



The Trafalgar School  
at Downton

newsletter | ISSUE TWO 2018

Empowering students to be the source of their own success



# *Around the houses at Trafalgar*

Most of you will know that we have five houses here at Trafalgar – Breamore, Clarendon, Longford, Pembroke and Radnor. Pembroke is our newest addition and was established in 2016 when our student intake increased.

You may be less familiar with the distinct characteristics of each and the fervour with which our students support their own house in our inter-house competitions! More of that later.

The five houses form the bedrock of what we do and bring a great sense of belonging for students and staff alike. Each includes a group of students from across every year (these are our tutor groups), creating a smaller family within the larger school community, helping to make students feel comfortable and ensuring they are ready and willing to learn. Tutor groups stay together with the same Form Tutor throughout their school journey – from Year 7 until they leave us at the end of Year 11.

The house system also gives us an opportunity to reinforce the school's distinct values and ethos, as defined by our seven 'Pillars'. These include Community, Mutual Respect, Pride, Creativity, Resilience, Ambition and Family Atmosphere and they are the values around which everything at Trafalgar pivots.

"We're proud of the pastoral care we offer – it's one of the school's real strengths and it's something that parents, students and external visitors consistently comment on," says Rachael Faulkner, Deputy Headteacher and Pastoral Lead. "It is important to us that our students attend consistently, behave well and feel able to develop to their full potential. We believe that supporting our learners with a strong tutor and house programme creates an environment in which they feel confident to learn and to become caring and empathetic members of society."

The house system has also given rise to a strong spirit of competition and an admirable commitment to fundraising.

The houses are pitched against each other in a range of disciplines spanning music, sport and academic challenges. It's all to play for from September when the score board is reset for the new academic year.

In recent times we've raised more than £12,000 each year for different charities. Our nominated charities for the 2018/19 academic year are yet to be chosen but will be voted on over the first weeks of September.

Here's a quick run down on each of the five houses.

## **BREAMORE**

Head of Breamore is Chris Danvers. He expects every student to pitch in and do their bit and believes that the key

to Breamore's success is its focus on looking your best, trying your hardest and treating others with respect. Breamore students are renowned for their teamwork and tenacity and their Head of House makes sure that everyone has the chance to develop into the best version of themselves.

## **CLARENDON**

Over in Clarendon House, Paul Oakley expects 100 per cent effort from everyone. He encourages his team to work to the best of their ability and never quit. They are known for their charity fundraising - who can forget their regular 'Sponge the Teacher' event (always a great money spinner!). Mr Oakley has his sights set on even greater things come next year. Watch this space!

## **LONGFORD**

Kaz Armstrong rules over Longford's 'lion pack'. Their symbol is a proud lion and they use its inspiration to define the character expected of a Longford student.

House mottos include '... once you become fearless, life becomes limitless' and '... the one excellent thing that can be learned from the lion is his dedication, passion and fearless effort in facing life's challenges.'

Our current Head Girl, Izzy, is a member of Longford House.

## **PEMBROKE**

Pembroke students think before they speak and look before they leap. These are the values that Head of House, Tom Pollard, strives to instil and he's looking for students who are kind, considerate and make fierce friends, as well as those who are driven to do their very best.

Pembroke may be small (due to its creation just two years ago it is currently only made up of students from Years 7, 8 and 9) but it's big on personality ... and very vocal too if the volume of cheering at Sports Day is anything to go by!

## **RADNOR**

Symbolised by a mythical red dragon, Morgan McNiff encourages her students to be tenacious in the pursuit of excellence across the complete range of school activities. Strong friendship bonds are key and Radnor House is known for celebrating the successes of its students. Last academic year they were proud winners of the House Music competition.

Our current Head Boy, Sam, is also a member of Radnor House.

It remains to be seen which houses will triumph next year but the real reward is in working hard to learn new skills or improve existing talents and having a lot of fun along the way! We look forward to watching everyone's progress.



# Awesome Alumni

We love catching up with past students and hearing about their ongoing adventures and challenges. Most students are with us for five years and, being a smaller than average secondary school with a great family atmosphere, we relish the chance to really get to know our students whilst they're with us. Many keep in touch and we love it when they do!

