champions were Rhys, Bradley and Alfie, who gained the most bullseyes and won the archery competitions.

In the evening students enjoyed chatting to friends and having a lovely and much needed cup of hot chocolate and a biscuit.

Expecting cold wintry weather and that some of our activities might have to be indoors we were really fortunate and although a little cold, we were able to carry out all the activities planned.

Students settled into their home for the week quickly: taking their belongings to their rooms and making beds, although a few needed some help, as duvets ended up at the bottom of duvet covers, fitted sheets pinged back when another corner was added and some bottom sheets looked like mountain terrain so would make for a very uncomfortable night's sleep.

When bedding was eventually sorted, everyone had a welcome and tour around the site and then started their first activity of orienteering. Once maps were the correct way around, everyone quickly got the hang of finding the next location and collecting their stamps. Karl was crowned king of the orienteering

Everyone took part in the activities and showed real determination, with Kieran in particular throwing himself into every challenge enthusiastically. Those who found some activities quite challenging still took part and achieved great success: Alexander demonstrated his skills in bouldering and Shannon in particular, overcame her fear of the climbing wall to reach the top and then dropped the equivalent of three stories from the high tower twice. Issy bravely climbed to the top of the high tower, despite her fear of heights and Alex and Oli pushed themselves in the climbing challenges to achieve their personal bests. Our climbing daredevils were definitely Kayla and Alfie, who scaled the walls so quickly and hung from the bar at the very top.



challenge, collecting the most stamps in the correct order.

We had our meals in part of the games room and we were then able to use this room as we wanted. It was lovely to see everyone taking part in the activities, including table tennis, table football, billiards, games, or just borrowing a book to read.



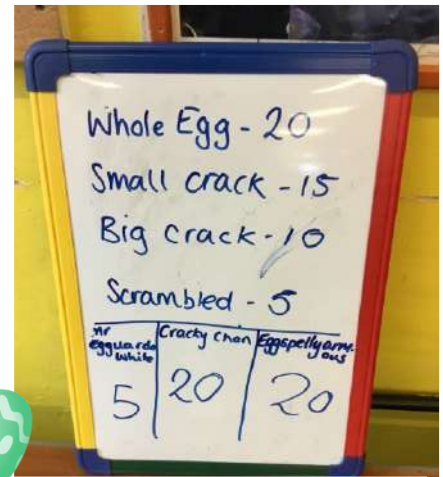
Staff at Standon Bowers were really impressed by our students' resilience and teamwork, as they discussed how to carry out tasks and supported one another to overcome challenges. Poppy was particularly supportive of other students and staff during the trip.

Students split into three groups to carry out an egg drop competition in the evening, with two teams creating successful egg carriers. Points were awarded for the success of the drop, the carrier, teamwork and a suitable egg name. Oli's choice of name for his group's egg of 'Cracky Chan' ensured a win for his team.

Other activities involved scavenger hunt, lighting fires and making bread, creating a bug hotel and owls made from fir cones, as well as team games. During bridge building activities, students really demonstrated their teamwork skills by creating bridge structures to cross some rather gruesome-looking water and rose to the challenge of building and climbing over a large land bridge.

Our visit drew to a close with students climbing and balancing on milk crates as well as taking a leap of faith of the tallest tower, three stories high and then some very exhausted students and staff returned to school.

I would like to say a huge well done for everyone who took part in the visit. Our students showed all the elements of PRIDE in their behaviour and resilience throughout their visit. Staff were fabulous and joined in with all the activities, surviving on very little sleep and the staff at Standon Bowers were fantastic, making sure our students had a really lovely visit and lots of fantastic memories to treasure.



Middleport next!

Middleport have recently returned from Standon Bowers, which they attended for three days. During their time at Standon Bowers, Middleport took part in lots of outdoor, team building activities such as high ropes, rock climbing, bush craft and bridge building. The trip to Standon Bowers lent itself to the schools anchor this half term, 'leaders and followers' as every pupil had the chance to lead as part of each activity whether that be directing their team around the orienteering map or giving their team instructions of how they could help climb the rock climbing wall.



At the beginning of their time at Standon Bowers, Middleport set out to achieve four goals: Independence, trying something new, facing a fear and most importantly, having FUN! At the end of the three days we revisited the goals we had set and Middleport students said...

"I was really nervous to jump from the high ropes, there was a tear in my eye, but all of my friends were at the bottom, cheering me on so I jumped. I was really proud of myself."

