

The BAC

Blackfriars Academy Chronicle

Journeys



Summer Edition 2024

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The BAC

Blackfriars Academy Chronicles


Journeys

Blackfriars Academy BAC 'Journeys' - May 2024




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Foreword



A very warm welcome to all parents and carers to our termly BAC – the Blackfriars Academy Chronicle. In this edition, we have focused on our anchor of ‘Journeys’ You will be able to read about students’ journeys to places near and far but also the journeys that they have taken in terms of their learning. This is particularly poignant when it is the Year 11s who have done us proud this year – they have been so resilient, completing all of their coursework and sitting exams. One student had to sit 3 public exams in 1 day!

It is a very exciting time at Blackfriars because we are having a lot of work done. The whole school is currently being decorated (the decorators come in at 4pm & knock off at 12 midnight!!), we are having our heating system overhauled – no more thermals needed!, 55 new wifi points are being installed to cope with our increase in the use of technology, and most importantly, we are having a new series of break-out / play spaces created outside the classrooms. These will provide a calming area where students can go and swing / rock or bounce to help with their self-regulation. A relatively small building job you would think – but not when you have to move the hillside back and in doing so, discover a layer of sandstone. The project will be complete for September. None of this work would be possible without the organisational and financial support of the Shaw Education Trust, just one of the many advantages of belonging to a Multi-Academy Trust

We hope, that as you read our BAC, it gives you a flavour of what a joyous school we have – our students are a credit to their families but they also do so well in school because they are supported by an incredible team of staff. In what is my final edition of the BAC, I would like to pay tribute to all the staff and students and to thank you for entrusting us with them on a daily basis. I wish you all and the school well and look forward to hearing how Mr Campbell, the new Head, takes Blackfriars on its next journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Ram'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

The Blackfriar's Song

We're the believers
We're the achievers
We don't let anything stand in our way.
We are the dreamers.
We're the truth seekers
Strong enough to say 'Come What May'

There may be rocks ahead that we have to dodge
There may be mountains high that we have to climb
There may be rivers wide that we have to swim
But we'll take it all in our stride
'Cause we've got PRIDE.
We are strong
We're where we belong
We're determined to take it all on.

There may be rocks ahead that we have to dodge
There may be mountains high that we have to climb
There may be rivers wide that we have to swim
But we'll take it all in our stride
'Cause we've got PRIDE.
Sometimes our path
Takes us far and wide

But we travel on with hope and PRIDE.
There may be rocks ahead that we have to dodge
There may be mountains high that we have to climb
There may be rivers wide that we have to swim
But we'll take it all in our stride
'Cause we've got PRIDE.

We hope you enjoy our BAC



**Blackfriars
Academy**



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Alison - Out with the old

How much did you enjoy working at Blackfriars? Lewis

“Blackfriars has been the most wonderful place to work, I have loved being a part of such a caring and fun-loving community. It is rare to find a workplace where all the staff are so committed towards achieving the same goal - making the educational experience of our students joyful.”

How long have you been at Blackfriars? Jath

“10 years - I started as Head of School in June 2024. I literally came down the hill from Keele University where I ran teacher training courses for students living in the West Midlands as well as going out to India and Thailand to teach teachers there. Coming to Blackfriars was the best decision I have ever made.”

What is your favourite thing at Blackfriars? James

“The students - you are all such inspiring young people to work with - for some students, every day is a battle but everyone still manages to be positive.”

How many friends have you made? Rayane

“So many - it is one of the best things about Blackfriars, how friendly everyone is. I now have new friends who I hope will be friends for life.”

Why did you like working here? Sophie

“Blackfriars is a very complex school because of the range of needs of our students and the different ability levels. This makes every single thing that you do complicated - I have loved this intellectual challenge because it has had so many unexpected benefits , for example, the anchors have given all students a shared focus.”

Do you love Blackfriars will you be sad to leave? Daniyal

“I am very sad to be leaving and will miss everyone terribly. But I have a 3 year old grandson who I want to spend more time with and Mr Parr & I have lots of plans to go travelling. I think Blackfriars is ready for a new Head and I am sure that Mr Campbell will be fabulous at leading the school.”

What was your favourite class? Lucy

“As you are asking Lucy, I will say Churchill, but I have to warn that if you were in Middleport, I would say Middleport was my favourite class. Seriously though, what I love the most about Blackfriars is that every single class is filled with wonderful, individual students. Each class is my favourite! “

What was your favourite moment at Blackfriars? Kai

“I have an annual favourite moment which is our Celebration of Achievement evening. It is so lovely to welcome our leavers back into school to collect their certificates. They return filled with pride as they talk about their new setting - they all seem to have grown a great deal - physically and in confidence. It has always been a very special evening and we have had very inspiring speakers as well that have brought tears to my eye! “

What will you miss most from Blackfriars?

“I will really miss 8.45 - 9.30 and 3.15 - 3.45pm every day. I love listening to all of the students coming in to school - their sense of excitement and pleasure to be in school with their friends where they feel that they belong and are happy. At the end of the day, I enjoy listening to all of the chatter about what has been going on and then that lovely silence when everyone has gone. It is going to be very strange to be at home and not hear that wonderful buzz!”

What was your funniest or worst moment at Blackfriars?

“The worst moments at Blackfriars were during Covid when we were all so fearful about how we were going to be able to keep everyone safe.

But the worst moments are easily outweighed by all of the funniest ones. These happen on a daily basis, particularly because several of the staff are practical jokers. Residential and visits out of school provide lots of funny moments, from getting soaked when canoeing to finding snakes in my bed!”

Jamie - In with the new

Why do you want to lead our school?

“Well I have seen and heard lots about your school and I want to be part of it and I used to live in Newcastle.”

Will we still finish early on a Monday?

“Yes we will still finish early on a Monday.”

What differences will you make to our school?

“I don’t know if I will make any changes to school as I still don’t really know how the school runs at the moment.”

Will there be more money for more school trips?

“I don’t know how much money there will be for school trips.”

Do you have any pets?

“I have a dog and it is a cockapoo.”

What is your favourite colour?

“I think that my favourite colour is turquoise.”

Will you make sure everyone gets a say?

“I can guarantee that you will get a say in pretty much everything.”

What is your favourite book?

“My favourite book is the book with all the stickers of football, players that you have to collect.”

What is your favourite Disney film?

“My favourite Disney film is Monsters inc.”

Will you keep PRIDE?

“I definitely keep pride.”

Will you change the timetable?

“I can’t change the timetable until I start working at this school.”

How will you tackle school dinners?

“I don’t know how yet but I will improve them.”

What are your favourite animals?

“I love cats and dogs.”

What inspires you?

“I am inspired when people try their best.”

What is your favourite food, drink and flavour of crisp?

“My favourite food is whatever, my favourite drink is tea and my favourite crisp is cheese and onion.”

How would you tackle bullying?

“Bullying will not happen because I won’t allow it to.”

What changes will you make?

“I can’t make changes until September.”

Do you have any phobias?

“I am not a fan of heights.”

What sort of schools have you taught?

“I have taught in lots of different primary and secondary schools.”

What is your favourite film?

“My favourite films are Indiana Jones and Star Wars.”

Do you have kids?

“I have a 17yr old, a 19yr old and a 23yr old.”

Can you improve the Wi Fi?

“I will try my best to improve the Wi Fi.”

If a problem arose how would you deal with it?

“I would talk about the problem and try and solve it.”

Have you worked in SEND before?

“I have worked in SEND before.”

Stoke or Vale?

“I don’t support Stoke or Vale but I was at a Stoke game last.”

What do you know about the school?

“I don’t know much about this school but I know that it is amazing.”

What is your favourite football team?

“I support Liverpool.”

Will you keep the physio team?

“I will keep the physio team.”

What are your favourite subjects?

“My favourite lessons are geography and English.”

Barnstondale Residential

Miss Umney and the Bridgewater Team organised a wonderful residential to Barnstondale on the Wirral this term. They stayed in a log cabin with great facilities including a soft play and sensory area as well as a film room.

