

Parent & Carer Newsletter

December 2023

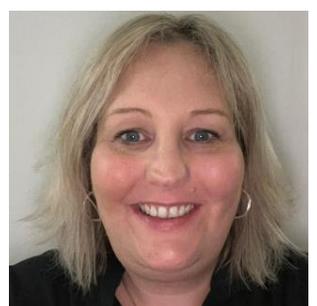


Welcome from the Director of Alternative Provision

I am delighted to issue the first newsletter of the new Altus School. We launched in September of this year, merging the former Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision School (GFAPS) and Severn Valley Alternative Provision School (SVAPS). We are made up of 6 centres across Gloucestershire and our staff team work tirelessly to support young people who have perhaps struggled in a mainstream setting. Our long-term goal is to help our students make a successful transition into the next stage of their education, whether that be a new mainstream or specialist school or for our older students, a move into post 16.

Our young people tell us that they appreciate the work we do and I am very proud of the opportunities and successes they enjoy during their time at Altus School. I hope that our first newsletter gives you an insight into the work the school does – if you want to know more, contact your child's centre manager or you can email me at admin@altusschool.org.uk

Emma Gundry



Who are we? Our Centres

When students are referred to Altus School, they are placed in the most appropriate centre, dependent on their age and next steps. Whilst we aim to ensure students attend their most local centre, this isn't always possible depending on age and numbers already on site.



Rutherford House

Centre Manager: Brad Simms

Rutherford House provides education for primary aged students referred to Altus School. Students enjoy a broad curriculum with a focus on outdoor activities to nurture positive behaviours.



Raikes Centre

Centre Manager: Matt Brown

Raikes provides short term provision for KS3/4 students with a focus on supporting young people to return to mainstream school quickly.



St George's Centre

Centre Manager: Fiona Clarke

St George's in Cheltenham provides education for KS & KS4 students who will either return to mainstream or complete their education with us, before moving into a post 16 placement.



Belle Vue Centre

Centre Manager: Rebecca Allen

Our Belle Vue Centre in Stroud works with KS3 students, supporting them to swiftly return to a new mainstream school.



Russet House

Centre Manager: Ann Morris



Ryeleaze Centre

Centre Manager: Sophie Ellis-Smith

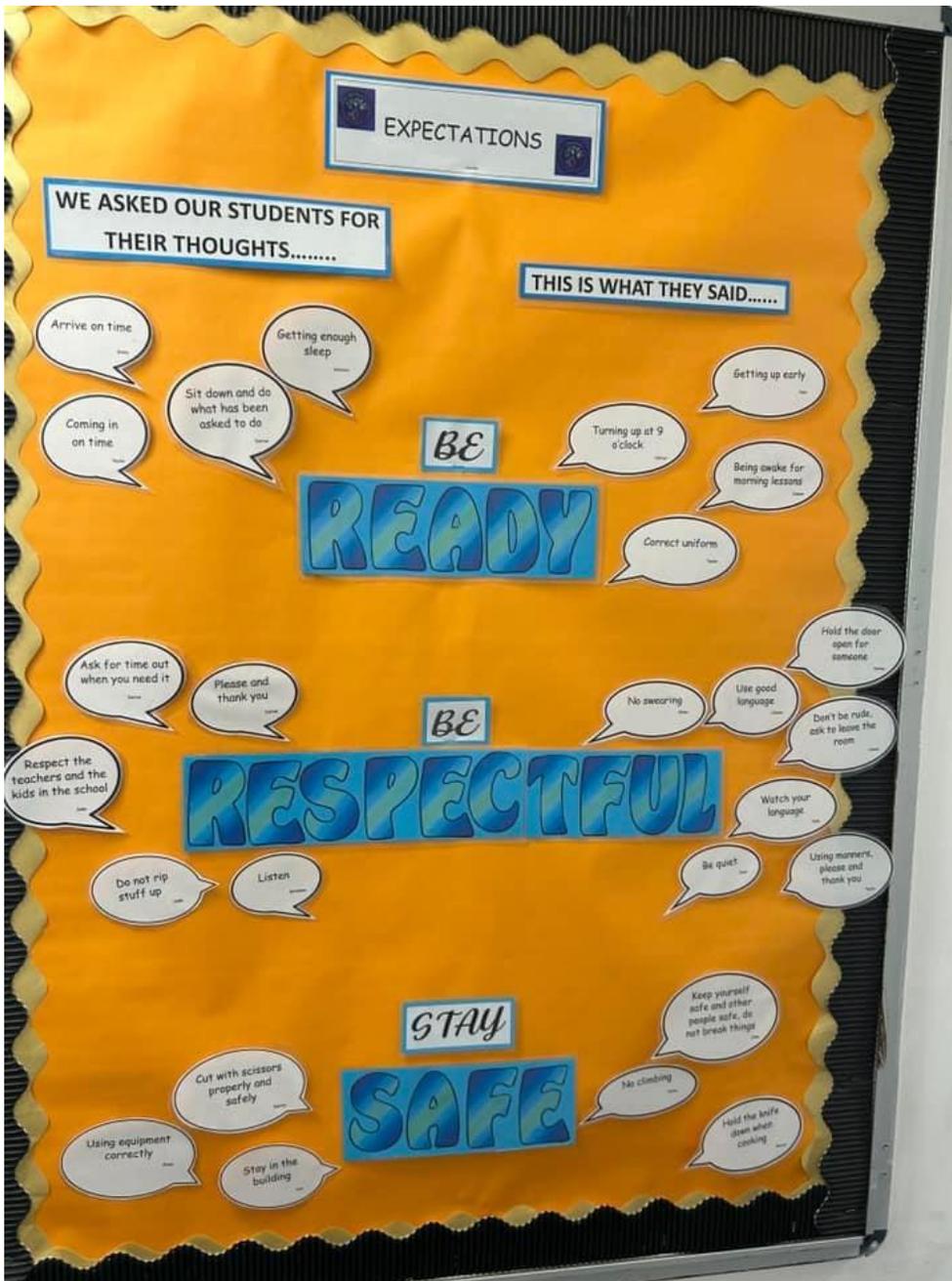
Russet House in Gloucester and Ryeleaze in Stroud both work with KS4 students who are most likely to complete their education with us before moving into post 16. Students can complete a range of GCSE and other qualifications to support a successful transition.