"I didn't want to try the rock climbing wall, I was happy doing the rope jobs on the ground. However, with the help of the staff and some encouragement I was challenged to climb to the first rock. Me and Miss Walton climbed together and I reached half way up the wall!"

"My favourite activity at Standon Bowers was the flying eggs, I really enjoyed working as a team to try and protect our egg. Our egg didn't survive but I still had lots of fun as it was something I had never tried before."



As a class of Year 7 students and two additional students joining Middleport for the trip, Middleport did the school proud, they were willing to try every activity, worked well as a team and gained strong friendships they have now brought with them back to school.





Land Use & Science



We have had a very busy winter in Land Use. All classes have been involved in planting daffodils around the School, the results cheer everyone up. Well done everyone - this beautiful display of daffodils is courtesy of Portmeirion who planted these bulbs in late October early December.

Everyone is growing something! Bridgwater have replanted their flower bed with spring tulips. Spode are equally pleased with their efforts to grow their own beautiful tulips.

If the weather is too bad we come inside, here Moorcroft are safely whittling their own dibbers out of sticks they selected themselves.

Students can still experience Spring indoors using the 4D room, Spode really enjoyed seeing a crocus growth sequence in slow motion.

But it is hard graft as well in Land use....no slacking! There was plenty to do like turning over soil on a raised bed prior to planting .

A member of Moorcroft absolutely loves experiencing an earthworm in his hand.

There is also a lot of science going on. The students really enjoyed seeing the immolation of yet another jelly baby at the end of last term!



Food Tech

This term we have been looking at the leaders that are in professional kitchens. We have spoken about the different TV chefs, Jamie Oliver, Gordon Ramsey etc. I have been the head chef of our kitchen and the students have had to not only follow instructions from me but to also read the recipe and follow the recipes as independently as possible. They have decided what healthy recipes they want to cook and learnt the difference between equipment and ingredients.

We have been learning how to follow the steps and instead of asking what comes next to look and read their recipe. Students are getting better at this the more they do it. We have also spoken about how they can all be helping at home, whether helping cooking the dinner or washing and drying up. They understand how helping in the kitchen is vital for their preparation for adulthood.

Here are some pictures of the students to show what they have up to this term!



PSHE

The PSHE topic in school this half term has been Relationships and Sex Education, which became statutory in all schools in September 2020. We covered everything from the effect growing up has on our bodies to the importance of developing healthy relationships with others and the importance of consent.

Gladstone recently reflected on what they have learned and understood from the day by creating a massive poster (which was later draped over a table in the Humanities room) ->

Below are some reflections made by Gladstone:

In R.S.E.L I learned about how my choices or reactions can affect others. I learnt about how healthy and unhealthy relationships can be made and the importance of getting permission from others when in relationships. Good choices can keep us safe and clean.

In RSE I learnt that when our body's change we sweat and we need to start using deodorant

in R S I E iv'e learned the different types of contraception.

In RSE, I learned that girls have periods, and they need good items that are necesery to help them through it.

In RSE I learned about how pregnancy works and what to do when you do get pregnant

By growing hair on our body's

In RSE I learnt that when we grow our body's begin to change

In RSE, I learned how to give good advice to young people by telling them , that puberty is normal and we all go through it and you need to ask a sensible adult , teacher or a friend , who you will trust to give you good advice and how to go through it.

In RSE we learned about about how to keep our self clean

In **R.SE**. I learnt about girls when they are on their period and what items they use such as period pads.



Sports

We have been fortunate to be able to take a couple of groups of students out to represent the school in competitions against other schools. The events are organised by the North Staffs Special School Sports Association. The events are held throughout the school year and involve all the special schools in the area. We as a school attempt to attend all of the competitions if possible to enable us to allow as many of our students to experience the different environments a competitive event brings. It also allows us to show off our amazing student's ability and resilience.



The first competition we attended was the 6 a side football competition. We played a round-robin tournament against six other schools. The tournament was played at Biddulph leisure centre.

