



"Staff share high aspirations for all" - GFAPS, Ofsted 2022

"Highly skilled specialist teachers help pupils to re-engage with learning" – SCAPS, Ofsted 2019

# Parent & Carer Newsletter

## July 2024

### Welcome from the Director of Alternative Provision

I cannot believe that we are nearly at the end of our first year as the Altus School. Of course, many of you will not have started the academic year with us, but those of you who were with us when we changed in September will know just how busy we have been bringing the two previous schools together. I am incredibly proud of how our staff team have worked with our young people, including supporting their transitions to new settings. We will be saying goodbye to lots of our students at the end of this term and whilst we will miss them when they are gone, we are very excited to see them flourish in their new long-term schools. We also say a sad farewell to Mr Davey, a SEND teacher in Rutherford House, and James Elliot, a PE teacher at Ryeleaze, both of whom are off to pastures new in September. I am sure you will join me in thanking them for their hard work and commitment during their time in the school and wishing them all the very best in their new adventures.

I would like to take this opportunity to also thank our parents and carers for your support as we have made changes to where students are based now and in September. Staff at St George's and Russet House have enjoyed meeting many new young people and important relationships have started to be built. We look forward to strengthening those at the start of the next term with the RESET days that will take place on 5th and 6th of September. Staff across the school really value these opportunities to meet with you and plan how best to support your child moving forward. It's an important chance to catch up and start our work as a team to explore the next best steps for your young person.

You will know that we have 3 simple expectations of our students, to be **ready, respectful** and **safe**. This newsletter celebrates the way in which they regularly meet and exceed those expectations. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I have enjoyed putting it together! I wish you all a safe and happy summer and we look forward to seeing you all again in September.

**Emma Gundry**





# What's been happening in school?



It has been a busy time for students at Rutherford House with lots of involvement in the Cheltenham Festival.

In June, KS2 children participated in the Jazz Festival workshop listening to jazz music. All children really enjoyed the experience, and we were so proud to see them take part with students from across the county.



On Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May the students visited the Science Festival. Both staff and students enjoyed doing experiments and creating bubbles and bouncing beans!





# Students hard at work

## YEAR 11's WRITING SUCCESS!



It's been a delight to witness Year 11 working so hard on their writing skills in the build-up to the GCSE exams. In our revision sessions we have covered a range of writing tasks for various purposes and audiences: e.g., creative fiction stories, non-fiction articles, letters, speeches, writing to explain, persuade and inform - just to name a few. I was blown away by the positive learning attitudes demonstrated by the Year 11 students and their desire to improve, to get better GCSE grades in English Language. They should feel extremely proud of themselves for their resilience and perseverance in improving their writing skills! Keeping everything crossed for the exam results day. Superstars!

"You don't have to spend money to find happiness."  
Write a lively article for your school or college magazine giving your views on this topic.

Do you have to spend money to find happiness?

Have you ever wondered if in order to be happy, you need to spend thousands on your clothes, holidays and holidays? Can you find happiness in these things? Jana Dzurkova investigates.

No money = NO life!

Can you imagine feeling ecstatic living near the bridge.

hungry and with no clothes? It is impossible. All humans need their basic needs met: Food, shelter, hygiene. Without those, it is very hard to feel happy. Therefore, happiness does depend on not having money to afford clothes, food, rent etc.

Money and lifestyle

When we think about happiness, we always imagine owning a big house, driving fancy cars, and going on expensive holidays. Being able to provide this lifestyle is expensive. In order to do so, you need to have a job and a good salary.

You've worked so hard today! Super paragraph work, Jane!

Are Tattoos harmless and fun or something you will regret in life?

Have you ever wonder about getting a tattoo? Do you believe they make you look cooler? Will you end up regretting it? Brihantha Barton investigates.

Inked = Happy

According to the research by Inked magazine, 85% of young people between 16-25 believe that getting a tattoo makes them feel more confident and happy. They claim that they feel they can express themselves. More over, tattoos can be way to express their loves for their parents, grandparents, pets and loved ones they have lost. Don't you think that important?