All the students took part in a range of activities that took them out of their comfort zone and showed how brave and resilient they are. Students climbed or were hoisted up a very high climbing wall, they took part in abseiling and tried their hand at archery and target shooting.

They also spent time in the woods creating shelters and learning how to make a campfire. Then that evening they sat around the firepit and roasted marshmallows.

There was also time to explore the sensory garden and specialist accessible playground. All students and staff thoroughly enjoyed this experience, trying new activities, gaining new skills, developing their independence and socialising with their friends.

Well done everyone!





Bendrigg 2024

Clarice and Anysley Class had a great opportunity to take part in a residential to Bendrigg in the Lake District. It is a long way but what a journey the students have been on – not just in the minibus, but in terms of their learning as well.

The pupils prepared for this journey by watching videos and seeing social stories about the activities and buildings at Bendrigg.

The journey up to beautiful Kendal was a long and rainy one but everyone coped well and passed the time spotting lorries and singing. Big thank you to Mrs Blackwell and Jez Statham for getting everyone there safely.

On arrival, everyone explored their new setting and found their bedroom and took in the amazing views, spotting rabbits and a hare in the grounds.

The Bendrigg staff came and spent time with the students getting to know them and building relationships. They understood the needs of the students and worked with them at their pace and changed the activities if they could see the students would prefer something else.





Through the activities on offer we all went on a journey to see how brave, resilient and adventurous we were! On this personal journey students experienced a bit of trepidation, anticipation, nerves, anxiousness and excitement and then thrill and joy!

Students were hoisted up into the air on a supportive seat swing and then swung across a big hall whilst their favourite song was played. Some even enjoyed being swung around and around the room. Others preferred to explore the amazing sensory room with its light, sound and movement changing buttons to press.

There were some very brave students and staff who attempted the climbing wall, some using their hands and feet to climb and reach the top, others who experienced being lifted in a harness up alongside the wall where staff helped them to reach out and touch and hold the wall. They were lifted higher and higher until they showed it was high enough! Those who were more cautious became the cheer leaders encouraging them on, interacting with the staff and equipment.

Christopher Columbus

Moorcroft explored how Christopher would journey around the world looking for ways to make money selling spices and materials to make money. He was only 13 when he went on his first adventure. We made maps and explored what kind of boats he would sail on. In maths we explored and played games with a compass.

Reading

Moorcroft has focused on our reading through the term. Reading is done in many places not just through phonics and the reading scheme.

Some pupils like to have reading to help them calm down. It is also used for sensory time and for fun. Our book is The Explorer we used the maps and knowledge explored to help us build rafts and to make shelters.



Preparation for Adulthood

We have explored how to tidy areas up like book shelves, Piles of blankets, and how to fold articles of clothing.

The pupils were very good after some practise at folding their clothes (they wish this to be kept a secret)

Road crossing safely

All pupils explored crossing the road on a zebra crossing. We then used a pelican crossing. Some pupils were able to do this independently, some had verbal support and others experienced crossing a road as they do not normally travel close to the road they use a vehicle.



Panathlon

AYNSLEY

Aynsley Class have had the amazing opportunity to partake in the Panathlon Event held at Keele Univeristy alongside a range of other specialist schools!

This event involved students taking part in a range of different sporting activities including bowling, Velcro Boccia, ping pong, curling, maths parachute throw, target practice, amongst many others.



The students in Aynsley all thoroughly enjoyed the experience and were pleased to receive a t-shirt, medal, and a certificate to show for their hard work, resilience and commitment throughout the day.

A huge thanks to our own Mr O'Connor for providing this opportunity to us.



The Immersive Pathway

The Immersive Pathway, which is made up of three classes – Dudson, Clarice Cliff, and Aynsley, have had a busy, engaging and successful year. We have welcomed new students into our Pathway in September, but have also said goodbye to our Year 11 and Year 13 Leavers. Students from all classes and ages have had a range of exciting opportunities to develop their learning, communication and independence, through both the Pathway's curriculum and community visits.

Dudson welcomed a number of Year 7s into the Pathway this year, and all of the students have settled in well. Dudson have taken part in a number of community visits, with Christmas Dinner at Fletcher's Garden Centre being their highlight! Not only did all of the students tolerate the change in routines and the busy environment of the Centre, but they all enjoyed themselves as well! Students had the opportunity to see the Christmas lights; look around and buy some presents for those closest to them; and explored the park. In terms of Christmas dinner itself, the class sat altogether on a long table, and the students were exemplary in their eating, showing great progress to transfer these skills into a new environment.

Dudson have also demonstrated brilliant learning within the classroom, with their sensory story 'The Colour Monster' being one to remember. This was a story which linked colours to emotions such as yellow is happy like the sun, and anger is red like fire. Students were immersed into the story through the 4D room, listening to music, having sensory objects of reference, material of each colour, and making sounds on instruments – all linking to the different emotions. This made a close link to one of our whole school PSHE Day too: Managing Emotions.

Clarice Cliff have also had an exciting year this year, with a large focus on developing independence. One project which has supported students in this has been their important role in the school's gardening area. The students have transformed the school's gardening area by initially digging up the dead plants and leaves, before repotting plants and working on growing strawberries, mint, and lavender. These were chosen for their sensory aspect too – lots of smells and textures to be explored. All of the students have engaged in this project, and up to six bees were counted on the flowers! Clarice O'Cliff Class have worked hard to help our environment, and have been very successful in doing so.



Clarice Cliff also went on a visit to Westport Lake, which links well with their project of looking after the environment. Whilst at the Lake, students had a range of opportunities, including feeding the ducks, whilst following instructions to do so safely; experiencing the park, with some students trying out equipment and activities which they hadn't before!

Students also had the time to choose an ice cream from the ice cream van, before using their money skills to pay for it. Whilst exploring the environment, students also took part in a

sensory scavenger hunt, where they felt the trees, feathers, looked at the water, and smelt the flowers and scents.

Aynsley had a range of opportunities to develop their independence and awareness of the world around them. Linking to our final PSHE Day: The World I Live In, Aynsley were introduced to a number of animals, colours, and feelings they may experience within the community, through sensory-based classroom activities, before taking a trip to the Farm! Aynsley had a fantastic day, with all students who attended having the experience of looking after a number of animals, for example, brushing the rabbit and guinea pig; feeding the pigs; and petting the donkeys, amongst others. Students were also encouraged to help the bugs in our environment, by creating bug hotels ready to bring back to school!

Another aspect of learning, which has supported students in their independence and wider awareness has been our topic of road safety, linking closely to the anchor of 'Signs and Symbols'. We first explored symbols we may see whilst in the community, such as zebra crossings, the red man, and green man. Students then had the opportunity to practise the steps 'Stop, Look, Listen' to cross the road safely on our school yard, before moving into practising on a quiet road in our local area. Students were able to remember the three steps and some even crossed the road with independence! We have then continued to transfer these skills in a wider range of settings, on different trips throughout the year.

The Immersive Pathway have been on quite a journey this year, they've had a great year from start to finish, and we are very excited to welcome some new students in September ready for another exciting year ahead!



Aynsley Leavers

Lorna has become a big character in our Blackfriars Academy community since joining us five years ago. Lorna has always shown us her bubbly, sociable, and determined side, welcoming new people into her classroom over the years and creating positive relationships with both staff and peers. A highlight for Lorna has been her increased independence and self-confidence within her final year – especially during her Rebound sessions. Initially, Lorna refused to get onto the trampoline, and needed lots of gentle encouragement from familiar staff members to just get on to it! By the end of the year, Lorna was excited for the session each Tuesday and loved to show how she could independently bounce herself up to ten times to different people in the school! Lorna will be missed by us all at Blackfriars, but she is now ready to move to the next step in her journey at Newfriars FE.