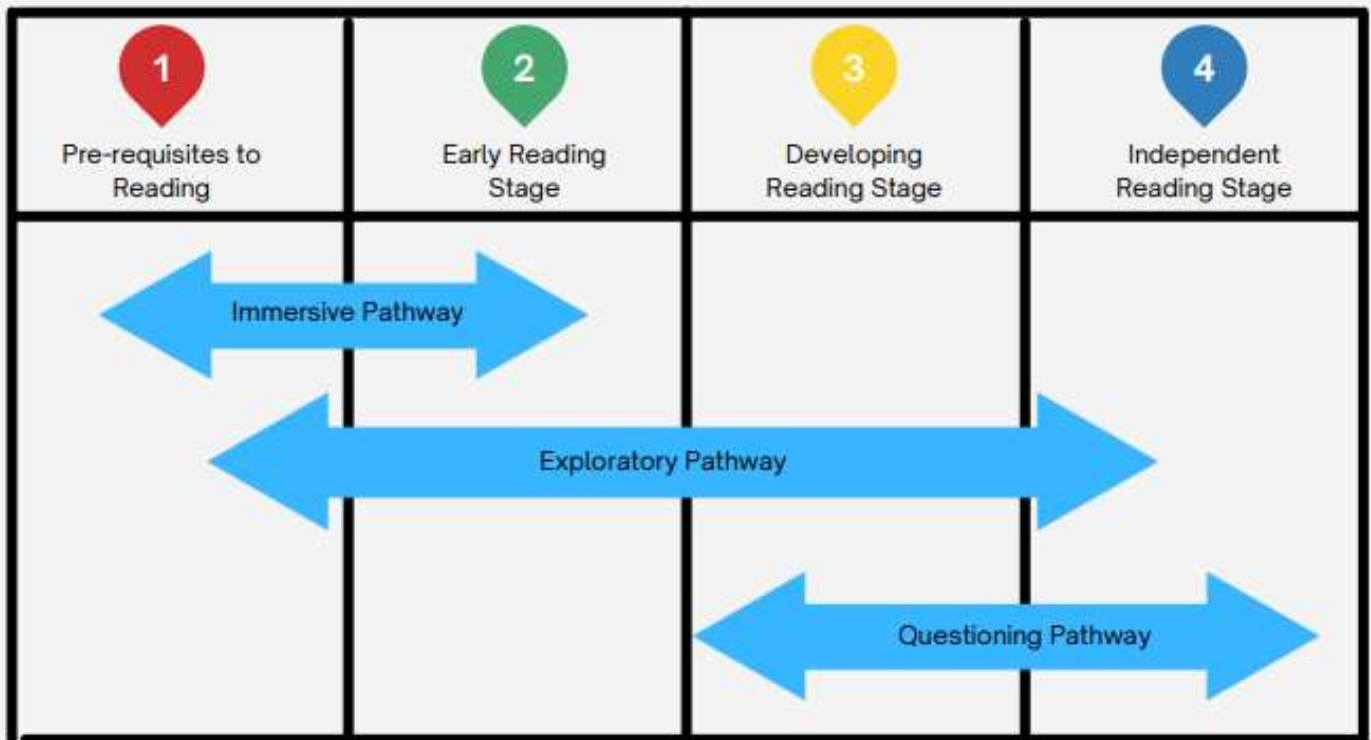
The players were outstanding, they matched most of the other schools in most of the games, and their performances, if not the results, were a real joy to watch. The teamwork, communication, and especially their resilience stood out for all to see, so much so that the group was awarded a trophy for being the most resilient squad of the tournament!!

The second competition we attended was an Indoor cricket event at Fenton Manor sports centre. This was quite a new activity for some of the group but to say they blew us away with the standard of play is a massive understatement. Again we played a round-robin tournament against 6 other schools and the way the group performed and conducted themselves throughout the competition is a real sense of pride to us all at school. The standard of batting, bowling, and especially the fielding, after only two practices, was amazing, some outstanding catches were witnessed, wonderful absolutely wonderful.



What does reading look like at Blackfriars?

It depends upon what pathway you are in:



ROUTE ONE

Pre-requisites to Reading

- ✦ Looking, attending, listening, tracking
- ✦ Reading own body
- ✦ Be stimulated by the rhythm and pattern of words and stories
- ✦ Match letters, pictures, objects, insert jigsaw pieces
- ✦ Enjoys sharing simple stories, song, music
- ✦ Responds through any form of communication such as: gesture, signing, PECS
AAC
- ✦ Anticipate, recognise the familiar



ROUTE TWO

Early Reading Stage

- ✦ Beginning to learn Phase 2 sounds (Letters & Sounds)
Oral blending/in head (with pictures / objects not written words).
- ✦ Recognise a few meaningful keywords by sight (name, days of week, help, mum, dad etc.).
- ✦ Blending to read a few simple words e.g. mat.
- ✦ Recognise the initial sound of words/symbols
- ✦ Reads a few very simple sentences e.g. I feel happy. (may be symbol sentences)
- ✦ Enjoy reading stories, rhymes and non-fiction books with adults.
Recognise environmental signs and print
- ✦ Respond to very simple questions about pictures/ events (through any form of communication such as signing, PODD, ACC, gestures, yes/no responses). E.g. "What is the animal?" "Who went to the shop?"