Great career choice?

They're many great artists out there, who are very talented and amazing. They can turn into wonderful tattoo artists, who can earn thousands of pounds in one day from this job. This isn't like a job you don't go collage for, you do get a qualification for it as it's strict hygiene and health and safety regulations.

Wednesday 15th May 2024  
LO: Structure an article (Paper 2)

Teenagers spend too much time on their gadgets and not enough time sleeping.

Do Teenagers Spend too much time on their gadgets and not enough time sleeping? For example, research shows that 95% of teens have a mobile phone that they use in their everyday life. This article will look into a balance between gadget time and spending time sleeping with teenagers. Isn't this unhealthy?

Addicted to screens

What do teenagers normally do after school? Research by Guardian newspaper shows, most teens go home and play on their phone or console. Even watch TV. As most people know, staring at a bright screen twenty four seven is not good for your eyes, so isn't all this screen time damaging their eyes?

Lack of sleep = Bad grades

After spending 8-11 hours a day staring at bright screens it is no wonder that 6/10 teenagers suffer from insomnia.

11.04.2024  
How assess the quality of my creative writing

The misty morning

I walked in the park on a misty morning, coming back from seeing my mates and I looked around and I couldn't see anything! It was so misty and the mist looked like a cloud of smoke. It was so hard to know where I was going...

Suddenly, I heard a strange sound coming from the alley way. What was it? My heart was racing, my hands were shaking.

16.4.2024

I looked around - nothing. In the corner of my eye I saw some strange shadow. It could feel the ghost back on the back of my neck. The shadow moved closer. That moment, I couldn't risk it any longer and as fast as a lightning, I began to run.

Great work today, Jane!

Wednesday 15th May 2024  
LO: Structure an article

Things I can't live without,

What are the most important things you can't live without?

What brings you joy in your life? In this article, I will explore the most important things in my life.

My bunny Binky.

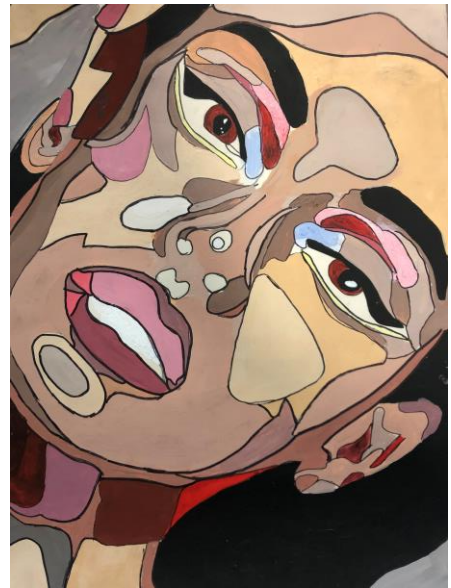
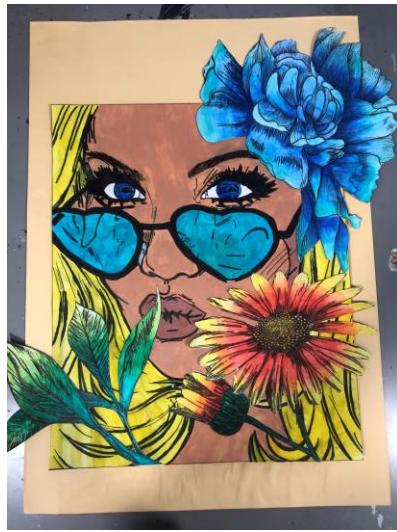
I can't live without my bunny because he brings me so much happiness everyday. I enjoy looking after him, it brings me so much joy seeing him happy because that just makes my day seeing him happy and healthy.

My favorite person ever, my grandad.

I would be so upset without my grandad. He is my all time favorite person because since I was young and we have always had a unbreakable bond. Do you have someone in your life that you cherish? I think everyone should look after their grand parents and never take them for granted.



