

The Rockwood Standard



CORE
ROCKWOOD
ACADEMY



The Newsletter of
Rockwood Academy
13th Edition April 2021

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HEADTEACHER



DEAR STUDENTS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITY,

I would like to thank everyone for their hard work over what has

been the most unusual of terms. When staff first came back to school on the morning of 4th January, the third lockdown had not even been announced: given all that has happened since, this seems a long time ago now! I am proud of how our community came together during the lockdown. The key quality that everyone has needed, and demonstrated, has been adaptability.

Moving learning online was a significant under-taking. All students had to learn how to use Microsoft Teams and other apps, which they did brilliantly: by March, we had all become IT specialists! Behind the scenes, a big operation was underway: where students did not have laptops or another suitable device on which to learn, we worked hard to provide them with one. Where students did not have internet access, we delivered dongles to homes. Our support staff worked tirelessly throughout the lockdown, phoning any students who were struggling to get into a lesson, identifying problems and ironing them out.

Thanks to all this hard work, learning continued. Our online attendance was exceptional, as high as 98%. This would not have been possible without the support of parents and carers. Students emailed essays for marking; they completed tests online; they memorised facts through fun quizzes; they even led lessons themselves as they became more familiar with MS Teams.

Throughout lockdown, we remained a place where students always come first, and we set out to offer students something equivalent to what they would get from the school site. So our after-school clubs continued, but online. Our talented artists and musicians could continue practising their craft. Our cadets could keep learning survival and leadership skills. Our keen footballers might not be able to play football, but they could at least join football club to discuss the sport and watch clips of professional players.

When lockdown came to an end, our whole staff body needed to become health workers!

Our staff were trained in how to run a COVID test centre, and how to administer COVID tests safely and reliably. Students then came into school, on three separate occasions, for tests. My heartfelt thanks go to everyone who made these days run smoothly.

Of course, we made a success of lockdown, but it was a delight to see our students in the flesh again when they returned to school. With yet new changes to government regulations, students needed to learn different rules and routines to those in place before Christmas. This they did exceptionally well, with no complaints about wearing face masks in the classroom. Their maturity was an inspiration.

Throughout the term, despite changing circumstances, school life has continued. We were delighted to open our new building, the Mady Gerrard Building, named after our friend, Holocaust-survivor Mady Gerrard. Mady was not allowed to travel to Birmingham for the event, but we were able to send her the book of our students' artwork and poems we had prepared for the occasion. In return, Mady has very generously gifted us with a plant for the building.

Our students had many exciting opportunities through the term. In particular, our Head Girl, Sana, was invited to speak on the panel of an exclusive online Save the Children event, attended by the charity's major supporters and contributors. The panel were asked to discuss the pandemic and its impact on children around the world. The special guest at the event was HRH The Princess Royal, who mentioned Sana's contribution three times when she summed-up the event.

We now look forward to the summer term. The good news is that the lockdown rules may begin to ease, so we will once again be able to organise trips. Cadets are already beginning to plan a summer camp, and we are going to run a sports day. With the weather warming up, there is much to which we can look forward.

Ms S Darr, Headteacher.



CORE VALUES

COLLABORATION

This term, Rockwood Academy can proudly report that we have started our new groups of student ambassadors: our Holocaust Education Ambassadors, our Rights Respecting Schools Ambassadors, and our STEM Ambassadors. These ambassador groups give our fantastic students a platform in which they can foster and develop their leadership skills.

Each group represents a diverse panel of students who meet on a three weekly basis to discuss plans for their respective areas. All three groups are a fantastic reflection of the collaboration between staff and students at Rockwood, as their opinions and views on key topics are listened to and are used to drive the future direction of the school.



OPPORTUNITY

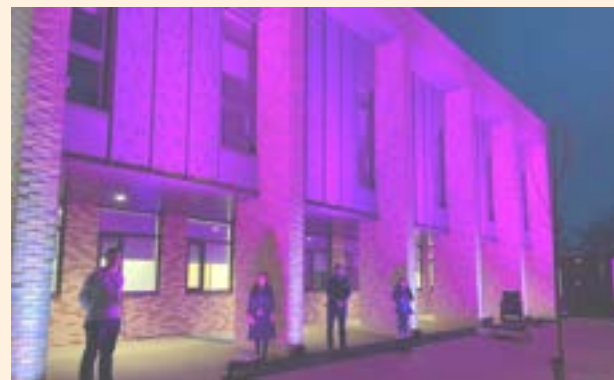
Our Head Girl, Sana, was given the fantastic opportunity to talk on the panel for Save the Children's Royal webinar. One person in particular who heard Sana talk was none other than HRH, The Princess Royal. Sana spoke about the impact that COVID-19 had on children, and the struggles that students have faced completing online learning.

At the end of the event HRH The Princess Royal commended Sana on her brilliant public speaking skills. Well done, Sana!



RESPECT

Rockwood Academy marked Holocaust Memorial Day by lighting up our new school building, and shining a beam of light into the night sky. This was part of our ongoing participation in Echo Eternal, the commemorative arts project, whose theme this year was 'be the light in the darkness.' It was a beautiful event, and the beam of light could be seen far and wide across Birmingham. We have officially opened and named the new building as the Mady Gerrard Building.