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ROUTE THREE

Developing Reading Stage

- ✦ Developing phonics understanding phase 3-6 (Letters and Sounds)
- ✦ Multi-Sensory language Programmes (MSLP)
- ✦ Lexia Core 5, Hickey, Beat Dyslexia, Alpha to Omega, cued articulation
- ✦ Further developing blending and segmenting skills
- ✦ Further developing comprehension skills, extracting information from a given text

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ROUTE FOUR

Independent Reading Stage

- ✦ Skills further consolidated through, Lexia PowerUp and guided reading sessions in 1:1, small group and whole class settings
- ✦ Reads a wide and varied range of books, exploring a range of genres – myths, legends, plays, novels and non-fiction as well as poetry.
- ✦ Reads whole books to read in depth and to read for pleasure and information
- ✦ Consolidating comprehension skills, using close reading questions with comprehension as they develop inference skills through discussion and writing.
- ✦ Use written information in books, websites and notices to gain practical information
- ✦ Use written information in vocational tasks including: form filling, booking appointments, job applications and planning leisure activities

As students are able to access the internet independently, guidance on using technology safely is delivered across the curriculum.

Reading has always been incredibly important at Blackfriars:



We read instructions so we know where to go:



And what to do: Recipes



WORLD BOOK DAY

We love reading so much that we celebrate the annual World Book Day! This term saw the 25th anniversary of World Book Day! Lots of us dressed up as our favourite characters from the Queen of Hearts to Gangsta Granny and even Donald Duck! Here are a few images from the day:



Performing Arts
Something's Coming....
Something Good!

Watch this Space...

Summer 2022





NEWS FROM OUR PAST STUDENTS

INTERVIEWS COMPILED BY OUR YEAR 11 PEER MENTORS

Korneliusz left us 2 years ago. This is his story:

"I have taken my English and maths GCSEs and then music level 2 and 3 qualifications at college. I want to be an Artist/Producer/Songwriter and make my own record label. My happiest memories of Blackfriars are going to Bendrigg residential and staying with friends and teachers and doing load of exciting activities. Mrs Owen ,the PA and music teacher, really helped me adapt my confidence and taught me more stuff to do with music. If I could use just one word to describe Blackfriars: " FANTASTIC". I got where I am today because of support from teachers and my family."

Thank you to our all our ex-students for taking part.
We wish you luck for the future!

"Since leaving Blackfriars in 2003, I have gained A-Level qualifications in English Literature and Media Studies from Stoke on Trent Sixth Form College. After leaving Sixth Form College and Blackfriars FE (now known as Newfriars) in 2006, I went to Staffordshire University to study Journalism and Media Studies. I graduated with a 2:1 Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in 2009.

I am a Trustee of a charity called Our Space and I am also a volunteer speaker for the assistance dog charity, Canine Partners. I live independently in a bungalow supported by a team of personal assistants. I have lived in my bungalow for 10 years and really enjoy my independence.

I have lots of good and funny memories.

I went on a school trip to Belgium in 2001. We visited the war graves in Ypres, and I managed to find the grave of my Great, Great Grandfather who was killed in the First World War. This was a very special moment for me. I also enjoyed taking part in plays. One year, we did A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. I had to wear a wig because my hair was short at the time and, at certain points during the scene I was in, it would move on my head, so I would attempt to put it back into place which was tricky!

Mrs Pritchard was a really big help to me during my time at Blackfriars. She was our Teaching Assistant for 5 years, so we built up a really good bond. I am still in touch with her now. I really enjoyed English with Mrs Baker, as well as Food Technology with Mrs Ford, ICT with Miss Lewis and European Awareness with Mrs O'Connor.

I have had a lot of support from my family and friends. The staff at Blackfriars also helped to give me the confidence to achieve what I wanted to do in life. I would describe it as AWESOME!!" - **Faye**

We all really enjoyed finding out about what our past students are doing now.

- Peer Mentors: Brad, Rhys, Aaron, Tyra, Allarna, Owen and Shannon.