William has had a brilliant five years with us here at Blackfriars Academy, and has an infectious personality! William’s humour has been evident throughout the years, and his laugh always makes others laugh. Despite challenges which William has faced, he has never let this stop him, showing his resilience and determination brilliantly well. His confidence has continued to grow, and this was demonstrated in a moment which will stick with his staff – when William was adamant, he was going to be the Bride! William was learning about different celebrations, and role played a wedding – he walked down the corridor (the aisle) in a dress and veil and was excited to show everyone he saw! William is now ready for his move to Newfriars FE, he has settled well during his transition visits and has loved exploring his new setting.

Jessica has been with us at Blackfriars for a number of years, and is leaving us as an adult – 18 years old! Jess has made numerous amounts of happy memories here, and she has been an important member of our community – everybody knows Jess! Despite some challenges, Jess has been a very happy, smiley and friendly student, forming positive relationships with a range of staff members. Jess is at her happiest when Katy Perry is playing and she is able to dance. Jessica has made a number of big steps this year, two of which have been – going into the swimming pool and enjoying a swimming session; and joining the class on not one, but two Sports Trips where she has engaged in all of the activities and games on offer, amongst a busy environment with other schools and students there. These big steps have shown Jess is getting ready for her next move in to a new setting!



This school year in Art

Students in the different pathways were introduced to the very colourful paintings and prints of the Pop Artists of the 1960s, and then explored and questioned what popular culture means. The Pop artists used new language to inspire artworks. Students thought about their own 'street talk' language and converted these words into designs which became very colourful paintings and collages. Shared language amongst peers creates a sense of belonging which was the school's Autumn anchor.

The Spring term saw the school anchor theme of 'Signs and Symbols' so students across the school were introduced to ancient Mayan illustrations which were used as a very early form of communication. Using the illustrations of words they created their own artworks in the form of relief works using cardboard and paint.



During the summer term students across the pathways 'journeyed' to the US again and looked at how the Pop artists portrayed fairground and junk food. They looked at the colourful paintings of Andy Warhol and Wayne Thiebaud to draw inspiration for designs of very large 3 dimensional sculptures of ice creams and paintings of doughnuts. The final results, looking, very delicious, were used for the school prom for the Y11 leavers.



Bridgewater's Work Experience at Caudwell Children's Centre

This term, Bridgewater class have embarked on an exciting new venture, attending weekly training sessions at the Caudwell Children's Centre to learn the ins and outs of running a pop-up café. Over six weeks, our students immersed themselves in a variety of engaging activities, gaining valuable skills and experiences that extended beyond the classroom.



Each week, students attended training sessions designed to prepare them for hosting and running their own café for the public. The students engaged in a variety of different sessions, which included role-playing activities, practical skills training, and creative tasks, all designed to give the students an understanding of café operations.

The students also explored various roles involved in café operations, before selecting the one they wanted to perform. These weekly sessions allowed the students to develop the necessary skills for their chosen roles and practise their tasks, ensuring they were well-prepared for the grand opening.



The culmination of the training sessions was the day when our Bridgewater students ran their own pop-up café, serving members of the public with the skills they had honed over the past six weeks. Issy and Nati took on the critical roles of front of house, warmly welcoming and seating guests.

Dillan and Rachel efficiently served as waiters, ensuring each customer received their order promptly. Henry managed the till with precision, handling transactions seamlessly. Sienna kept the café spotless as the cleaner, while Lola worked her magic in the kitchen as the chef, preparing the orders for the customers. To add a vibrant and lively atmosphere, Ethan took on the role of café DJ, playing music that kept everyone entertained throughout the event.



The six-week training programme at Caudwell Children’s Centre was a resounding success. The students thoroughly enjoyed their time, embracing each activity with enthusiasm and curiosity. The experience not only equipped them with practical life skills, but also fostered teamwork, creativity, and self-confidence. Their hard work and dedication were evident in the smooth operation of the café and the smiles on the faces of satisfied customers.

As we reflect on this wonderful journey, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the staff at Caudwell Children’s Centre for their guidance and support. This partnership has provided our students with invaluable experiences that will serve them well in future endeavours.



Churchill's Trip to Peak Wildlife Park

Churchill Class visited Peak Wildlife Park on the 2nd July 2024. This was our end of year trip and we had our fingers crossed that the day would be dry.

We set off from school in high spirits, with coats at the ready, for the journey to Leek and the park. We were wondering what journeys the animals undertaken and how they had arrived at their final destination, Peak Wildlife Park as we travelled along. We then moved onto I spy.

Our day was full of learning, laughter, fun with the sun finally making an appearance in the afternoon.



Below is a list of some of the animals we spotted and where they come from:

- Pygmy Goat from Republic of Cameroon
- Valais Blacknose Sheep from Switzerland
- Chickens from Southeast Asia
- Flemish Giant Rabbit from Belgium
- Asian Short Clawed Otter from Vietnam
- Visayan Warty Pig from Philippines
- Ring tailed, Black & White Ruffed, Black Lemurs from Madagascar
- Meerkats from Southern Africa
- African Spurred Tortoise
- Alpaca from South America
- Humboldt Penguin from South America
- Polar Bears from the Arctic

It was an excellent day out and a good time was had by all!



Science

In Science, Middleport explored the topic States of Matter. Middleport completed lots of practical experiments in Science lessons to help support their understanding of solids, liquids and gasses, how materials change state, understanding how materials dissolve and how to separate materials.



One experiment Middleport completed explored how chemicals react with one another. The students worked scientifically in pairs to show what happens when vinegar and bicarbonate of soda are combined. The reaction caused a balloon to inflate.



To help support the students' understanding of solids, liquids and gasses students went to Cadbury World to see chocolate changing state. First, the students enjoyed learning about John Cadbury and how he came about founding Cadbury's chocolate.

Students also spent time learning the process of how chocolate is made and engaged in a sensory experience whereby they were the cocoa bean to understand it's journey from bean to chocolate. The students then went onto the tasting room, where they were able to try melted Cadbury chocolate with a choice of toppings.

Middleport had a fantastic time at Cadbury World!



Sensory and Physical Curriculum

Our school anchor for the summer term has been Journeys. Through our sensory and physical curriculum, our students embark on various journeys that enrich their sensory and sporting experiences. Each lesson and activity will incorporate transferable skills to support their academic journey as well.

Students worked through the summer term exploring their creative abilities. Here are some highlights from their exciting adventures:



Boxing:

Students enjoyed engaging boxing activities, and we were thrilled to have Colin, a boxing coach, from All Stars Boxing, visit us. This experience not only boosted their physical fitness but also taught them discipline and perseverance.





Sword Fencing:

This term, following a request from a Student who wanted to experience the thrill of fencing, we were able to introduce some fencing sessions. Thanks to Keele University Fencing Club, our students had the opportunity to enhance their physical journey using foils and épées. The experience was both challenging and exhilarating, and we are grateful for their support.



Gymnastics:

ShapeOur gymnastics sessions focused on sequence-making, where students created a journey of five balances and three rolls using tension and fluidity. This activity enhanced their coordination, strength, and creativity.



Cardio Drumming:

Some of our Exploratory Pathway students participated in an exciting Cardio Drumming activity. This marks the beginning of their journey in exploring fun and engaging ways to incorporate cardio exercise into their routines.



During these sessions, students learned basic drumming routines, which set the stage for an even more exciting challenge: creating their own drumming routine to the “Ghostbusters” theme tune! This activity not only promoted physical fitness but also allowed students to express their creativity and rhythm.

We are proud of our students’ enthusiasm and dedication as they embark on this fun-filled cardio journey.

Sensory P.E:

For our Immersive Pathway students, they follow a distinct curriculum designed to fully immerse them in their Physical literacy and learning.

Most activities take place in our specially designed Immersive 4D Room, where projections and lighting create a calm and self-regulatory atmosphere. This environment allows students to embark on sensory journeys that engage all their senses, promoting periods of calm and focus.