EXCELLENCE

Rockwood students proved their excellence during this term's lockdown, as every day we had an incredibly high attendance for online learning. Our attendance figures regularly reached 98%, similar to that which we would expect in more normal times, and high above the national average for attendance during the lockdown. We are constantly impressed with the dedication that our students show to their education, and especially so recently. Well done to every single student in Rockwood for showing your dedication!



FEATURES

MADY GERRARD DAY

On January 7th, Rockwood Academy had the honour of opening the Horizons 21 Festival, Echo Eternal's festival commemorating the Holocaust. The theme for this year was 'be the light in the darkness'. Each day of the ceremony was dedicated to a different Holocaust survivor, with schools making a pledge in the survivor's name. The first day of the ceremony was devoted to Mady and our pledge was as follows:

"In Mady Gerrard's name we pledge to share her testimony and put Mady at the centre of our learning environment. We will do this by naming the new building of the school after her, ensuring her name and testimony are forever included in the work of the school curriculum and community activity."

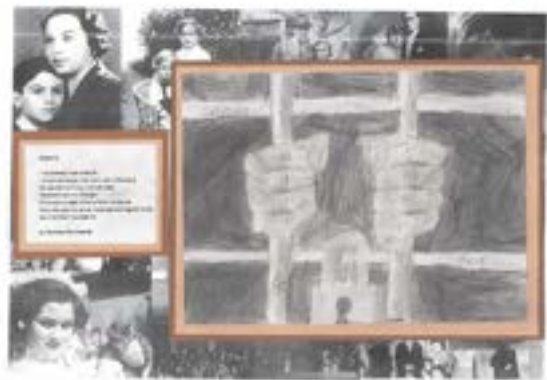
Part of the event was the opening of our new building, named in her honour. Rockwood Academy and Echo Eternal quickly adapted the plans for the opening ceremony after the announcement of a new national lockdown. The ceremony took place online, and a significant part of the ceremony was a Zoom discussion between Mady Gerrard and Sana, our head girl.

The building is state of the art and has 14 new classrooms, a state of the art studio and brilliant new technologies for our students to access in the new Learning Resource Centre. We are so happy to welcome our students into the new building.

As part of the ceremony, Rockwood lit the building up in coloured light, and shone a beam of light into the sky, highlighting our commitment to being the light in the darkness, and our endeavour to keep the memories of Holocaust survivors alive. We were kindly sponsored by Morgan Sindall, who helped us to light the building, and also built the new build. We were inspired by the Holocaust Memorial Day 2021's message; 'be the light in the darkness'. This theme encourages everyone to reflect on the bad that humanity can do, but encourages individual to resist and 'be the light' before, during and after genocide. It asks us to consider different types of darkness, such as identity based persecution and the denial of justice. It was inspired by Gena Turgel MBE, survivor of the Holocaust, who said;

"We will continue to do our bit for as long as we can, secure in the knowledge that others will continue to light a candle long after us."

Mady Gerrard kindly donated a beautiful tree to the school, to be kept in the Mady Gerrard building. This will serve as a beautiful reminder of Mady and our school's ongoing dedication to education young people about the terrible experiences that the Holocaust survivors suffered. We have also displayed a plaque in her honour, commemorating the opening ceremony, in the entrance to the building. We have also got her pledge displayed on the wall of the reception area in the Mady Gerrard building, so as to remind all staff, students and visitors to the school of our dedication to Holocaust education.



echo
eternal

ANN KIRK DAY

On 20th January, Rockwood had the pleasure of hosting the Horizons 21 festival once more, this time honouring Holocaust Survivor Ann Kirk. Ann had to flee Germany at the age of ten to live with strangers in England, after experiencing many horrors in Germany because of her Jewish background. In Ann's testimony about her experiences, she emphasises the importance of acceptance and respecting one another, no matter people's religion or race.



Therefore, in her name Rockwood has pledged to hold a Cultural Appreciation Day in the summer term, to celebrate the multicultural community here at Rockwood Academy. The full pledge is as follows:

In Ann Kirk's name we pledge to encourage everyone in our community to express themselves as individuals and to celebrate the diverse cultures that exist within our community. We will do this by running a Cultural Appreciation day, dedicated to highlighting diversity in our school.

On our campaign day, we took part in a number of activities. We started the

day off with a lesson for all students about Ann Kirk and the Holocaust, asking

students to reflect on the events in World War Two and Ann's testimony, leading to a discussion on what we can learn from the past.

Next, a panel discussion took place. In this, a selected group of students discussed in greater depth Ann Kirk's testimony, and what we can do to prevent such horrors happening again. Meanwhile, throughout the day a series of tweets were posted on the school's Twitter feed celebrating the diversity of our students. For those students who were in school during lockdown, another activity was creating a fantastic piece of artwork. The students in school made a model boat, overlaid with printed images of Ann Kirk and the words of our pledge.

STEM

Our Key Stage 3 students have received their very own coding kits, as we launched Rockwood's very first coding club! The club offers our students the opportunity to code Micro:Bits and learn about how code is used in our everyday lives. In today's world, it is essential for



young people to learn how to create software, not just consume it.