"At college I have done Business level 1, ICT level 2 and ICT level 3

I am currently doing digital graphics and I would like to be a Social media executive

My best memory was getting a distinction in photography

There were a few teachers that inspired and helped me throughout my time at Blackfriars such as Mrs Martin, Mrs Evans, Mrs Gardner and Miss Sayers now known as Mrs O Sullivan. I would describe Blackfriars as very WELCOMING.

Getting help from tutors, I gained confidence in myself."

- William C (left school 2015)

Chrissie left school 14 years ago. But she loved us so much she came back!! This is Chrissie's story :

"When I left Blackfriars I did a BTEC Diploma in Business, and then my Support Learning and Teaching Level 2 and 3 qualifications.

When I was at Blackfriars all the fantastic staff helped me in different ways and gave me the very best start in life. Everyone was supportive and caring, and the physios worked miracles keeping me mobile. Mrs Martin's lessons were my favourite- she has always been so helpful, supportive and passionate about learning.

I love working as a teaching assistant at Blackfriars now- it's a wonderful job. I have always tried to work hard, persevere and never give up. Blackfriars to me is INSPIRATIONAL."



"From 2013-15, I took A-levels in Psychology, Sociology and Government & Politics at Stoke on Trent Sixth Form College. From 2015-18, I took an undergraduate degree course in Politics and International Relations at the University of Reading. Finally, I did a Master of Research (MRes) course in Politics and IR at Keele University.

I currently work as a STEM public relations consultant at Stone Junction in Stafford. My role involves working with engineering, science and technology companies – interviewing clients, writing articles and working with journalists to ensure that their content gets published in relevant magazines. It's really fun seeing your work in print! For now, I think I will stick with my PR career because it has really opened my eyes to what the industry has to offer, and no day is the same. It certainly keeps me on my toes, and I love the excitement of getting to work with lots of interesting colleagues and clients on a daily basis."

What was your best or funniest memory at Blackfriars?

"It wasn't long after I started at Blackfriars in 2010 that the World Cup was being held in South Africa and I remember us all sitting together in the main hall to watch it. Everyone was really excited, and I just loved being a part of it – I felt like I belonged, and I think it was even a good score (from what I remember!).

Two people really stand out as inspiring. Mrs Martin and Ms Rawlinson were so supportive and inspirational while I was taking my GCSEs and I fondly remember the after-school lessons where we would go over extra work and prepare for the exams. I will always remember how much they invested in me, and I am forever grateful. I remember studying the Cold War, a subject that I really enjoyed. This also involved a lot of essay writing, which prepared me for my current role where I write technical content daily.

I would describe Blackfriars as EMPOWERING."

- Martin D

Dylan left Blackfriars last year and went to Newfriars College.

He remembers his favourite lessons being history and PE. He is loving College, and says he is developing more confidence, learning to take a joke more and have fun, and loving the Drama and Art courses. He had a major role in the Christmas panto.

We asked Dylan how he got to this point and what he remembers most about Blackfriars. He said that he really appreciated the support from everyone, especially Mrs Campbell, Juliet and Mrs Fallows. He said Blackfriars made a huge difference as people made time for him. We asked for one word to sum up school and he said "COMPASSIONATE".

Dylan wants to go on to be a music therapist.

"After leaving Blackfriars, I went to Newfriars College where I studied performing Art which was a BTEC level 1 certificate and Level 1 photography. After leaving Newfriars, I started at Newcastle-Under-Lyme college to study Level 2 Extended Certificate in Information and Communication Technology. Also, I have completed my GCSEs in English and maths. In my spare time, I have completed a Diploma in Adobe Lightroom and in photography.

I am currently at Newcastle-Under-Lyme studying a Level 3 BTEC National Extended Diploma in Information Technology. I am hoping to set up my own company in website development.

I met lots of people who were inspiring and helped me during my time at Blackfriars. I have always had the mindset that anything is possible, no matter the limitations. Being in a wheelchair and having cerebral palsy has its challenges, but hard work and determination has got me to where I am today.

Keep setting goals that are reachable over time, no matter how big or small. Instead of thinking about what I can't do, think about what I can do, or if there is something that I can't do, how can I change it so I can. Always remember that anything is possible no matter what your disability is." - **Josh T**



Some of our ex students who attend Newfriars' College then get the opportunity to move on to Project Search. Project SEARCH is a supported internship programme for young people with disabilities and learning difficulties. It is established around the world and has over 300 sites internationally. In 2018, Newfriars College, in partnership with the UHNM Trust and Sodexo launched the first Project SEARCH site in Staffordshire, based at the Royal Stoke Hospital, with strong links both here, and at the UHNM sister site, at County Hospital in Stafford. Interns complete three separate work placements (usually one per term) in areas such as catering, portering, administration, customer service, gardening and ward support. Students are supported by two full time members of staff, who are on hand to job coach and prepare students for adulthood and independent living. Students follow a 'Preparation for Adulthood' curriculum, focusing on the key areas of-

- Employability, Independent Living, Community Inclusion and Healthy Living

Leaders in our school - new staff!

