

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear all,

It's been an amazing term here at Nightingale Community Academy (NCA) and I wanted to drop you a quick line to let you know about some of the boys' achievements and some of the changes that have been put in place over the last few months.

First and foremost, I want to tell you just how proud I am of the boys who were here last year. They have invited over 20 new faces into their classrooms since September and we end the term with 114 children on roll. To put that in context, in 2016 when NCA was opened we had just 78 children. This increase of almost 50% had to be agreed by the Education Skills & Funding Agency and is a reflection of the increasing popularity of your school.

Last year's exam results were the best we have ever managed with 38% of our year 11 boys achieving 5 GCSEs including English & Maths. Full details can be found on the website under the 'Key Information' tab. May I also suggest that you take a look at the 'Latest News' section at the bottom of the homepage where there's bound to be something to make you smile?

At the beginning of November, we visited Jamie's Farm in Herefordshire. Four staff and 8 learners immersed themselves in life on a working farm. The boys did extremely well and completed a range of tasks including milking cows and helping the farmer move fencing with the tractor. They prepared and cooked meals for everybody to enjoy and I am reliably informed that each one was more delicious than the last! We look forward to revisiting Jamie's Farm in May with a different group of learners.



Earlier this month Oak class took part in their WOW! day for the topic on World War II. They all came dressed up as evacuees and brought in their favourite teddy bears. Throughout the day the boys took part in WW2 activities including a themed music lesson and cooking using basic rations; the cake was disgusting! They really got into the spirit of it and Chef James even signed their ration book during lunch time!



This half term, Year 10 and 11 successfully completed their Speaking and Listening assessments as part of their GCSE English Language qualification. Students had to prepare a presentation about a topic of their choice and then respond to questions. The boys took this task very seriously and should be very proud of their achievement. We even had our first ever 'distinction' grade!

The term hasn't all been quite as academic and boys have taken part in a range of enrichment opportunities including a fantastic key stage 3 trip to Shakespeare's Globe to see 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', visits to The Horniman Museum and a key stage 4 visit to the Tate Modern. As part of this term's drop-down day the whole school worked on skills of independence in order to better understand how to be successful.



Each week the Literacy Nurture Groups meet to work on reading, spelling, writing and comprehension skills. Taking the time to notice progress learners are making is central to the atmosphere of positivity. At the end of each session the community volunteers and learners gather to compliment each other; noticing the hard work and kind social skills that occur in the groups. Thirty-five learners benefit from the groups each week and we are truly grateful for the volunteers' generous gift of their time and talent.

When NCA opened we didn't have enough money to appoint a full-time music teacher and when we finally managed to get music up and running, Covid interrupted and we had to start all over again. NCA pupils have always been fantastically receptive to music and since June (when our new teacher Haimish joined us) they have been working hard to get back on track. We now have Diogo in Y10 singing opera (his attendance has improved enormously) and we have started a

range of music clubs that boys attend during the week. We have many small groups starting and little bands emerging in classes.



In the Primary phase there are weekly music classes providing very practical and personalised coaching on instruments. We now boast a new bass guitar from a very kind donor, a professional electronic drum kit and we have purchased a range of other new equipment including a beautiful piano which will arrive in January. The Apple Mac software has been upgraded in the main music lab to allow pupils to record more live music or live samples and a number of other of funding projects are in the pipeline to increase the range of work we can do. We are always looking for parents who play an instrument to come in and give some time to encourage real skills and knowledge in Music; especially in the primary phase. The boys recently performed in the most incredible Christmas Concert and it took me a while to compose myself before speaking at the end because the tears kept coming every time one of the boys successfully performed a solo or read immaculately to inform the audience. The boys were a credit to you all and demonstrated just what a powerful school community we have become.

I want to congratulate Josh and the team on Tom's Farm who have won the prestigious 'Best School Farm Project 2020-21' prize at the National School Farm Awards. Luke in year 8 was also national runner up for 'Young Farmer of the Year'. I was truly amazed when I found out because hundreds of children take part in the contest and many of them live on farms. Luke & Demba in year 10 volunteer regularly at weekends and have become an indispensable part of the farm team. We are extremely proud of their achievements.

Dr Rosena Allen-Khan our local MP visited the school to hand out a number of 'Covid Heroes' awards to staff. While she was here she took the opportunity to wander around and the boys made her feel very welcome. She was particularly fond of our new batch of rabbits and will be visiting again when we have our farm open day next year.

A number of students in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form have started a work experience program with local firm Anderson & Sons. Crawford Anderson runs the gas and heating engineering company and is a friend of the school.



The boys ride along in the vans with skilled engineers and have the opportunity to learn practical skills that will make them more employable when they finish school. We are grateful to have such a supportive community member on our side.

Our Nightingale parents' group is held every Wednesday morning from 9am until 10:30. The group meets for coffee and a chat to share the highs and lows of parenting our boys. Everyone is welcome and the group is friendly and informal. From January monthly workshops will be held to explore subjects of interest such as living with ADHD, the Nightingale Curriculum and Improving Well Being. You will be given a warm welcome and there is no pressure to attend every session. We are also planning to have a parents' evening at the end of January (subject to Covid restrictions) and you will have the opportunity to go through your child's Autumn Term report with his tutor and to meet with specialist subject teachers.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the staff team for all their hard work this term and for the spectacular effort they have put in to keep the boys' school experience as normal as possible. I am concerned that the boys' attendance is slightly lower than I would expect it to be at this time of year and would encourage you to make sure that your child attends school regularly. If you need any support we are more than happy to provide it and if you are concerned about Covid and need any advice about vaccination or testing, the team here has become quite expert over the last couple of years and can signpost you to the appropriate NHS professionals. We will be testing the boys on our return in January to make sure we keep everybody safe and to ensure that we limit interruptions to learning.

It simply remains for me to wish you all a fabulous holiday season and to send our best wishes to everybody in the Nightingale community.



Andre Bailey  
Principal