Our club offers the opportunity for students to work collaboratively with their peers and their families to explore the world of code; the parents of participating students have been provided with resources so that they can join in the fun with their child! Our students thoroughly enjoyed the launch session online and are currently completing their first coding project. We look forward to sharing their creations on Rockwood's Twitter feed.

At Rockwood Academy, we passionately believe that our students should shape the enrichment experiences that are on offer to them. Our new STEM Ambassadors provide suggestions for projects we can incorporate into our STEM curriculum and activities we can run to provide unique opportunities. The ambassadors are currently competing in the "BP Ultimate STEM Challenge". We look forward to showcasing the work and achievements of our STEM Ambassadors in the next edition!

RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL

It was now some time ago – back in the summer of 2020 – that UNICEF awarded us with their silver award for our work as a rights respecting school. This accolade recognised all the hard work our staff and students have been doing to promote, and abide by, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Our next target is, of course, the gold award. To achieve the gold award, UNICEF is looking for schools with excellent student leadership and at which students have taken on real responsibility in steering the future of the school. After all, Article 12 of the UNCRC states: "Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously."

Student leadership has long been part of life at Rockwood. Our Students' Council is now an institution of long standing, and form reps feed their views to students on the council. However, we also recognise there is scope to get students involved in other aspects of school life. To this end – and as discussed elsewhere in this magazine - we have introduced groups of student ambassadors, who will lead our work in different areas. The first three groups of ambassadors are our Holocaust Education Ambassadors, STEM Ambassadors and, of course, our Rights Respecting School Ambassadors.



CURRICULUM

ART

What a rollercoaster of a Spring term it has been in Art and Design. Most of the work students have produced has been completed during lockdown, but the standard has remained excellent, showing imagination and flair. Here you can see our students' incredible hand drawings of cupcakes and accurate depictions of fruits.

Art club was also introduced online, with tasks and demonstrations available for students who have a passion for art. Activities included creating windmills to decorate their garden for summer, and the Rockwood Rock Hunt— messages of positivity were placed on rocks for the



community to find!

Year 8 took part in the conclusion of Echo Eternal's Horizons 21, with our sculpture commemorating Holocaust survivor Mady Gerrard displayed in the Echo Eternal online gallery.

Meanwhile, students from year 7 and 8 worked on the artwork for a book which we gifted to Mady. We were so proud of the students' work for Echo Eternal, and delighted when our book featured on the BBC news!

BUSINESS AND COMPUTING

In Business, Year 11 students have been working extremely hard on their BTEC Tech Award Enterprise coursework for components 1 and 2. In component 1, students are exploring how entrepreneurs and SMEs focus on what their customers need and how they meet these needs; in particular, they are learning about market research. In component 2, students are given the opportunity to plan and pitch their own business enterprise. This is a great opportunity for students to develop their communication skills, co-operation and problem-solving skills.

In Computing, it was lovely to welcome our students back into school — especially as, for the first time, we have been able to use our newly-equipped



ICT classrooms!

This term, our year 7 students are starting a new and exciting project where they will be creating some fantastic educational games in Scratch. They will use their computational thinking skills to develop simulations of computer-controlled toys. The year 9s are starting a fun and exciting new project called Python. They will learn how to write code and solve technical problems.

DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

We have been working hard to launch Design & Technology at Rockwood! We have been able to teach food lessons online, and our students cooking at home made the delicious-looking food pictured here! Students said that, during lockdown, they particularly enjoyed these lessons as it gave them a break from focusing on a computer for long periods of time.

The equipment has now been ordered for our new Resistant Materials room, and as such a new option will now be available for year 9 students when deciding their GCSE choices. This will be an exciting new adventure for our students, giving them more practical life skills and the opportunity to see what it might be like to learn a trade.

Students at key stage 3 have started a Resistant Materials project, creating a money box design out of card. In so doing, they will get a feel for the subject to help them decide whether to pursue it at GCSE. Our food group is now preparing for their practical exam, which was put back slightly because of lockdown. They are testing out ingredients and planning their final dishes. We look forward to seeing the final results and creativity behind their work.



DRAMA

It has been a thought-provoking term in drama. At key stage 3, students started the term by completing a scheme of work based on Echo Eternal's Amplify programme. The idea is that, by the end of the scheme of work, students will have been inspired to 'take action' and find a way of promoting an anti-hate message in their own communities. Our students

certainly were inspired! For example, many wrote letters to the local MP discussing the need to raise awareness of genocides across our city. Now we are back in school, it has been a pleasure to see our students again and return to more traditional teaching methods! Our key stage 3 classes have been looking at drama across different media. For example, our year 7s have been considering how to deliver drama on

the radio, as part of which they have been very much enjoying reading and performing a radio version of Jack and the Beanstalk.

At key stage 4, our students have made steady progress towards their GCSEs in spite of the difficult circumstances. We are looking forward to a set of GCSE results this summer which reflect the acting talent here at the school.

