

A View FROM THE TOP



Issue No 247

Friday 20th November 2020

The Principal's Update

There is definitely magic in the air at Howell's this week, with Christmas trees and decorations appearing around the building. I have loved hearing seasonal music coming from the Great Hall as filming for our virtual Christmas Celebration has begun in earnest, with jingle bells, tinselled antlers and shimmering stars all making an appearance as the performers walked past my office on their way to record their time in the spotlight. I have been privy to a small preview, and we are all in for the most marvellous treat. [Click here](#) to see some festive photographs from inside the Great Hall.



The week started with students and staff proudly pulling up mismatched socks on national Odd Socks Day to celebrate individuality, what makes us all unique and to raise awareness of bullying as part of Anti-Bullying Week. Thank you to everyone who participated in this important day.

On Monday evening, we welcomed Year 11 students, both from Howell's and from local schools, to sit the Co-Ed College Scholarship Examination in a safe, socially distant setting. Many thanks to Mrs Hall-Davis and everyone involved who made the evening run so smoothly.

Maths Week

This week, Mrs King led an assembly to launch Maths Week, which starts on Monday 23rd November. [Click here](#) for more information.

Musical Success

Many congratulations to Mia R, Year 8, who gained a merit in her Grade 5 piano examination.

Children In Need

On Friday 13th November we held our annual Pyjama Day in the Senior School and Co-Ed College, which raised a fantastic £664 for Children in Need. [Click here](#) for more information.

Birmingham Schools Debating Competition

Congratulations to all the students who took part in the Birmingham Schools Debating Competition on Sunday 15th November. [Click here](#) for more information.

GDST Undivided Charter for Action

In the summer, the GDST announced its **Undivided** commitment to diversity, inclusion and real change across the family of schools, in response to feedback from the GDST community of alumni, staff, parents and students and the challenge set by the Black Lives Matter movement.

Since then, the GDST Undivided steering group has prepared a Charter for Action; this sets out specific commitments, focusing on what the GDST (as an organisation) will deliver.

The GDST promised to consult on these proposals before they were finalised, which is why we are seeking your views. The Charter for Action is available on the GDST website [here](#). Please do read it and share any comments you may have for the steering group to consider at this stage.

We are also consulting with staff, alumni and senior school students.

The Charter for Action will be firmed up early next year. [The GDST has already started with important work in this area](#), including training, student and staff surveys, and data collection to help establish baselines and set stretching and challenging targets.

The student survey will be sent to pupils in Year 5 upwards from 1st December. It will ask a range of questions to establish the extent to which students feel every child, regardless of their background, is included and well-supported by their classmates and their school. If you have any questions about this, please contact Martin Pilkington at undividedsteeringgroup@wes.gdst.net.

Thank you for your help and support in making the GDST an even more inclusive organisation.

Winter/Christmas Poetry Competition

After such a superb response to the National Poetry Day Competition, we have decided to run a Winter/Christmas Poetry Competition. Entries must take one minute or less to read aloud and the two winning poets will be professionally recorded by Mr Ralph and included in the Virtual Christmas Concert. All poems must be emailed to Mrs Persson (s.persson@how.gdst.net) by Thursday 26th November at 2.00pm.

South Hampstead Speaker Series: Katya Adler

GDST students are invited to join the latest in the South Hampstead Speaker Series of talks with the BBC's Katya Adler. On Monday 23rd November, from 6.30pm to 7.30pm, the award-winning BBC Europe Editor will be sharing her expert insight on Brexit and the EU, her thoughts on the highs and lows of 2020, and some reflections on her career path. Tickets are free but limited, so please sign up to register and receive your link to join by [clicking here](#).

PwC's Virtual Classroom

We are thrilled to bring you the latest instalment of PwC's Virtual Classroom - a programme open to students between Years 10 and 13* focusing on racial equality, social mobility and gender equality. [Click here](#) for more information.

GDST Talks

The GDST Talks series continues with two presentations taking place in December, and we would be delighted if you were able attend. [Click here](#) for more information.

Have a wonderful weekend and I look forward to seeing everyone on Monday when Maths Week will begin.

Sally Davis, Principal