By stimulating their senses, we enable our students to participate in focused learning activities in their classrooms. This approach not only enhances their learning experience but also supports their overall well-being.

We are proud of the progress our Immersive Pathway students are making and look forward to continuing this innovative journey together

The most important thing about the activities is that they are all fun!!

Budding Party Planner

A highlight of this term is our Leavers Prom. This is a rite of passage for students that are leaving and there is great excitement and anticipation in the air.

Prom planning takes up a lot of time and coordination, taking on board all the leavers wishes and expectations for their special evening. This year we have been really lucky to work with Orla from Churchill class, who has been instrumental in helping with the organisation of the Prom Ball.

Orla attended the early meetings and recorded the students' views. Using her IT and art skills Orla, working with her 1:1 support, Mrs Evans, incorporated the ideas into a portfolio which she presented to the leavers and Prom committee. At the meeting Orla outlined her visions and the students voted for their favourite.



“ I really liked organising, making decisions on what things will look like and where things will go, I liked meeting the different classes”

With this crucial decision made, Orla then helped to design the Prom and made final decisions on the décor, activities and menu. The design process culminated on the 4th July in the decorating of the hall and arranging the seating, tables, mocktail bar, disco, party games etc. Orla was on hand to oversee this too and to welcome the leavers to their prom.

We will leave the last words to Laura Evans...

“As Orla ‘s 1:1 I am so proud that she was able to overcome her fear of speaking in public to the different people involved in this process and saw her vision come together the night of the Prom, well done Orla”

Work Experience

We have had a busy year in Work Experience. Our wonderful workers have shown enormous courage, determination and dedication and have been a credit to our School. Here is a small selection of the wide range of work they have been doing.

Callum is making 'minor' adjustments to a motor vehicle. Imogen is testing brake lights both were at Martec. Isabel and Rebecca are working the tills at Tesco, and Millie is beautifying nails at Landau.



This is just a small snapshot of what has been going on. All the business' have written and told me how polite, smart and confident the students all are and a huge credit to Blackfriars. A huge thank you from all at Blackfriars to the businesses that have supported us this year. Thanks also to all the T/A 's ,drivers and administrators who have made all this happen .



I'm a Year 11 Get Me Out of Here!

This term, students in the Performing Arts options class hosted the thrilling summer show, "I'm a Year 11, Get Me Out of Here!". Guiding us through the excitement were our fantastic hosts, Shant and Bec, whose dynamic energy and humour kept both the contestants and audience entertained.

The courageous contestants took on a series of 'elimination' battles and the winner of the battle then had the opportunity to take on the challenging and often hilarious trials, displaying remarkable resilience, bravery, and team spirit.



The show kicked off with the Battle of the Voices between Poppy and Lilly, where Poppy emerged victorious and took on the Slimy Surprise trial. Poppy triumphed in the Slimy Surprise trial, courageously using her mouth to retrieve stars from boxes filled with worms, fish guts, mud, animal droppings, and slime. Next was the Rap Battle, which saw Issy and James face off with Issy winning meaning that she would take on the trial, Mystery Mayhem. Issy showed incredible composure as she blindly faced boxes filled with unpleasant surprises to find hidden stars. The Joke Battle between Alex and Noah had everyone in stitches, with Alex coming out on top and taking on the Critter Canteen trial. Alex bravely consumed some of the most bizarre dishes imaginable to earn his stars.



The Battle of the Moves was the next trial and this saw Mia and Kayla competing head-to-head in a dance-off, showcasing their talent and determination, with Kayla emerging victorious and moving on to the Disgusting Drinks trial. In the Drinking Trial, Kayla faced a lineup of revolting drinks, from goat's wee to children's snot, and impressively earned all her stars.

Finally, in the Rock Paper Scissors Battle, Oli triumphed over Caitlyn and went on to face the Knowledge and Nausea trial.



In the Knowledge and Nausea trial, Oli had to correctly answer five questions while having snakes, mealworms, spiders, and cockroaches poured over him, showcasing his composure and earning all five stars.

Special congratulations to Poppy, Issy, Kayla, Alex, and Oli, who successfully completed their trials and earned their freedom from Blackfriars Academy forever.

We are immensely proud of all our performers for their grit and good humour. A special shout out to our amazing Year 11s, who have shown us all the true meaning of perseverance and teamwork! Also, a big thank you to all of the other performers involved for making this year's show a highlight of our school community.

An update on how our staff develop their expertise: Explicit Teaching and modelling

Having a spotlight on explicit teaching and modelling this year was a great opportunity for teaching assistants to build on their previous professional development focus on progressing student independence. This had been based on the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) evidence on the most effective deployment of TAs. Being explicit and modelling to students proved to be an area where we could make further progress and so it was adopted as the TA challenge for this year. We aspired for all TAs to be confident and competent experts who can model while students actively watch and listen, trying the same step for themselves immediately afterwards.

The year began with a blank display board in the staffroom and TAs were tasked with the 'ordeal' of having themselves photographed illustrating great and successful examples of explicit teaching and modelling. I 'modelled' an example of myself teaching. As the display filled up with wonderful examples, colleagues were able to celebrate each other's successes and learn from each other.



The project was launched with a professional development session analysing good examples from videos provided by the Chartered College of Teaching. Blackfriars staff considered and discussed how those in the videos questioned and engaged students through modelling. Some symbols and signing were used where appropriate.

Some further evidence underpinned our work: more effective teaching through modelling by Adam Lawrence, 2018 and The explicit use and modelling of cognitive science in staff development by Liz Barratt, 2018.

TAs were shown samples of modelling and then reflected and discussed in their class teams what they planned to implement with their own students. As ever, Blackfriars staff were professional, inventive, creative and compassionate in their approach and practice. Because of their resourcefulness and dedication, students have continued to make excellent progress.



A student has made an error in a comprehension. Rather than correct it, Chrissie is modelling how to split the screen and find the relevant information.



A student wasn't building the Lego as instructed. Julie is modelling exactly how to build the Lego, whilst the student observes, finds the relevant pieces and does it herself.

Portmeirion

Each Tuesday period 2 Portmeirion go shopping to our local Tesco. The intention was to progress with independent money skills as well as work towards bespoke Preparation for Adulthood and EHC plan targets. Close attention is paid to the time we leave and return so that those most adept at telling the time can work out how long the visit took (and how long to wait for lunch!). Danny explains; “Tesco is one of the best places to go and budget, using your maths skills to pay for things you get.”

Back in September 2023, just getting out of the front door was preceded by a multitude of questions (from staff): Look, it’s raining, so where is your coat? Have you got your money? Have you got a shopping bag? Is your money safe loose like that in your hand? How much money do you have? Our first visit took 45 minutes. There was confusion and nervousness at the tills, and items were returned as students overspent. For some, choosing items was a gamble as to whether they had the funds to pay. As mistakes were made, students progressed.



Skip forward to June 2024 and the shopping visit to Tesco is a well-oiled machine. We leave school promptly and the whole visit takes 20 minutes. Students may not all be making the healthiest of choices - the initial excitement of buying Prime drinks was short-lived as students’ enthusiasm for it quickly waned. However, money is kept in purses and wallets, clothing is (usually) weather appropriate and students understand the value of their budget. Prices are checked and money is counted. We all know that crossing Seabridge Road needs our full attention and we apply road safety skills with focus.

Some students, such as Olivia, take responsibility for a family shopping list; “I spend at least £10 on jacket potatoes and snacks.” Others might indulge in a weekly treat such as Josh; “I love Tesco because I love to buy a drink and a pack of some crisps.” Packed lunches are enhanced by carefully selected favourites.



We’ve bought chocolate Santas’ and Easter eggs, stationary and cuddly toys. I’m hoping that the sun will come out and we’ll need to buy some ice-lollies before the term ends! Thanks to the shop staff who never fail to welcome us cheerfully and have inspired some of Portmeirion to aspire to a job at Tesco.