# Students hard at work - amazing art work



In KS4, students have been busy across the school creating work for their GCSE portfolios. The work they have produced is incredible and we are anticipating lots of success in the next 2 years.





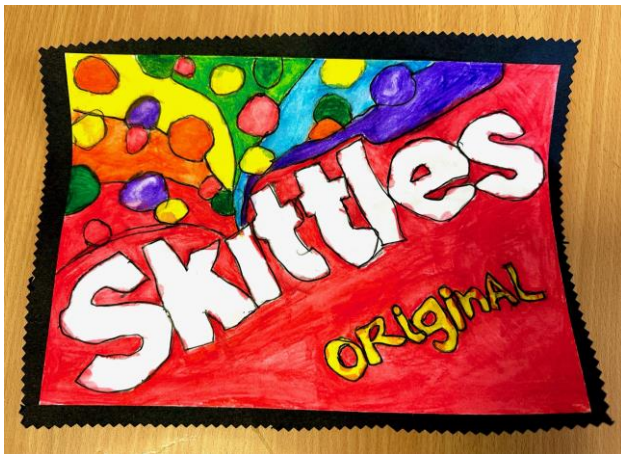
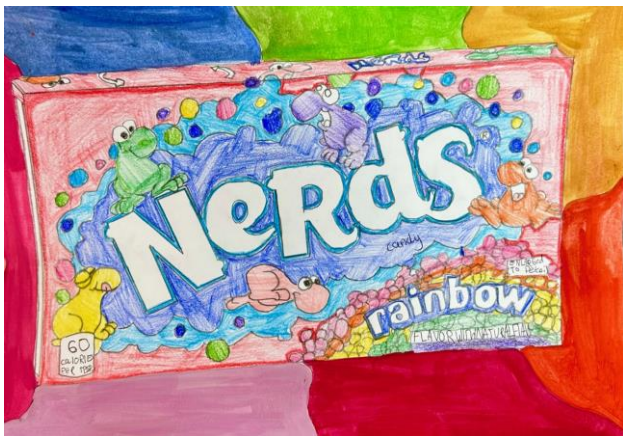
# Students hard at work - amazing art work



At St. George's, the students have been looking into 'sweet treats' and produced some great work whilst having a lot of fun with it! They used clay to create donut sculptures and decorated them with sprinkles and paint mixed with corn flour to thicken it up to look like frosting. They also created their own brand name and decorated their boxes for full effect!

They also looked into 'typography' and produced some really interesting ways to turn their words into their chosen food items, it brought a lot of enjoyment.

Lastly, a few of them chose their favourite sweets and drew them out with water-coloured pencils for a bright and colourful final piece.







# Community participation - residential to Abbey Home Farm

Belle Vue students enjoyed a 3-day residential to Abbey Home Farm this term. Whilst many of the children were very apprehensive about going and staying away from home, which the majority had never done before, they all loved and enjoyed every moment!

Staff and students were up early in the mornings to feed the calves and pigs. Nearly 200 eggs were weighed, boxed and labelled to sell in the shop. It was hard work as the team chopped logs, harvested their own vegetables and cooked all their own meals. In the evening, students whittled sticks, had a campfire and sing song and toasted marshmallows. It's fair to say everyone slept well!

The children had so many proud moments and conquered so many fears; they were a credit to themselves, the school and their families.







# thrive

### What is Thrive?

Thrive is a structured approach to the early identification of emotional developmental need in children and young people. The building blocks within Thrive are named: Being, Doing, Thinking, Power and Identity, Skills and Structure, and Interdependence.

It is a preventative and reparative measure helping adults who have or work with young people to see behaviour as a communicator of emotion.

### What does Thrive Involve?

Students will receive an individual Thrive assessment and action plan created by a licensed Thrive Practitioner. This can be on a 1:1 basis, or in group work. If requested, sessions with the young person and parents/carers can also be arranged.

Within the Thrive sessions activities can include: Sand Play, Therapeutic stories, a wide range of art and craft activities, cooking, mindfulness, team building games, roleplay.