ENGLISH

English have started the year with lots of hard work and focus from our students. Year 11 are continuing to push hard and improve, getting ready for their final GCSE marks. They are studying outside of the classroom with past papers and GCSE Bitesize. Year 10 are stepping up with their study of how non-fiction texts use language and structural devices to deliver their meaning effectively. They even had a chance to create their own texts on a wide range of topics including careers, travel and education. They are getting ready to take year 11's place at the top of the school. Years 8 and 9 spent the beginning of 2021 exploring the form of poetry and how it has been used to show identity and belonging. Some classes wrote their own poems. Year 7 participated in a multi-genre exploration of culture across the world. Students explored stories from China, India,

Jamaica, Britain and Africa. Students got a great insight into how different cultures shine through within the context of where it was written and whose story was being told.

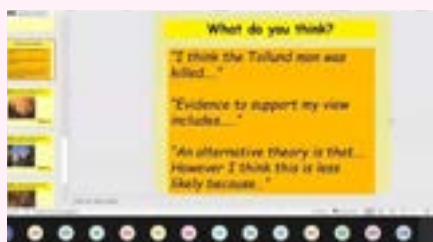
We had a great time despite the lockdown, studying hard and playing a lot of Booklet quizzes in English. However, we are excited to be back in the classroom and our students are already showing us how ready they are to explore English Language and Literature at Rockwood.



HISTORY

Key Stage 3 have been focusing on the Tollund Man Mystery, the industrial revolution, slavery and America in the 1920s. The Tollund Man is an excellent way of introducing year 7 to key concepts in history, and the lessons worked particularly well online. When focusing on the industrial revolution, we have been examining living, working and housing conditions. Students have worked really effectively when analysing sources, and they have made inferences about the industrial revolution and engaged effectively when developing paragraphs. The students in KS3 should take great pride in their work ethic and resilience; they were a great credit: not only to the vision and ethos of the school, but also to their parents. Key stage four students have been working hard, focussing on the ever changing developments of America. They looked at how society adapted and evolved during various social, economic and politic events. Year 10 have worked very hard learning key GCSE content to get them prepared for next year. Year 11 have also been working hard in

completing many lessons over the COVID period and also assessing what they have learnt in mini-quizzes and mock exams. Like our Key Stage 3 students in History, Year 10 and 11 worked extremely hard over the lockdown period and modelled excellent behaviour and resilience for the younger year groups at Rockwood.



GEOGRAPHY

Key Stage 3 Geographers have been studying rivers, Russia and climate change. They have been focusing on the how different factors such as climate and resources impact people, places and the environment. Some of the skills students have concentrated on include cartography (map skills); decision making and evaluating the positives and negatives of river management schemes; how people and nature are contributing towards climate change, and the strategies to deal with it effectively; as well as the landscape and people of Russia. Key Stage 4 students in year 11 have been working hard focusing on natural hazards such as earthquakes and typhoons, as well as studying the impacts of climate change - in addition, they have studied ecosystems such as rainforests and deserts. Year 10 have focused on how the UK landscape is changing, in particular rivers and coasts. Both KS3 and KS4 students have displayed resilience; they are determined to achieve and their work ethic is inspiring.

Looking forward to the summer term, year 7 will be learning about urbanisation; that is, the growth and development of cities. It will be interesting to see how students respond to the transition to human geography. We have great confidence in the year group! Year 8 are continuing to study rivers, moving on to some of the more complex geographical systems related to the topic. Year 9 will focus on resources management, learning about food, energy and water. At key stage 4, year 11 will continue to work on their portfolios, concentrating on paper 2 which is human geography. The year 11s have responded well to the changing demands of their GCSE.



MATHS

The Mathematics department welcomed the students back to school after eight weeks of online learning. Whilst staff successfully delivered lessons online, with diverting activities and quizzes, we are enjoying teaching students in the

classroom again. Recently students in years 9 and 10 took part in the UKMT Intermediate Mathematics Challenge. The Mathematical Challenge aims to stimulate mathematical problem solving and lateral thinking. Well done to all the students who took part. Congratulations to Haleema, Kashif, Ikram, Nylah, Maya and Junaid

who all achieved the bronze award. Special congratulations go to Aaminah who achieved the silver award.



MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

WELL-BEING AND MFL PANCAKE DAY COMPETITION.

This term saw the launch of a well-being and MFL 'Pancake Day' contest. This involved both students and staff competing for top positions in the best looking and well decorated pancake competition, as well as the best pancake-flip whilst counting in a foreign language! The aim of this whole school competition was to engage students' creativity and test their baking skills! There were many fantastic entries but of course there can only be one winner, Ruqayya, who has won

an Amazon gift card! You can see her winning pancake alongside this article.

CARNIVAL

Another fantastic competition that took place this term is the Carnival costume competition. Carnival has historic relevance and is celebrated throughout many countries, especially in France and Spain. It has a religious background but today it is celebrated with lots of street parties and fancy-dress costumes. The brief for the competition was for students to design, at home, their own costume - being as creative as they could be! The

winner is yet to be announced- who will win the costume competition?