Celebrating Bridgewater's Year 11 and 13 Students' journeys at Blackfriars

As the school year comes to an end, we take a moment to celebrate the incredible journey of our Bridgewater Year 11 and Year 13 students. Since joining us in Year 7, all students have shown tremendous growth, resilience, and determination, making us immensely proud. Now, as they prepare for their next chapter in September, we reflect on their inspiring journeys through Blackfriars Academy. Each student in Bridgewater has achieved significant milestones and made unique contributions to our school community. Their journeys have been diverse, but each path has been marked by growth and success.

Henry has excelled in developing his independence, mastering essential life skills such as tying his shoelaces, which he was extremely proud of! Henry has also showed great enthusiasm and dedication in the Bridgewater café where he has showcased his ability to work as part of a team and carry out his role as treasurer.

Ethan has demonstrated exceptional growth during his time at Blackfriars, particularly in perfecting the use of his cane to navigate both familiar and unfamiliar environments with confidence. This significant achievement has empowered him to explore and engage more freely with the world around him. Additionally, Ethan's passion for music led him to an impressive accomplishment as a DJ at the Caudwell Café, where he entertained audiences with his talent.

Issy's journey at Blackfriars has been truly inspiring, marked by tremendous progress in her communication skills. She has come on leaps and bounds, expressing herself with increasing confidence, which has greatly enhanced her social skills and interactions with peers and adults. Her perseverance with physical management and physio is equally commendable; she has consistently demonstrated determination and resilience in overcoming challenges.

Natalia's amazing sense of humour has not only brought joy to her peers and teachers but has also been a key aspect of her outgoing nature, helping her build strong, positive relationships. Natalia has excelled in using her PODD book to communicate effectively, showcasing her dedication to improving her communication skills. Additionally, her tolerance and perseverance with her physical management programme have been commendable, reflecting her resilience and determination.

Sienna's journey at Blackfriars has been nothing short of remarkable. Despite her personal challenges, she has absolutely excelled with her signing abilities, becoming a confident and effective communicator. Sienna really is a super signer, and we are so proud of the progress that she has made. Over the years, Sienna has matured into a determined and resilient young woman, earning the affectionate nickname "Miss Independent" for her impressive strides toward independence. Her journey from Year 7 has been filled with numerous accomplishments, reflecting her dedication and hard work. Sienna's happy and giggly nature, paired with her occasional stubbornness, has made her a beloved member of our school.

Bridgewater wish Matthew the best of luck as he moves forward on his journey! Throughout his time at Blackfriars, Matthew has made memories that we will cherish forever! As he prepares for the next chapter in his life, we have no doubt that Matthew will continue to develop his skills and make a positive impact.

Rachel's journey at Blackfriars has been defined by her helpful, kind, and caring nature. She is known for her friendly demeanor and her ability to make those around her feel valued and supported. Rachel's independence has flourished over the years, allowing her to take on new challenges with confidence. One of her proudest achievements is becoming a peer mentor, a role in which she excels by offering guidance and support to her fellow peers. Rachel's dedication to helping others, combined with her friendly and caring attitude, has made her an invaluable part of our school community.

Dillan has blossomed into a confident and cheerful young man and has come a long way since his early days in Year 7 at Blackfriars. One of his proudest achievements has been carrying out the role of a waiter at Caudwell Cafe, where he has demonstrated his ability to interact with customers and manage tasks efficiently. Dillan's journey is made up of resilience and personal development, inspiring those around him with his positive outlook and determination to succeed.

As September approaches, our Year 11 and 13 students are preparing to take the next big step in their educational journeys by moving to college. This transition marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter filled with opportunities for further growth and learning. We are confident that the skills and experiences they have gained at Blackfriars have prepared them well for this next phase.

We are incredibly proud of each of our Bridgewater students. Their resilience, determination, and achievements are a testament to their hard work and the support of their families, teachers, and peers. As they move on to college, we wish them all the best and look forward to hearing about their future successes.



Our Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) journey this year

Back in October 2023 PSHE came under the spotlight of Ofsted as they visited Blackfriars. The inspectors made a deep dive into PSHE across the whole school which contributed positively to our fabulous report. The system and structure of PSHE across all 3 pathways is rigorous and well embedded, a unifying theme throughout the whole community which supports the personal development of our students, focusing on the EHC plan targets. iPads are used to capture progress against specific targets and students also develop their knowledge and understanding of the following topics at a level which is bespoke, relevant and personal to them:

Autumn

- Self-awareness (Me, who I am, my likes, dislikes, talents and interests)
- Self-care, support and safety (Looking after myself and keeping safe) includes aspects of Relationships and sex education.

Spring

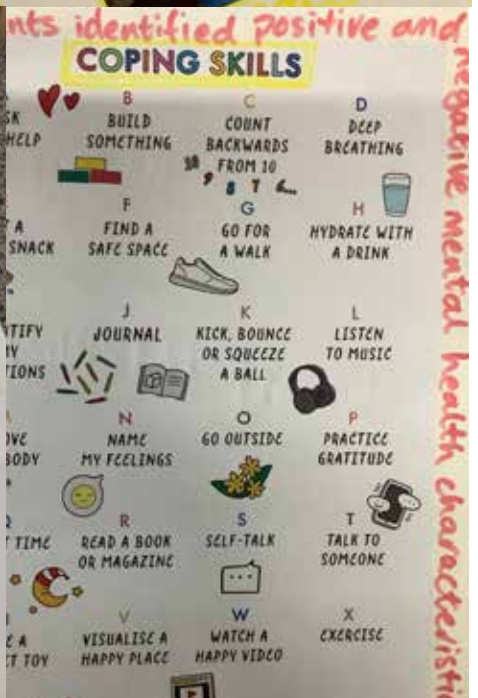
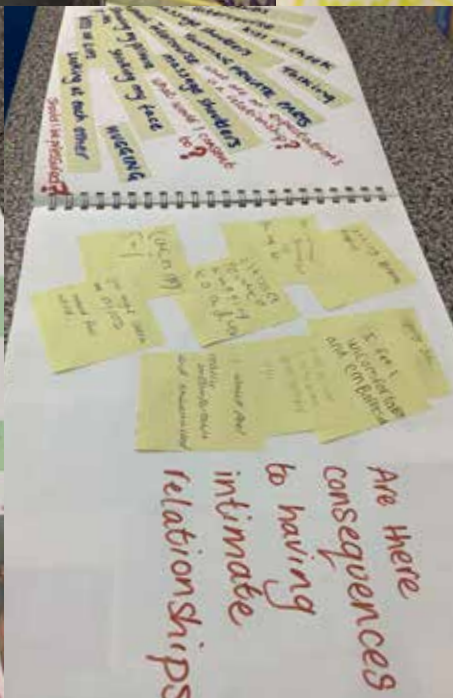
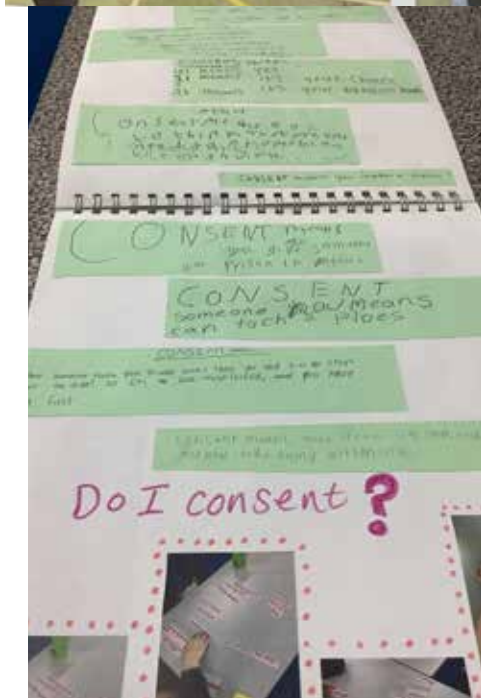
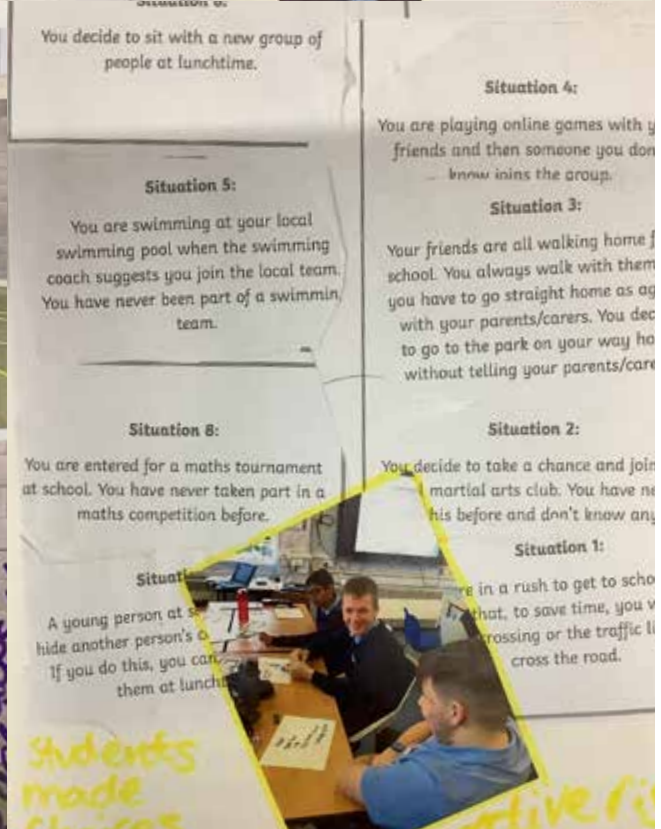
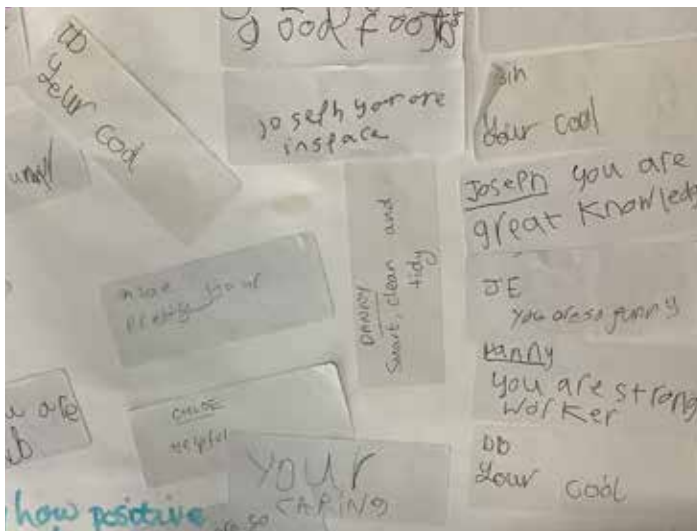
- Relationships: Managing Feelings (Understanding feelings and that how I feel and how others feel affects choices and behaviour) includes aspects of Relationships and sex education.
- Relationships: Changing and Growing (How I and others are changing; new opportunities and responsibilities) includes aspects of Relationships and sex education.