Below we hear the latest news and views from two of our leavers – Downton local, Georgie Budd and Katy Filipe from Harnham.



## GEORGIE BUDD

A star student from the get-go, Georgie was head girl in her final year and left us with eight GCSEs (six A\* grades, two As and one B). Notably, she was responsible for producing Trafalgar's first leavers' Yearbook. Georgie's mum and aunt also attended Trafalgar.

After leaving us, Georgie went to Ringwood Sixth Form College where she passed her A' Levels with flying colours – English Literature (A), Biology (A), Chemistry (A) and Maths (B) – and then went on to qualify as a doctor after studying for five years at Cardiff School of Medicine. Whilst at university, she was also selected to attend a ten-day Global Young Leaders Conference in the USA, learning about leadership skills, global issues and international diplomacy from worldwide experts.

Sadly, Georgie was involved in a car crash and broke her back in 2017 but has shown remarkable fortitude and is continuing with her medical career nonetheless. Her long-term ambition is to move into medical education, teaching other young doctors their craft.

"Some may think I would obviously want to change the outcome of the car crash that paralysed me but I believe that things like this create opportunity for a different path," says Georgie.

"If I had to offer some advice to current students I'd tell them to always question, to do their research and to be grateful. I was lucky enough to be guided by two particularly memorable teachers, Dan Bulley and Elizabeth Cutter, one who encouraged us to think for ourselves and the other who was tough but pushed us to get the results we were capable of achieving. I'm grateful to them both!"

She's stayed in touch with the teaching team at Trafalgar, even coming back to school to help as a volunteer during Arts Week. Georgie is also in close contact with 10 of her ex-classmates, some of whom are now married to each other!

## KATY FILIPE

Katy is currently studying for a Level 3 Extended Diploma in Technical Theatre Arts and Stage Makeup at the BRIT School for Performing Arts and Technology, Croydon's one-of-a-kind school which claims the likes of Jessie J, Adele and Amy Winehouse amongst its past pupils.

Having left Trafalgar with nine GCSEs and joined the BRIT School at 16, Katy had to move to London to pursue her dream. Highlights of her school days include the ski trip to Italy, sports days and being a prefect.

"I had to move away from home and start using the underground rather than the school bus for my journeys to and from lessons, so it was all rather different," says Katy. "I was massively helped by the supportive environment at Trafalgar and by Mr Cole and Mrs Sykes who both encouraged me to realise my potential.

"The dream is to work on films and in theatre doing special effects makeup and long term to help other people have the same resources that I'm lucky enough to receive at the BRIT School.

"There's nothing I'd change if I went back in time. I really enjoyed Trafalgar but I would tell any current students who want to follow a similar path to make sure they always work at the highest possible standard and to keep every bit of art work they've ever done.

"You can always reach your goals if you put everything into it. Remember that you don't need to stick to the same sixth form college as all your friends if it's not the path you want to take. Do what makes you happy!"

Katy, too, has kept in touch with lots of her former classmates, including friends from younger year groups. She's also been back to Trafalgar on work experience.



Headteacher, Stewart Roderick, says: "We're always so thrilled to hear news of our leavers, especially when they've shown as much determination and enjoyed as much success as both Georgie and Katy. It's an inspiration to both the staff and the students. We wish them the very best of luck in their future careers and look forward to hearing about their next chapters."



# Our future historians explore the past at the Chalke Valley History Festival

A very hot Wednesday at the end of June saw us take 40 history students from Year 9 to this year's Chalke Valley History Festival.

Getting our historians out of the classroom and immersing them in their subject is an incredible experience for everyone. Students always come home with a whole new level of enthusiasm and excitement about their historical studies. That alone makes the day worthwhile but the trip also brings huge benefits for our GCSE students who hear and see a different angle on some of the topics they'll be writing about come exam day.

This year's students heard talks on a range of relevant topics including the History of Medicine, the Second World War, the Cold War, the Weimar Republic and Nazi

Germany – all delivered by eminent historians. They also saw living history displays, demonstrations and visited a reconstructed trench. Most popular was definitely the firing of the World War Two 18-pounder artillery piece, which sent shockwaves through everyone watching!

The event is part-funded by the History Festival's charitable trust so the cost to us is very little, bearing in mind the quality of the speakers. We're fortunate to have such a prestigious event on our doorstep!