MUSIC

Across both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, the unusual circumstances of the lockdown have presented students with new learning opportunities. Students have been able to compose music using different online software and applications, which has enabled them to be musically creative in a different way to the classroom. Students in KS3 have been exploring the music applications on the Chrome Music Lab website, either creating short melodic pieces through Song Maker, or using the Shared Piano application to collaborate. Students in KS4 have undertaken the challenge of mastering new music apps for the composition component of their GCSE.

In the first Spring half term, year 7s have been learning about the history of the piano, as well as exploring the use of the piano through different musical genres, such as classical and jazz music. Students have been able to practice their keyboard playing by using an online virtual piano to play basic music scales and to help them identify notes. In the second Spring term, year 7s have been learning about

minimalist music and using the smallest amounts of notes and resources to create a minimalist piece of music.

In the first Spring term, year 8 have been exploring Grime music, especially its history and origins. The year 8s have been fully engaged about its emergence in the underground music scene in London, to its development alongside new online media, and its eventual international expansion. After this, year 8s have been exploring Indian music, starting with traditional classical music from North and South India. We have been looking at raga, which is the melodic aspect, and tala, which is the rhythm aspect of Indian classical music.

Year 9s started the year learning about theme and variation in music - they focused on how different musical elements can be altered to create variations on an original piece of music. They have now moved onto learning about music technology, learning about the history of music technology across the music business, electronic instruments, video game music and music software.



P.E.

What a whirlwind term it has been! Team PE embraced the challenges of lockdown head on and were determined to ensure health and fitness were a key priority. Following on from Joe Wicks, Mr Smith in conjunction with the team provided students with a weekly workout: this always had a strong focus on physical and mental wellbeing.

A massive thank you to all students who took part and embraced this newfound way of learning, ensuring that physical fitness continued successfully during lockdown. As government restrictions eased, a greater variety of sports and activities have been possible, and we have offered them to students in

curricular and extra-curricular programmes.

As Year 11 approach the latter stages of their course, every effort will be made to make sure they obtain the best marks possible and we will support them with their future careers.



SCIENCE

Lockdown restrictions & online learning were never going to prevent the Science team from providing students with exciting opportunities to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Spring term saw the launch of the 'Be an Excellent Scientist' homework challenge at the academy.

Our KS3 students had the opportunity to take part in a range of fun activities during remote learning, focused on developing STEM skills at home.

Students stayed up-to-date with current research, took part in a photography challenge, built models and even conducted their own experiments!

The science team received over 200 entries before half term – all of which were absolutely amazing! Well done to everyone who entered, but massive congratulations go out to our Spring 1 winners: Samiya, Leen, Amayah and Aminah.

The 'Be an Excellent Scientist' challenge is still running, and we are all excited to see what our scientists get up to over the coming months!



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

This has been a very exciting half term for the RE department, with students demonstrating resilience and dedication to continue with blended teaching and learning - despite the situation with the pandemic. At KS3, the RE department has been exploring festivals, pilgrimage, religion in the media, philosophical beliefs and rites of passage – all these different topics have been thoroughly enjoyed by the students.

The topics provided them with the opportunity to express their points of view, and to evaluate and assess religious beliefs' relevance in the 21st century. At

KS4 we have been studying Christian beliefs and practices. Our Year 11s are working relentlessly hard to get the high grades to which they aspire, and the students are responding remarkably well to the support that is provided by their teachers.

During the Lockdown, our year 7s participated in National Association of Teachers of Religious Education's art completion, through which they explored various themes whilst showcasing their creativity. Students have demonstrated their understanding through excellent poems, sculptures and drawings.



PASTORAL TEAM

YEAR 7 – MR KHAN

I am really proud of how Year 7 have adapted to changing circumstances this term. Year 7 students had experienced lockdown at primary school, and some had been asked to isolate for short periods during their first term at Rockwood. However, this was the first time as secondary school students in which they experienced an extended period of home learning. And, when the time came, they were brilliant! Students quickly got the hang of learning online, and they soon learnt how navigate around Microsoft Teams. The whole school pulled together to help them. In consequence, we managed to achieve very high attendance online – congratulations particularly go to 7b, who had the highest online attendance!

The work which students produced in lockdown was often excellent. In Art,

students were learning how to draw realistic-looking cupcakes – some of the drawings students produced were stunningly good!

Students also attended virtual, after-school clubs – for example, the football club was very popular, with year 7s enthusiastically joining debates about which footballer is best: Messi or Ronaldo. Other clubs, like Music Tech, were also popular. The five children pictured are our fantastic students who are taking part in the Les Mills programme!

Of course we made lockdown work, but nothing is the same as face-to-face learning. It was a real pleasure to see our students again now lockdown is over. Students have settled in well now they are back on site. They have

been particularly delighted to get an extra 15 minutes for lunch with the new timetable. Well done to everyone in Year 7 – now we look forward to an equally brilliant summer term!



YEAR 8 – MISS SHAHEEN

I would like to start by saying how proud I am of all our year 8 families. Being a parent isn't easy: juggling jobs, running a household and having demanding young children - with their raging hormones - is hard work! Covid-19 added to parents' challenges. So we salute our parents, as year 8s attendance online was consistently high. 8B in particular persistently got 98% attendance. Students were engaged and making great progress and that is down to perseverance of students and families.