Summer

- Healthy lifestyles (Being and keeping healthy on the 'outside' and on the 'inside')
- The world I live in (Living confidently in the wider world)

The intention of all PSHE learning in school is for it to be creative, engaging, dynamic and fun. On designated PSHE days, students can all participate in a whole school activity, be it an assembly, sports hall keep fit session or team building games. Carousel activities allow students to work with different teachers on tasks such as cooking, making calming jars, planting seeds or making graffiti. Dressing the room sets the scene, and props, resources and movement replace more traditional lessons. Another unifying task is that each student contributes in some way to a whole school project each topic e.g. summarising learning on the PSHE tree (see it lit up in reception!), being part of a giant collage of photos or adding their own piece to a super long string of bunting.

Where issues arise, teachers have the opportunity in registration time to hone in on areas of concern for specific students and classes e.g. social media usage. All implementation and impact is evidenced in the PSHE scrap books, which beautifully reflect this vibrant and essential subject in school.



Questioning Pathway Conference – A Resounding Success!

The Questioning Pathway Learning Conference was held in April. We welcomed our Link Academy Councillor, Kath Brookes, to complete a Quality of Teaching and Learning Review and looked forward to hearing her views. The Academy Council members are incredibly supportive of the school but also challenge and add a level of accountability in a spirit of partnership with the staff ensuring that our students are centre for all we do.

The conference gave Kath an opportunity to discuss the vision for the pathway, tour lessons, meet with students in the Pathway, teachers in the Pathway, as well as meet with parent representatives on teams. The voice of our students, parents and teachers are central to the conference and the programme ensured the voices of parents from Gladstone, Portmeirion, Royal Doulton and Churchill were heard loud and clear. We are pleased to present extracts from Kath's full report below.

On the Pathway vision Kath stated:

“Using foundations of inclusiveness and self-awareness, students are led on a journey of self-discovery and encouraged to grow in confidence through questioning things around them. When they leave Blackfriars, pupils will have a good foundation of skills to take forward into the next stage of their lives.”

Learning Walk:

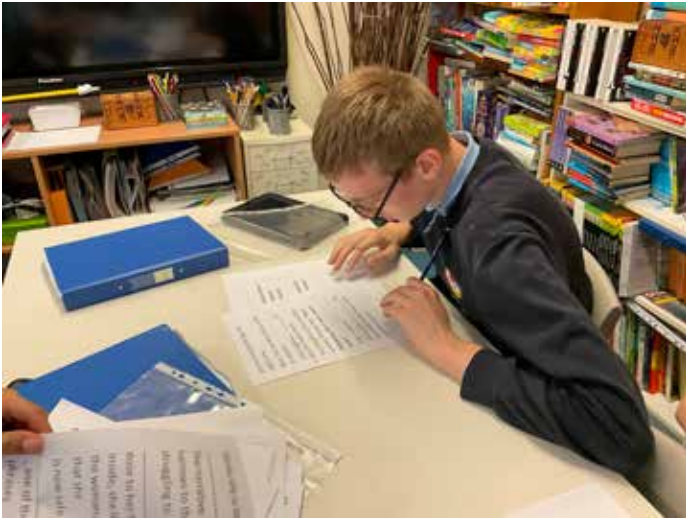
“I was very pleased to be invited on a learning walk around the Questioning classes. I observed swimming, food technology, Science History and PE. In all the lessons the students were engaged and enjoying their learning. In food technology students were able to tell me what they were making (ramen) and list ingredients. It was good to see lots of teamwork going on and lots of smiles.

Swimming was lovely, very calm and again all smiles. One student had been worried about going swimming, but their TA had suggested wearing a t-shirt which solved the problem. To me this demonstrates the way that TAs at Blackfriars get to know the pupils so well and go above and beyond to solve problems.

History was Christopher Columbus which tied very nicely into the journey anchor and students were being asked to write down a description of a slide and then draw it from their own written description, something I am not sure I could do.

Science was Mars, again tying into the journey anchor and students were able to give facts about Mars when asked.

We then went to visit the PE class, but they had just finished boxing, working out their own routines and then boxing them. I was impressed by the level of engagement in all the lessons and the inclusivity, everyone was supported, involved and joining in and very obviously happy to be at school.”



Student voice:

Kath asked a series of open questions -

Can you tell me your name and what you think you would like to do when you leave school as a job?

Answers ranged from a ride engineer, policewoman, IT. Looking after animals or children and go to college.

Do you enjoy school. If so, what aspects of school do you enjoy the most and why?

Everyone seemed to enjoy school and listed a wide range of lessons they enjoyed the most.

What clubs do you belong to? Are they enjoyable? What other clubs would you like to see in school?

Computer club and boxing club were popular with suggestions for a football club. A chitchat club and a free time club. A sleep club was also mentioned.

Student voice:

In lessons what do the teachers do to help you learn?