Who are we? Our School Expectations

At the Altus School we don't have lots of complicated school rules. Instead, we have 3 simple expectations to help students understand the positive behaviours we want to see from them. We expect students to be:

- Ready
- Respectful
- Safe

As you go around the school you will find these expectations reinforced. We have also done lots of work with students themselves and they have explained what 'ready, respectful and safe' looks like in school.



You can find out more about our Relationships and Behaviour Policy on our website www.altusschool.org.uk

If you have any questions about student behaviour or our school expectations, please speak to your child's tutor or centre manager.



What's been happening in school?

It has been all go in school since starting back in September. Students have been hard at work both in and out of the classroom.



Forest School

Forest School is a key part of our primary provision and students love getting outside – in both rain and shine! We are very lucky to have been supported by the Ernest Cook Trust meaning we have plenty of wet weather clothes for students to wear when the rain falls!



Staff and students visit Woodchester Mansion



Students from Belle Vue enjoyed a visit to Woodchester Mansion in Stonehouse. This was a chance for them to develop their photography skills, as well as enjoy exploring the Victorian gothic house!



Science Lessons



Students have been getting hands on in their science lessons this year. There are lots of practical opportunities with students here seen dissecting hearts, rats and chicken legs!



Gloucester Youth Project

We are very lucky to be working with Gloucester Youth Project who provide nurture support for a number of our young people, as well as a construction course for KS4 students.



Staff and students at our Raikes Centre worked hard to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support, taking part in the world's biggest coffee morning. Everyone enjoyed the chance to support the cause by buying some delicious cakes made by staff and students!



Amazing Art lessons!

We have a number of very talented artists in the school who have produced some fantastically creative work this year. The special effects work the students have completed has been particularly gruesome!



Tasty food lessons

Cooking lessons are a key part of our curriculum. Students produce some fantastic food in their lessons and achieve some great outcomes to gain a range of qualifications.



Community Participation

Our students have taken part in a range of national and local community events this year. One particular highlight was the **Gloucester Lantern Parade**, kicking off the festive season. Our primary students had worked incredibly hard to make the lanterns that they then walked through the streets of Gloucester with other local schools, before joining in with a service at Gloucester Cathedral.



Prior to taking part, students at Rutherford House were also delighted to receive a visit from the sheriff and Mayor of Gloucester who came to see all their hard work.

Remembrance Day

Ahead of Remembrance Day students from all centres visited memorial sites across the county to lay poppy wreaths to pay their respects to those who have and continue to fight in conflict.



Show Racism the Red Card

Staff and students showed their support for this important charity by getting involved with 'Wear Red' day to highlight our commitment to anti-racism.



Safeguarding Information



Our Designated Safeguarding Lead is Debbie Kirkham. She is supported by a wider safeguarding team. If you have any concerns about your child's safety or wellbeing you can contact Debbie or her team who are there to support.