The year 8 team made daily wellbeing calls. Not only was it great to check how our students were getting on, but it was also nice catching up with parents and hearing how some parents benefitted from live lessons too! One is never too old to learn, so I am happy

that some parents benefitted from the opportunity!

Teachers love working with young people, so lockdown has not been easy: we missed our students' buzz, their laughter and even the dramas! So when lockdown ended, we were equally excited for students to be back in school as parents were! I know students are also happy to be out of the house and back into school routine, amongst their friends and peers.

Now we are back in school, thank you to all parents for taking pride in your children and making sure they come to school looking smart and prepared to learn. You will

be pleased to know we have heard nothing but praise for year 8 this term. They have a positive attitude, adjust to changes, follow school rules, and actively take part in cadets. What pleases us is hearing from teachers how they look forward to teaching year 8!



PASTORAL TEAM

YEAR 9 – MS SAHOTA

This term has been dominated by lockdown, and our year 9s have shown their growing maturity in the way they coped with the situation in which the country found itself – they have accepted the need to stay at home, to keep everyone safe, and they have got on with learning despite the changed circumstances. Attendance in lockdown was excellent, and all our students made academic progress.

The students were so missed, so it was a delight when they returned to school. It

is so nice to see year 9 embracing and enjoying being around their friends again. The year group faced a big decision this term: what subjects they wished to pursue at GCSE level. Students engaged with the process in a sensible fashion, attending taster session and seeking advice from teachers and family.

In consequence, they are now well set up for the transition to KS4, which will be upon them sooner than

they expect. It is a big moment in a child's life and we feel so lucky to be able to help them in this process. The picture here shows our students taking part in the Echo Eternal Horizons 21 online film, in which they were brilliant!



YEAR 10 – MR ALI

Year 10 have continued to demonstrate excellent standards throughout this term; in normal times, Year 10 can be a challenging period in a young person's life, but this year the challenges faced by the students have been significantly greater. We are delighted to say that our Year 10s have continued to rise to the challenge in the face of adversity.

Despite spending the first half term

participating in remote lessons, year 10 maintained their exemplary attendance record, achieving a phenomenal 99% attendance to their live lessons. Feedback from teaching staff has showed the students' efforts and dedication towards their studies. They need to keep working hard, but we are certain our year 10 can achieve their very best through next year!

We are so proud of how well the students have adjusted to learning in the

face of the pandemic, and it has been an absolute joy to see them all back in the Academy's corridors ready to take on the year ahead.



YEAR 11 – MISS WALKER

The academic year has brought unprecedented challenges to all those involved with helping young people succeed. We are incredibly proud of how the Year 11s have settled and how they continue to face challenges with such resilience.

Year 11 have been incredibly busy with their academic studies. They are working hard to prepare for the upcoming GCSEs. Work produced by students has been of an incredible standard; here, you can see a beautiful drawing of a ship produced by one of our year 11s for their Art GCSE. The

academy has already invested in 'My Tutor' and year 11 are actively engaging in after school sessions.

The post-16 process continues to be a strength at the academy; year 11 have been incredibly busy in applying for post 16 places. Our dedicated careers team continues to support year 11 through this process to ensure that they have made the right choices.

As we continue to receive further guidance from the government on examinations, year 11 are tremendously busy in completing key assessments

which will further support their examination results. Well done, year 11: continue to be as resilient as you can be, and we are confident that all of you will achieve the grades you deserve.



PARTNERSHIPS

COMBINED CADET FORCES



Rockwood Combined Cadet force continued to parade during the lockdown, albeit virtually. We were successful in delivering navigation and first aid lessons online. On return to face to face training, with guidelines in place, we are completing the practical lessons required for the cadets to gain a pass in these topics.

Looking to the future, staying within COVID 19 guidelines, the Cadets will take part in a seven-day residential camp at the Cadet Weekend Training Centre in Bramcote, Warwickshire. The cadets will arrive at Bramcote on Sunday 20th June 21 and depart Bramcote on Saturday 26th June.

We are working hard to ensure it will be a fun-filled week of activities, from practical navigation to shooting on a range; the cadets will also have opportunity to complete an expedition. The week also includes an activity day, involving rock-climbing, abseiling, archery, and other leadership and teamwork tasks.

We are also working on an International Cultural Celebration Day (ICCD) event, scheduled to take place on Saturday 25th September 2021. It is an

opportunity to celebrate all of our proud heritages, by increasing our understanding and awareness of the different cultures that exist within the communities of Warwickshire and West Midlands. Our aim is to celebrate the diverse cultures that exist within Rockwood's student and staff body, working in partnership with Warwickshire and West Midlands (SS) Army Cadet Force.

We have continued to deliver the Duke of Edinburgh's Award online; students have actively taken part. In recent weeks it is great to be back to face to face activities, so we can now concentrate on expedition skills, menus and a first aid test. We have also arranged a Bronze Expedition in June, where the students will complete their last module before gaining their Bronze award.