Pictures of what words mean to help understanding, some students are allowed to use a computer and provision of quiet spaces. Mention was also made of different levels of work according to ability.

What would you do to improve the school?

Shorter lessons and longer breaks. Better food options for lunch was mentioned along with bigger meals. More trips out and improve and add to outside equipment.

Trips - what has been your favourite? Are there enough?

Cadburys world, Standon Bowers and fencing at Keele were mentioned as highlights. More trips were requested including Alton Towers (a mini discussion about the rides not being everyone's idea of fun took place) London and maybe a trip abroad.

Residential - have you ever been on a residential, where did you go? Did you enjoy it? Where would you like to go in the future?

Enthusiasm was palpable from some obviously excited students. Bendrig and Standon Bowers were mentioned and it was obvious that students had enjoyed these residential. Water parks and a trip to Spain were suggested for future ideas.

You are going to have a new headteacher in September. Can you tell me one thing he needs to know about the Questioning pathway or the school?

Students expressed a variety of views. The new headteacher needs to understand the different needs of each student including different health issues. He needs to listen to everyone and keep P.R.I.D.E, Sing Sensations and work experience. Probably most importantly he needs to know that Blackfriars is full of amazing students.



Parent panel:

Open questions included:

Your child is in the Questioning pathway. Can you talk a little about what you think being in this pathway is like and what it is trying to prepare your child for?

Consensus was that the Questioning pathway was about achieving independence and developing a questioning mind and independent thinking. It improves student confidence and through repetition the skills to take on into the next stage of life become engrained.

What aspirations (life/job/independence) do you and your child have beyond Blackfriars?

Main aspirations were for students to be able to survive in an adult world and develop the skills necessary to do so. Blackfriars match tasks such as cooking and personal care being worked on at home providing a unified approach. Students may have unachievable aims for the future but their hopes for their future achievements are not dashed but instead they are listened to and prepared for the outside world, they feel that they have a voice. Support is given with moving on to college and potentially finding a route into employment. Staff know each student well and can offer support as needed.

Do you feel that Blackfriars is preparing your child for adulthood?

Resoundingly yes, school was felt to be very helpful with difficult situations and able to tackle some difficult subjects that perhaps family members feel unable to raise with students in a way that they will understand. Parents feel able to contact the school with any problems and know that they will be listened to. Students are showing increased levels of independence and can go out to play with friends safely or go to the shop on their own.

Do you feel that school effectively safeguards your child?

Resounding yes to this question.

What does the school do well?

Communication, parents feel that they receive good support and are able to contact the school and will be listened to with any concerns being acted upon. Students are known and individual needs are understood well by staff and learning is adapted to each student's needs. TAs are important part of learning for pupils and often someone to relate to.

Do you feel that school communicates effectively with you?

A definite yes to this question.

What would you do to improve the school?

More trips out, particularly residential. A suggestion was also made for getting pupils together outside school as many are very isolated once away from school environment.

The afternoon produced a wide range of evidence for the Questioning pathway to celebrate and also reflect upon as we move into the new academic year.

Thank you Kath and to all who took part for your support.

Exploratory Pathway – Summer 2024

This year started for the students in the Exploratory Pathway at two ends of the school. Middleport started the year as a group of new year 7s, about to start their journey at Blackfriars, and for those students in Bridgewater, a group of year 11s & 13s ready to complete their last year at Blackfriars. Throughout the year, Middleport, Moorcroft and Bridgewater have focused on developing their skills and learning more about community inclusion, independent living skills, employment and volunteering and good health.

Students in Middleport started their Preparation for Adulthood journey by first thinking about the targets they wanted on their Preparation for Adulthood plans. After discussions with the students and their parents, students wanted to get better at, amongst others, using and understanding money, making new friends and listening to and following instructions when playing games. During Preparation for Adulthood lessons, Middleport have completed activities that have supported their development of communication and interactions with their peers. Activities include turn-taking games, following verbal instructions, and giving verbal instructions.

Middleport spent this term practising many skills on their trips to Morrisons. Zach in Middleport said, “Preparation for Adulthood lessons are my favourite because we learn lots of new skills that will help us when we get older.” During trips to Morrisons, Middleport have practised communicating appropriately to order food and drink, using money skills and learned how to communicate with their peers in an environment outside of school.



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Students in Moorcroft and Bridgewater started the year revisiting their Preparation for Adulthood plans. They thought about the targets that they had already achieved and the targets they still wanted to work towards. In Moorcroft, students have been learning to cross the road safely. The students started by learning about different types of crossings and the steps they needed to take to cross safely. Moorcroft then practised on the school playground crossing, which resembles a real zebra crossing. Once the students were confident and safe, they went to practise their skills on a real crossing. Some students were able to cross the road independently and some needed some verbal prompts.

In Bridgewater, the students started the year by learning how to run a café at school. Each Friday, students would work as a team to take orders from the rest of the school, prepare the food and drink, serve the food and clean the kitchen to finish. Students worked well as a team and used their communication aids to support them when listening to and following instructions. After successfully running the Bridgewater café at school, Bridgewater students had the opportunity to practise and develop their skills further at Caudwell. Once a week, for six weeks, Bridgewater students went to Caudwell to learn how to transfer their skills into a working café. On the sixth week, Bridgewater ran a café for all the staff at Caudwell. They did a fantastic job and got lots of great reviews.



Students in the Exploratory Pathway have had a fantastic journey this year and have developed skills that will support them as they move onto their next adventure!



Home Cooking

This term our anchor has been Journeys. For this the students have been travelling around the world, following and cooking recipes, trying food, finding out about the journey to a city, finding out about the language and researching what tourist activities there are. To make it fair, we had a lesson where the students put their ideas forward for countries, cities and recipes that they would like to visit and find out about.

They then voted for each country, city and recipe. The countries that Churchill group 1 and group 2 voted for are Barcelona, Naples, Marrakesh, New York, Conwy, Cardiff, Nice, Stockholm, Kyoto and Mexico. The recipes they cooked pizza, churros, hot dog, tagine, Welsh cakes, crepes and ramen. The cities that Royal Doulton voted for are Rome, Malmo, Krakow, Toyko, Tirana, Paris, Naples, LA and Honolulu.

The recipes they voted for were tomato pasta, surf shack burger, polish pizza, ramen, truffles, chicken kebabs, and crepes and pizza.



Throughout the year the students have also been working on being able to tie their own apron. Many students are starting to succeed with this, with a sense of pride.

While completing the above we have been reviewing our health and safety of a kitchen; the seriousness of washing hands throughout the cooking session, focusing on the cross contamination of germs, the dangers to be aware of in the kitchen when cooking and how to make sure we are always safe.

While cooking, we extended our knowledge of how to follow a recipe in the correct order, being able to extract information on which equipment is needed for each recipe, used an array of equipment safely and correctly, applied heat in different ways, weighed and measured ingredients accurately, combined different ingredients and made recipes adaptable to all students. We also looked at key words we were unsure of in the recipes and extended our vocabulary when describing the taste of foods we had made.

All students tasted everything they made and were able to give an honest review using this new key vocabulary. Students were able to evaluate their own skills and think hard about how they can improve their independence when cooking.



It has been another great year Home Cooking, where the students have thoroughly enjoyed learning how to cook. I hope to keep extending their knowledge and skills in the future and that they start to cook at home as well as in school.

Goodbye and thank you to Mrs Parr!

Well it is the end of the Parr Era – and what a 10 years it has been for Blackfriars!

Mrs Parr came to Blackfriars in 2014 having left Keele University (where she had trained teachers of the future) with a background in History teaching and a passion and drive for improving education and opportunities for young people.

Mrs Parr brought to Blackfriars the mantra ‘What is the point?’ and empowered all staff to reflect on everything that they did and provided for the students, to make sure it was appropriate and purposeful every second of the school day. With her University background she encouraged all staff to delve into research and continue their learning journey constantly so that they had all the appropriate academic, evidence based research and knowledge to inform their practice. ‘What is the point?’ keeps everyone focussed and working in the right direction as a team.