### Meet our Thrive Practitioners



Ms Hazell Happy



Mrs Kate Betteridge



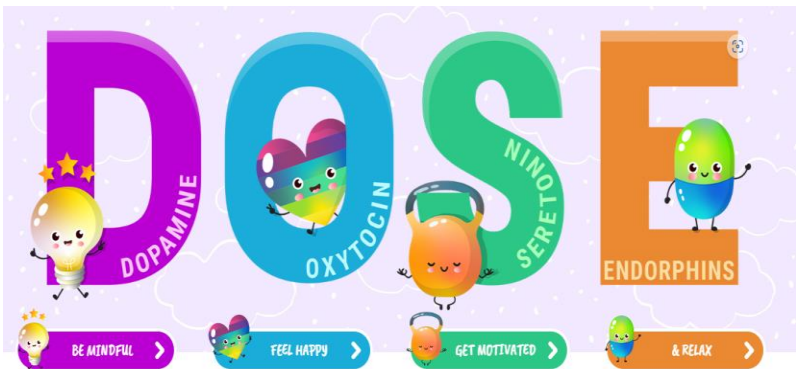
Miss Sophie Boothman



### Why do we use Thrive?

- As a tool to assess students' needs
- To support an EHCP, My Plan or My Plan+ and Altus Pupil Passports.
- To enhance the teaching and learning experiences for learners.
- To understand our students' behaviour better.
- Empowering all staff to be able to make the best use of their contact with each young person so that emotional development, social skills and cognitive choice about behaviours can be developed.

During the summer holidays, parents and carers might like to access [DOSE Magazine - Free Resources and Articles to empower](#) which has lots of activities to keep many of younger children occupied and looking after their mental health!



## Meet our staff

### Team Altus Bouncing Adventures

On Saturday 6th July, Team Altus (Mr Clemow, Mrs Morris, Mrs Henderson and Mrs Noyes) bounced their way through the World's BIGGEST and most EPIC Inflatable 5K Obstacle Course in Bristol. The excitement had been pumped up to the max, as we jumped, slid, and laughed our way to the finish line. We had to work as a team to get through the obstacle course and push each other along the challenging route (Mr Clemow needed an extra push a few times!), to make sure that all of our team made it to the end! At Altus School we believe in the importance of building resilience - a lifelong skill which means being able to adapt and bounce back when something difficult happens in our lives. At times, life can feel like an obstacle course to all of us, but it's important to remember that when an obstacle is tough - you try harder. When an obstacle is unmanageable - you simply change course. But you must never give up!



### Welcoming back an ex-student

We have been thrilled to welcome back Miss Watkins this year as a Teaching Assistant at Rutherford House and are delighted that she will be starting as a permanent member of the team in September. Miss Watkins was a student at Russet House and is really pleased to have the chance to draw upon her own school experiences to support our young people.

### Television stardom!

Our Operations Manager, Tracey Wallbank, who is usually happier behind the scenes keeping the school running, is all set to appear in the new series of Sister Boniface Mysteries. Tracey is a keen performer and has taken part in productions, including Calendar Girls, locally. Her group was invited on as extras to be singing nuns - a very different dress code to her normal workwear. Students might not recognise Tracey but she does a brilliant job in overseeing our buildings and will be busy this summer organising the moves between centres.







# 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.

At Altus School, we prioritise the safety and well-being of our students. We believe it is essential to educate parents and caregivers about potential risks to our children's safety, including the concerning issues of child criminal and sexual exploitation, as well as sexploitation. By working together, we can create a secure environment and empower our children with knowledge and awareness. Here is some crucial information to help you better understand these topics and take necessary precautions:

Working in partnership with the violence reduction team at Gloucestershire Police, The Altus School are lucky enough to have access to VR headsets for 12 months. These VR headsets allow pupils an immersive experience whereby they make real-time decisions in two dramatised situations that tackle the important topics of gang culture, peer pressure and knife crime. Alongside the VR headset experience, pupils are then able to reflect on the decisions made and the topics covered, aided by the fantastic resources created by the PSHE company 'round midnight'. So far, this has been trialled at Raikes, with high engagement and insightful contributions. Next academic year this will then be rolled out across the key stage 3 and 4 sites. Watch this space!