READING CULTURE

Thursday 4th March saw Rockwood staff and students taking part in World Book Day, which included a rich variety of elements: dressing up as our favourite literary characters; online literacy activities (from Roald Dahl in English to Andy Weir in Science); and an online reading quiz at lunchtime – encouraging students to investigate classic texts, from Dickens to Bronte and Conan Doyle to Dumas.

The school raised money towards

promoting reading around the world. Back in school, reading continues to be key – with students being provided with all-new reading books as part of 'reading time' during lesson change-over. These texts, from modern authors like Malorie Blackman and Benjamin

Zephaniah, serve to promote reading as a means of enjoyment and escapism during these emotionally challenging times.

As we look towards life post-pandemic, the school continues to develop and

grow. As part of our recent £14 million new-build investment, we look forward to opening our new Learning Resource Centre – with a selection of exciting new titles for our students to borrow and enjoy. Happy reading!



CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

This year, looking after children's mental health has been more important than ever before. As a school, we are very aware of the impact that lockdown and COVID 19 has had on children's mental health. Despite the virtual learning environment, as a school we threw ourselves into Children's Mental Health Week, asking our children to reflect on and share how they express their emotions, so that each child can learn from one another, and develop the

ways in which they express their emotions and feelings.

We also hosted a pancake day competition for all of our staff and students to take part in. Activities such as baking can be a brilliant for an individual's mental health, as it combines creative expression and - due to the nature of the friendly competition - social connection. We also hosted a virtual assembly for all students, focussing on mental health, with a video

message from the Duchess of Cambridge, who stressed how important it is for all children to look after themselves and their mental health during the pandemic.



PARTNERSHIPS

ROCKWOOD RADIO

As many people in the Rockwood community will be aware, Rockwood Radio has been in cessation as the broadcast centre is moved to its new home in the Mady Gerrard Building. We are so looking forward to opening our new state-of-the-art radio studio, which will be located in the LRC, and to start using it once again to record more fantastic radio! One of our students who previously worked on Rockwood Radio shows was Faiza.

Faiza was given the fantastic opportunity to apply the skills she learned at Rockwood Radio on a nationally broadcast podcast. Faiza, as a result of her involvement with Echo Eternal,

was asked to take part in the Pearson's education podcast, 'The Education Conversation.' Faiza was fantastic on the podcast, talking about the importance of collaboration at Rockwood Academy and the brilliant work that Echo Eternal have done. Faiza also spoke about the moment Rockwood had the honour of winning the Pearson National Teaching Awards at gold level for work through partnerships. When asked about the opportunity she said: ***'As a student at Rockwood, I felt honoured to be a representative for CORE Education Trust and voice my opinion. This has developed my confidence to a point where I can encourage others to do so too!'*** Faiza.



LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Leaders of Tomorrow, also known as CORE LoT, is a leadership development programme, organised by CORE to give our students the opportunity to develop vital skills which will help them in their adult life. They work with a mentor, Fela. Two of our students who are taking part in the programme have spoken to us about their experiences.

"Joining CORE LoT has been a terrific learning experience for me... I can freely express my passion about what I feel is right and gain the confidence to voice my opinions. This rare opportunity has given me a sense of belonging, and I am honoured to be a CORE LoT ambassador, advocating for change within our community." Faiza, Year 10.

"CORE LoT has helped me with many things, from vocabulary to confidence, and I'm so grateful for that. I have been able to develop my sense of worth and consider how to defend people that do not have the confidence to do it themselves." Bushra, Year 10.



MIRROR EFFECT PROJECT

This academic year, two students took part in a project called 'Mirror Effect'. Mirror Effect is an exchange and collaboration between, on the one side, ten girls between 13 to 18 years old from Bangladeshi heritage in Birmingham and, on the other side, ten girls from Bangladesh. Our students took part in ten Zoom sessions, using drama to explore themes like 'City Life' and 'Female Identities'.

The participants were paired up digitally, one person from Bangladesh with one person from Birmingham, and they created a film together exploring new realities of the current pandemic and its implications in their lives. This meant that they were able to share creativity across boundaries in order to gain a better understanding of each others' lives, cultures and experiences.

"I really enjoyed my experience in Mirror Effect, as I was able to connect with people from my home country and share stories" Humaira

LES MILLS

Five of our Year 7 students were chosen out of the many who applied to become accredited Les Mills instructors. Since Christmas they have been taking part in remote training, at the end of which they will be qualified to deliver Born to Move classes. Our students have expressed their pleasure are being able to take part in this world-class training system. The work-outs that our students are learning to instruct are all music based. The training programme follows a child-centred teaching model, and participants are taught the best way to manage children and their behaviour.

"My favourite part is the different activities we take part in." Anayah, Year 7.



MADY GERRARD BUILDING

We are delighted that the Mady Gerrard Building is now in use. Our year 11 and 7 students are loving the new setting for their learning! As discussed elsewhere in this magazine, the official opening of the building took place on 7th January, when our new plaque was unveiled. We also unveiled our pledge to Mady Gerrard. Later in January, we lit up the Mady Gerrard Building to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.