This brought a new depth to everything that we did as a staff with the use of the Monday afternoons to make sure this was embedded.

We knew she was going to be a very different leader when in her very first term she had her hair completely shaved off to raise money for the school!

Introducing the school motto of PRIDE to the school was inspirational and involved student voice so that they helped to shape the meaning of PRIDE and therefore had ownership of it. Pride in our appearance and all we do, Respect for ourselves and others, Independence, Determination and most importantly Enjoyment! Students know it, do it and tell others about it – it runs through everything that we do as a school. A firm foundation!

The improvements that Mrs Parr has made to the way Blackfriars works are vast in number. She is so passionate and positive about the direction that everyone needs to move in that she is able to sweep everyone along with her. Her ability to take an idea, inspire others so that they share that vision and have the confidence to put it into practice, is just incredible. And she does this in the most creative, inventive intelligent way. It is awe inspiring watching her work.

She encourages her staff and therefore the students to be the very best they can. She allows them to take risks, be creative, think outside of the box, try something new, be brave. This has led to the creation of Preparation for Adulthood curriculum providing a focus for all students from the moment they enter the school. Thus the Preparation for Adulthood room, the Horticulture and Land Based study areas, the small animal care opportunity, an extensive and exciting Work Experience programme, 4D room and curriculum, Sensory Diet and morning regulation, the variety of lunch time clubs, the residential enrichment activities, links with the local community, our drop down days where students and staff work on a Learning Enquiry – such as the Magana Carta, medieval day or the World War One day. Letting staff be bold in taking students abroad, to the Houses of Parliament and to be on the Youth Advisory Group. And the list goes on and on and so does the creativity.

So to Mrs Parr, your drive and vision is the golden thread that runs through everything that we do, it is now so well weaved into the life of the school and all that we do that this will be your legacy. You have pointed us all in the right direction with your mantra, we know ‘what the point is’ and we will never forget it!

Thank you for all you have done for the students, parents and staff at Blackfriars. We wish you well with your next adventure!



Mr Parr we wish you well with your semi retirement and your new adventure.

Thank you for all you have done for Blackfriars. You have delivered a hands on, fun, engaging Science curriculum to the students to allow them to access and achieve in this subject.

The Land Based study work and Horticultural curriculum that you have provided has enriched the students experiences and widen their knowledge about and love of, the outdoors.

The opportunities that the students have encountered through the range of Work Experience that you have provided has had such a positive impact and increased students confidence and self esteem. There have been so many 'wow' moments with students achieving beyond expectation when out in the community. And the links that you have now forged with local businesses will continue to support students

Your creation of a model railway club for the students has been inspirational – with it being the most popular club at Blackfriars and that is due to the passion that you bring to supporting the students with their interests and hobbies.

Thank you for setting us off on the right track!

Final Words

This edition of the BAC has afforded us the opportunity to reflect on our anchor, 'Journeys' - both metaphorical journeys and literal journeys. I hope that you have enjoyed reading all about what our wonderful students have been up to this term.

It is with sadness that this will be the last BAC I write in as the headteacher of Blackfriars Academy. I would like to take the opportunity therefore to reflect on my journey over the last 10 years. I journeyed down the hill from Keele University where my previous position was as the director of initial teacher education. I had a partnership of 70 schools that I used to frequently visit and I can therefore say, with some degree of certainty based upon this experience, that Blackfriars truly is the most caring and creative educational setting. The staff work so incredibly hard to provide your children with a memorable and meaningful education and it has been an honour to lead them. During the 10 years, a great deal has happened but I thought you might be interested in my Top 10.

1. Blackfriars Academy is proud of the part we played (1 of the three founder schools- Blackfriars, Walton Hall and The Coppice) in 2014 in forming the Shaw Education Trust.
2. Blackfriars School opened as a school for 'Fragile children' in 1960 - in 2020-21, we developed 6 for 60 - a project celebrating 60 years of working with incredible young people, their families and the community. Staff developed a list of 6 entitlements for all students including the offer that year for every single child to take part in a residential. These opportunities provide an unforgettable experience for all of our young people
3. Development of a strong, challenging and supportive Academy Council comprising parents and community representatives. They have worked with the school leadership team and the SET to help the school to ensure that it excels in supporting a range of students with very varied needs, recognised by Ofsted for 23 years as an 'outstanding' school
4. With the incredible support of the SET, Blackfriars' community survived and emerged even stronger from Covid - this felt like a huge achievement at the time but has had a long-lasting impact: our relationships with parents and carers are even closer having undertaken weekly visits to our students in their homes, delivering resource packs, work and food and toiletries
5. The 4 D room paid for by the wonderful Shaw Trust staff who were sponsored to run the London Marathon. This room enables us to immerse our students into any environment we wish to explore - it became our field dressing station when we had our First World War day - the interactive floor became No Man's Land which, when students trod on it, the mud squelched and formed their footprint, one wall reflected the dog fight taking place above the trenches that were shown on the other walls. For our most complex students, it provides great opportunities for them to be immersed in, for example, the ocean and practise maintaining eye contact as the dolphin moves around the room.

6. Re-furbishment of the hydrotherapy pool – not only has this enabled us to bring our fuel costs into the realm of the slightly more affordable, it has also resulted in a swimming pool that is inviting – consistently warm, well lit and exciting – rotating pictures on the wall and a disco ball takes the experience to a whole new level!

7. The exciting physical challenges that our students consistently rise to – many pupils have physical disabilities or medical conditions – despite these, they have been taken sailing, canoeing, fencing, cycling, climbing, boxing, abseiling ... the list goes on.

8. The commitment of our hard working staff to ensure that every child is offered a range of external experiences that enhance their lives – be it abseiling in a wheelchair to staying overnight under canvas, visiting the Houses of Parliament and the French battlefields or playing in the sea for the first time in their lives.

9. Blackfriars' staff are incredibly creative and ensure that the learning for our students is brought to life in many creative ways – to develop our understanding of the Magna Carta, we held a 2 day Medieval Fayre which included jousting, roasting of a suckling pig and the rejection of the Barons who tried to take control. Burn's Night was celebrated with a Piper playing his bagpipes throughout the school and the Haggis was sliced during the reading of 'The Address to the Haggis' by one of the students using a ceremonial silver sword. Enraged by the investigation into our polluted seas seen on The Blue Planet, our students took part in a series of activities culminating in making a giant jelly fish made from carrier bags that hangs from the school hall ceiling as a reminder to cut down on waste.

10. Every student has a personalised Preparation for Adulthood Plan that is written in conjunction with parents and carers and where possible, features the hopes and dreams of our young people as well as annual practical steps that they agree to work towards. Vital in this process is the work that we do with local employers (Tesco, Martel, The Belong Centre, Landau, Caudwell) who provide year long placements for our students – every young person in our Questioning Pathway has the chance to have 5 placements of approximately 5 weeks in duration. The students in the Exploratory Pathway run our 'FeelGood Friday' café but then take the skills learned into a real workplace (Caudwell Centre) where they work with a catering company to host a pop-up café. For our students in the Immersive Pathway, it is important that they have their horizons extended by experiencing different jobs – an example of which is when the fire engine visits and the students have the chance to try on the uniforms, roll out the hose etc.

There is so much to celebrate but none of this would have been possible without the support of our wonderful parents and carers.

My final words are to you, thank you for entrusting us with your children - each and every one of them is incredible. Have a safe summer and I hope you all enjoy working alongside Mr Jamie Campbell, the new headteacher of Blackfriars.



Blackfriars Academy Term Dates 2024-2025 (Pupils)_{v2}

September 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October 2024						
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November 2024						
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December 2024						
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29	30	31				

January 2025						
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February 2025						
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March 2025						
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April 2025						
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May 2025						
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June 2025						
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July 2025						
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August 2025						
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31						

 School Open
 School Closed