Hello, I am delighted to be the new EHCP Officer at Blackfriars Academy and to support the school team, parents and students through the EHCP annual review processes and with all matters relating to EHCPs. In doing so I also bring to the role many years' experience of working within Staffordshire's children's services.

I am Staffordshire born and have lived and worked in and around Staffordshire for most of my life. I am married with 3 (grown up) children and 2 (grown up) step children, 6 step grandchildren, 2 dogs, 4 cats and an array of chickens!

Upon leaving school I initially worked for a local law firm for a number of years before taking a break in the 1990s, and to follow one of my all-time dreams of working with horses, teaching children and young people horse riding skills in the northern US state of Minnesota. After the summer spent horse-riding I got to enjoy a few months travelling across the states, and living and working in California before returning home.

This is when my working life with Staffordshire county council began, over 26 years ago and as my eldest daughter turned 1, in a local community centre as administrative support for the adult education classes and youth services across the Staffordshire Moorlands. A few years later I also took on the role of coordinating international youth work in Staffordshire and across the West Midlands and in conjunction with the British Council and Foreign and Commonwealth Office and which also included travel across the region, to London and other far flung parts of the UK and Northern Ireland before the role came to an end.

I joined the Staffordshire SEND service in 2007 initially as a Casework Officer, and then as a SEND Locality Manager from 2014 and with responsibility for the management of the statutory SEND assessment and annual review processes.

During the years working in SEND, having forged some excellent working relationships with the local schools, I was thrilled to secure my new post at Blackfriars Academy which has provided me with the opportunity to work in an amazing school and with such a dedicated team and where I can continue to utilise my experience and knowledge of working within children's services to the benefit of the whole school, the students, and their parents and carers.

I may still be 'the new girl on the block' at Blackfriars Academy but, having received a terrifically warm welcome from everyone here, I already I feel an integral part of the school. I am enjoying getting to know the students, seeing lots of friendly faces as they come through the door each morning, and I have already met with some of our parents. So, if our paths haven't already crossed since I started here, I am looking forward to meeting you all at your child's review meetings and, in the meantime, if you have any questions relating to your child's EHCP and / or their annual review, don't hesitate to contact me by phone or email, or in person if you are at the school - my room is in the reception area and my door is always open! - **Kate**





Hi, I'm Ryan and I'm delighted to be the new IT Technician at Blackfriars Academy. I've been working here for a month so far and I'm really enjoying it.

I've always had an interest in technology since studying ICT at A-level and then Computing & Multimedia Systems at University. Blackfriars is the third school that I

have worked in as IT Support over the past 15 years and these roles have included website development, media design, and photography which I also enjoy doing in my spare time. Working in Education has always been very rewarding for me and the daily challenges along with the ever-changing technological landscape keep the job fresh and interesting.

Outside of work, I'm a dad of two little girls. I have a love of 90s music and classic cars and spend a lot of my time in the garage restoring my original mini. I enjoy hiking and try to complete a challenge every year for charity, recent years have included walking Hadrian's Wall and the southwest coastal path, the national 3 peaks, and the welsh 3000s.

The rest of my spare time is spent at the local boxing gym where I box competitively for Beartown ABC in Congleton and have recently become a Level 1 England boxing coach.

- Ryan

Hi there, my name is Keira. I've been the digital marketing apprentice for the school since early October. This involves running the social media for the entire school and putting together the newsletters (including this one!) Blackfriars Academy has really helped me come out of my shell and each day is different so I'm constantly learning and overcoming new challenges.

I have a passion for all things tech and gaming. This came from the very first console I got to play on back in the early 2000s which was the PlayStation 1. I have fond memories of the old Spyro games and have been into gaming ever since! I recently challenged myself to build my own PC. This involved doing the research to ensure all the parts would fit together, buying the parts at an affordable price and then actually building my system that is perfect for playing more recent games such as The Sims 4 and Minecraft.

I've got a pet cat called Trevor, he's a menace but is also a great gaming companion. He enjoys sleeping across my keyboard and belly rubs from his favourite person.

- Keira