PARENT ENGAGEMENT



We made lockdown work so successfully through our strong relationships with parents. When a student did not make it to a lesson online, a member of our support staff attached to that class phoned home and spoke to the parents. They checked the student was safe and well, then worked with the parents in order to get the student back online as soon as possible. Whatever the issue was – the internet was down, or a broken laptop – we worked with parents

to find a quick solution. It was by such methods that our online attendance reached a similar level to that which we would expect for normal lessons on the school site.

In the last weeks of term, students needed to choose their GCSE options. In more normal times, there would be an options evening at which students and parents alike could come into school to speak with teachers. With COVID regulations, such an evening was not possible, so we had to be creative. Videos about the different subject options were posted on our school website, and parents were advised to watch these with the students. Then we organised virtual parent-

student taster lessons, so the whole family could get a sense of the work which different subjects entail. Finally, students had taster lessons in normal school time. In this way, we ensured students and their families were able to make informed choices.

We are also excited to report that, in the summer term, we will be launching a new app; the SIMS parents app. Parents will be able to download it onto their phone and use it to find out what is going on at school. It will be a quick, convenient and easy way for us to communicate with parents. Look out for further news about the app which will be coming your way shortly!

UPCOMING EVENTS

In these difficult times, student well-being is an absolute priority. We will continue to run regular well-being activities, including physical activities outside on the school grounds!

Activities Week at the end of this term was a huge success, and provided a model for more of the same next term!

The Cadets will participate in the Cadet Weekend Training Centre in Bramcote, Warwickshire, between Sunday 20th June 21 and Saturday 26th June. During the week, students will complete an

expedition, as well as taking part in a wide range of activities including rock-climbing, abseiling and archery.

In the summer, term, we will hold a **Cultural Appreciation Day** in line with our pledge to Holocaust-survivor Ann Kirk. Students will get to sample the clothes, food and culture of different groups represented in our school. Pictured here you can see some of the organisers - our brilliant Holocaust Education Ambassadors - proudly wearing the traditional clothes of their ancestors' home countries.



GOVERNORS



Steve Ball

We just want to take this opportunity to thank Steve for his tireless commitment to the school and his work with the governors. We truly appreciate everything Steve has done over the years to champion Rockwood and its students. Steve has been a passionate advocate for the school and its community. He will be truly missed and we want to wish him the best in the future.



Sadaf Alvi

We are very pleased to welcome Sadaf as our newest governor. Sadaf is the Head of Academic and Employer Partnerships at University of East London. We look forward to your contributions to our school, Sadaf.

STAFF GOVERNOR

The one thing I have noticed this term is the commitment of staff and students to online learning: the staff at Rockwood have really stepped up and have gone above and beyond, ensuring the students come first.

The students themselves also deserve credit for making the change from face-to-face to online learning; the evidence is clear in the attendance figures - they are well above national average. Year 10 was consistent with an average of 99% attendance week on week.



Delroy Tucker

A special mention also to staff members who had 100% student attendance in their lessons: Miss Sandra McKoy, Mr Saqib Malik, Mrs Nalham Abhi and Mr John Hamula. These teachers are great examples of excellence. In addition, a special thanks goes to all the support staff that have worked hard behind the scenes contacting every student to ensure they have access to learning.

HEAD BOY & HEAD GIRL

As Head Girl and Head Boy, we want to say well-done to year 11s for completing another gruelling week of exams!

Although this year has been full of uncertainty, we want to fully encourage you to try your best and excel in all subjects, as the choices you make now shape your futures. Since the start of the New Year, it has been such a challenge for students and teachers here at Rockwood Academy. We are happy that everyone has had the ability to work and cope through these tough times. We are adapting to the changes and keeping safe at the same time.

We want to show our gratitude to teachers and students alike for adapting to the difficulty of online learning during lockdown. You all have showed great persistence and resilience through these difficult times. We are proud of working with all of you all! We would especially like to thank all the teachers for their support and commitment, and what they have done to support students' mental health, especially PE's exercise videos! We would also like to thank Ms Walker, our head of year, alongside Ms Williams, who worked extremely hard to provide year 11 with the best opportunities and advice. After the

Easter break, we hope we can continue to develop and prepare for our exams.

We all have setbacks in our lives, but the most important thing is to overcome these challenges as they shape us to become better humans. We have all seen this in recent months. An important quote we feel fits the moment comes from Steve Jobs, who said: 'believing that dots will connect down the road will give you the confidence to follow your heart'.

Finally, a reminder to everyone that the pandemic is not over and we must continue to play our part: washing hands and covering our faces, for example. We believe that our peers and staff have worked exceptionally hard through these unprecedented times and look forward to continuing in this vein next term.

Stay safe, follow the government guidelines and have a good Easter Break! Sana & Hamzah





Rockwood is an exciting place to learn,
grow and achieve. There is a real sense of
community among pupils and staff.

Pupils are genuine ambassadors for their school.
They believe that it is a privilege to attend their school.

- Ofsted



At Rockwood, pupils learn to gain in
confidence and develop strength of character.
They learn the importance of collaboration,
and how this leads to stronger communities.

- Ofsted

Rockwood Academy
Naseby Road, Alum Rock, Birmingham B8 3HG
Tel: 0121 566 6500
Email: enquiry@rockwood-academy.co.uk

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