Staying Safe Online

School holiday periods can be difficult for everyone, particularly children, as they can be exposed to risks that we (school and families) are not aware of – this can be especially so when children use chatrooms like Omegle or gaming online.

Chatrooms and gaming are places where groomers can hide their identities and encourage children to share personal information. Groomers then threaten the child into sending inappropriate images – with threats of violence against the child or their family - if they don't send the images.



: Starting conversations with your child(ren) about staying safe online can be tricky. These cartoons might help you to begin a conversation with your child.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

"IF YOUR COMPUTER OR TABLET STARTS ACTING WEIRD AFTER YOU DOWNLOAD SOMETHING, TELL ME OR ANOTHER GROWN-UP IN THE HOUSE RIGHT AWAY. IT'S OKAY, IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE, AND WE'LL FIGURE OUT HOW TO FIX IT TOGETHER."



CONVERSATION STARTERS

"IF ANYONE IS PRESSURING YOU TO SEND A PHOTO THAT MAKES YOU UNCOMFORTABLE, OR THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO SHARE YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEND IT. TELL THEM "NO" AND LET ME KNOW ABOUT IT"



Safety whilst out and about with the Hollie Guard App

Using the Journey feature allows you to keep an eye on your child while they are travelling. Whenever your child uses this feature, their emergency contacts are informed when they have arrived at their destination.

With the free version, users can also use this app to get help quickly if they are in danger.

If a user is in danger, they hold the button for 5 seconds to raise an alert, activating Hollie Guard and automatically sending their location to their designated contacts. For further information: Hollie Guard – [Hollie Guard – Personal Safety App](#)



The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme is funded by the Department of Education for those in reception to year 11 who receive income-related free school meals.

HAF will be returning this winter holiday, and the majority of HAF activities will take place between 2nd and 5th January. However, there may be some alternative days depending on your district so make sure to [follow your district lead on social media](#) to make sure you're up to date on your local offer. There will be lots of great options to choose from including festive parties, drama and science workshops, sports and games, art and crafts, as well as the ever-popular ticketed attractions. More information about the programme is available at: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/haf

This time you will be able to read through and browse the range of HAF activities that will be available in your district one week before they are available to book online. You can view all the activities on offer in January. This means you'll be ready when activity booking goes live on 4 December allowing you enough time to choose and book your family's HAF activities.

If you have not already done so, you will need to create an online Children's Activity Booking System account which you can access via www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/haf **Activities fill up very quickly so please don't delay in booking to avoid disappointment.**

Families who require additional support to choose, book or attend HAF activities, can receive support from six HAF Community Connectors, one for each district of Gloucestershire. [Find out more about Community Connectors.](#)

Please do not hesitate to contact Nicki Woolway, Pastoral Officer, if you have any questions.

Nicki.woolway@altuschool.org.uk Office: 01452 309510

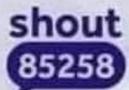


Help at Christmas



COPING AT CHRISTMAS

Christmas can be tough. That's why it's important to know there's always someone you can talk to.

 0300 123 3393 Helpline mind.org.uk	 Text SHOUT to 85258 24/7 text service giveushout.org	 116 123 24/7 helpline samaritans.org
 Text YM to 85258 24/7 text service youngminds.org.uk	 0800 58 58 58 Helpline for men thecalmzone.net	 0800 068 4141 Under 35s Helpline papyrus-uk.org

Christmas is not always an easy time but there is always help if needed.

Useful numbers to contact also include:

Gloucestershire social services 01452 426565

Childline (24 hours u18s) 08001111

NSPCC 0800 8005000

Looking ahead to Term 3

We return to school on Monday 8th January for a RESET day – staff will have been in touch to arrange a parent/carer meeting. This is an important opportunity to review your child's progress and set targets for their next steps. We look forward to welcoming you into school then and for parents/carers at St George's and Russet House, this is also an opportunity to get involved with our careers fayre, helping students in thinking about their post 16 options.



All students return for their normal timetable on **Tuesday 9 January**.



Keep in touch!

You can find out what's happening in school throughout the year by following us on social media. You can find us on Facebook, Instagram and X/Twitter.



By following us you can easily stay up to date with what staff and students are up to, as well as get more information about school holidays, local support and emergency closures for example.



For more general information about the school you can visit our website www.altusschool.org.uk

Volunteers wanted!

The Management Committee oversees the running of the school. It is a volunteer body who work alongside the school's leaders to agree the aims, policies and priorities of the Altus School. We would welcome any parents and carers who would like to join this group.

If you are interested – the committee meets just 5 times per year – then please do make contact at admin@altusschool.org.uk

Merry Christmas to all our students and families. We finish at 12.30 on Friday 22 December. We look forward to seeing you all again in 2024!