## Staying Safe During the Holidays

### Water Safety

As we head into the summer holidays and the weather warms up, many of us will enjoy spending time outdoors swimming or socialising close to rivers, canals etc. It is good to remind our children and young people of the need to keep themselves safe around water and the importance of following the Water Safety Code.

Further resources and activities can be downloaded by clicking on the following link:

[Free water safety outreach | Canal & River Trust \(canalrivertrust.org.uk\)](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk)

## Construction Site Safety

Children often perceive construction sites as an attractive playground filled with sand, holes, tunnels, cranes, diggers etc; however, they are highly dangerous places where on average, two or three children die and many more are injured, sometimes seriously, each year.

Please actively encourage your child to stay away from building sites and derelict buildings and remind them of the dangers of playing in such places.





## Holiday Activity and Food Fun is back!

Summer HAF/HAP activities will take place between the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July and 30<sup>th</sup> August.

The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme is funded by the Department of Education and is available for children and young people from reception to year 11 who receive benefits-related free school meals.

The programme offers a range of activities for children and their families including family play days, football camps, music workshops, arts and craft and more. Many of these activities provide food and in addition there are food hampers that can be collected from various locations across the city.

Gloucestershire County Council understand that all children and young people can benefit from a programme like HAF and have worked hard to secure extra funding to extend the offer to all families. This means they are now able to offer this programme to other children (HAP).

Further information can be found by clicking on the following link:

<https://gloucestershirehaf.com/gloucester-city-haf/>

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

[Nicki.woolway@altusschool.org.uk](mailto:Nicki.woolway@altusschool.org.uk) Office: 01452 309510



## Gloucestershire Helplines and Online Support



### In an emergency call 999 and ask for help or

- Go to the Accident and Emergency (A&E) department at your local hospital or
- Talk to your GP (between 9am-5pm Monday – Friday) or
- Phone NHS Direct by ringing 111 (after 5pm or weekends) or
- Mental health emergency only (age 11+): Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (GHC) Crisis Team: 0800 1690398 (available 24/7)



### Helplines & Websites:

- **TIC+Chat:** an anonymous, safe, confidential, 1-1 support service for young people in Gloucestershire aged 9-21 [www.ticplus.org.uk/ticpluschat/](http://www.ticplus.org.uk/ticpluschat/) 0300 303 8080
- [www.onyourmindglos.nhs.uk](http://www.onyourmindglos.nhs.uk) mental health support and advice.
- **Childline:** Online help and advice telephone and text chat support  
• [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) Phone: 0800 1111
- **Young Minds:** mental health advice and info for young people [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- **Young Minds CRISIS MESSENGER:** 24/7 service, providing free, mental health crisis support for young people across the UK. Text YM to 85258  
[www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help/get-urgent-help/youngminds-crisis-messenger/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help/get-urgent-help/youngminds-crisis-messenger/)
- **Samaritans:** [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) National Freephone: 116 123 (24-hours).
- **Self-Harm Helpline Rethink Gloucestershire:** Everyday 5pm-10pm  
• Webchat [www.gloucestershireselfharm.org](http://www.gloucestershireselfharm.org) Phone: 0808 8010606 Text: 075374 10022
- **PAPYRUS:** [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org) confidential help and advice to prevent suicide.  
• Helpline: 0800 0684141 Text: 07786 209 697 Email: [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)
- **ChatHealth:** NHS School Nursing confidential text chat service 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri  
• Text: 07507 333351
- **Anxiety UK:** information, support and advice [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)  
• Monday – Friday 9.30am-5.30pm - Infoline: 03444 775 774 Text: 07537 416 905
- **Hey Sigmund:** Anxiety in children and young people - latest research and news  
• [www.heyigmund.com](http://www.heyigmund.com)
- **NHS young people's mental health** [www.nhs.uk/Livewell/youth-mental-health](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/youth-mental-health)
- **Fixers:** stories by young people for young people [www.fixers.org.uk](http://www.fixers.org.uk)
- **Drugs Advice (Frank):** [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com) Live chat: 2pm-6pm  
• Phone: 0300 123 6600 Text: 82111
- **Homelessness (Nightstop):** [www.gloucestershirenightstop.org.uk](http://www.gloucestershirenightstop.org.uk)

### Self-help apps:

Free to download from your app store

- **Calm Harm** - managing self-harm
- **MindShift** - to help manage anxiety and urges to self-harm
- **Cove** - express your mood with music
- **Stress & Anxiety Companion** – helps you handle stress and anxiety
- **Chill Panda** – relaxation and breathing exercises
- **I am me** - supporting young people's mental health, advice, tips, articles, mood tracker

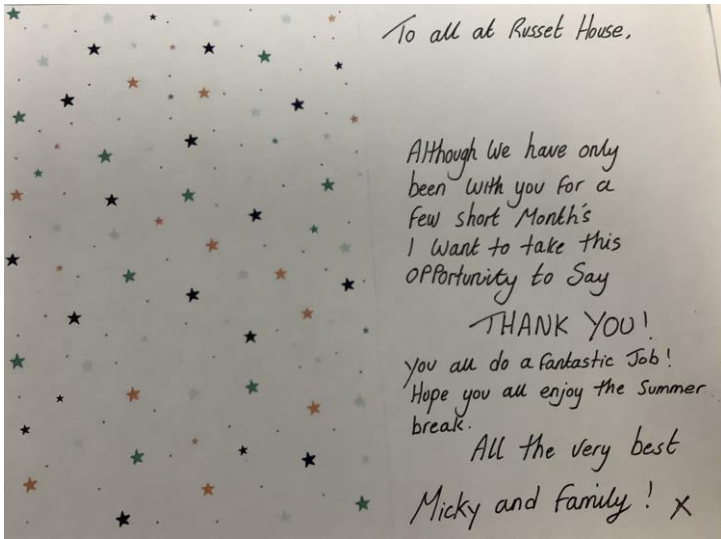
### Parent Support:

- **TIC+ Parent Support Advice Line:**  
• Mon & Wed 5-9pm Tues & Sat 9.30am-1pm  
• Online-chat: [www.ticplus.org.uk](http://www.ticplus.org.uk) Freephone:0800 652 5675
- **Young Minds:** [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) Parent Helpline: 0808 802 5544
- **Family Lives:** [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk) Parent Helpline: 0808 800 2222





# Positive Feedback



Dear Barbara,

I just want to thank you for coming to our home to teach our son. Your calm and caring have rubbed off on him in the challenging time he and we have been through. I also want to thank all at St Georges for your help and support to turn this boy around. Thank you, S x.

I spend a lot of my working days worrying about missed calls and worrying about what is happening now. It often feels negative and relentless, and I am glad that you have such a good safeguarding team. They do make me feel that D is "cared for" and safe.



## Transitions to new schools

We are delighted to work with so many different schools to support our students move into their new long-term setting. Please do use the RESET days to discuss your child's next steps.







## Looking ahead to Term 1

Staff return to school on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September for an INSET day, so no students are expected in school that day. Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> & Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September are RESET days – 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.

All students start timetables on **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September**. Check our website for term dates throughout next year.



### Stay connected!

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](http://www.altusschool.org.uk)

## Do you want to get more involved in school life? We are looking for volunteers!

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.



Our chair of the management committee is Lyn Dance. Lyn has worked in special schools in Gloucestershire for over 30 years and brings a wealth of leadership experience to the role.

You will also work alongside staff members, as well as volunteers from the local community, including our Vice Chair, Philippa Dancey.



**Wishing you all a good summer holidays and we will see you on in September**