“The Chalke Valley History Festival for Schools gives students a fantastic and unique opportunity to engage with world-class historians in a way that we could never achieve in school,” says Mark Whitelock, Subject Leader of History. “The speakers and topics are carefully chosen to meet the requirements of GCSE courses which really engages and inspires students. One of the highlights of the Festival for me has to be the re-enactors who have such a wealth of knowledge and in-depth understanding of their eras. Those things that go bang are always a hit with the students!”

We're already looking forward to sharing a visit to the Chalke Valley History Festival with our next group of GCSE History students.



## Introducing our Head Boy and Head Girl for 2018/19

We're thrilled to introduce our new Head Boy and Head Girl – Sam Butt and Izzy Bush. They were elected after a rigorous selection procedure which involved written manifestos, assembly presentations, shortlisting, and then voting by the whole school.

Their roles will see them provide a link between staff and students, supporting and leading at events both in school and within the local community, chairing the school council and working with senior staff to support the ethos and policy of the school.

“We're really looking forward to working alongside Sam and Izzy this academic year, helping them achieve their own objectives and seeing them flourish as they take on all the responsibilities that come with their new roles,” says Rachael Faulkner, Deputy Headteacher.

“Being singled out for these important roles is a fantastic achievement and the culmination of a really impressive path here at Trafalgar. Both Sam and Izzy have stood out from the beginning, showing themselves to be dedicated and hard-working students with a strong community spirit and a keen sense of fun. We wish them masses of luck.”

### SAM BUTT

Sam found out that he'd been chosen as Head Boy during a whole school assembly, having been chosen by students and staff from a short list of three candidates.

Here are his thoughts on hearing the news.

“I was very proud! When I texted my mum to tell her, she messaged back saying I'd made her cry. My dad was proud too and my friends were really happy for me.

“I think I was probably picked because I work hard, I don't like seeing anyone left out and I'm very approachable.

“The thing I'm most looking forward to is meeting all the new faces coming to the school and representing Trafalgar in public. I'm also looking forward to speaking to future parents at our open days, although I'm nervous about messing up one of my speeches (but I think that's probably the same for everyone). I think it'll make me more confident in myself and I hope I will feel like I can talk to anyone instead of sometimes shying away.”



Asked what he'd like to try and pass on to younger students, Sam says: “I hope to encourage them to work hard in the younger years rather than just when it gets serious in Year 10 and 11. Use every year so you can benefit!”

### IZZY BUSH

Our new Head Girl was equally happy to find out about her responsibilities for the 2018/19 school year.

Izzy tells us that she was just pleased to have made it to the final stages of the selection process. We agree – there's no doubt that being shortlisted to the final three is a massive achievement in itself.

“I'm feeling relaxed about becoming Head Girl,” says Izzy. “I'm a really positive person and I think I'll be a good role model because I work hard in lessons and feel comfortable talking to different people.

“I'd like to inspire younger students to believe in themselves. I went for Head Girl as it was something I really wanted to do ... and I got it! It made me happy and I'd really like others to feel they can achieve their ambitions too.

“I hope that I'll finish the year having shown that I can take on responsibility and that I'm a good leader.”

Izzy reports that she's really looking forward to seeing the school develop and grow as we begin to welcome our new larger Year 7 intakes.

Congratulations Izzy and Sam!





A group of 63 of our Year 7 and 8 students enjoyed a fantastic five-night trip to outdoor activity centre, Plas Pencelli in South Wales. We were blessed with amazing July weather and the sun shone on us from dawn until dusk most days – a huge bonus for all our outdoor activities.

Plas Pencelli is owned by Swindon Borough Council and was opened more than 40 years ago. It provides top quality, tailor-made outdoor education courses for schools, focused on personal development within a safe but challenging environment.

Trip leader, Rachel Eveling - Teacher of Science and Form Tutor for our outgoing Year 7 (now Year 8) Pembroke students - says: “There’s a highly qualified and inspirational team on site, who arrange activities and gently encourage our students to take risks and push their limits. It’s our experience that each and every person comes home feeling incredibly positive about their achievements, with many having overcome fears and taken on challenges that they wouldn’t have dreamt of just a week before!”

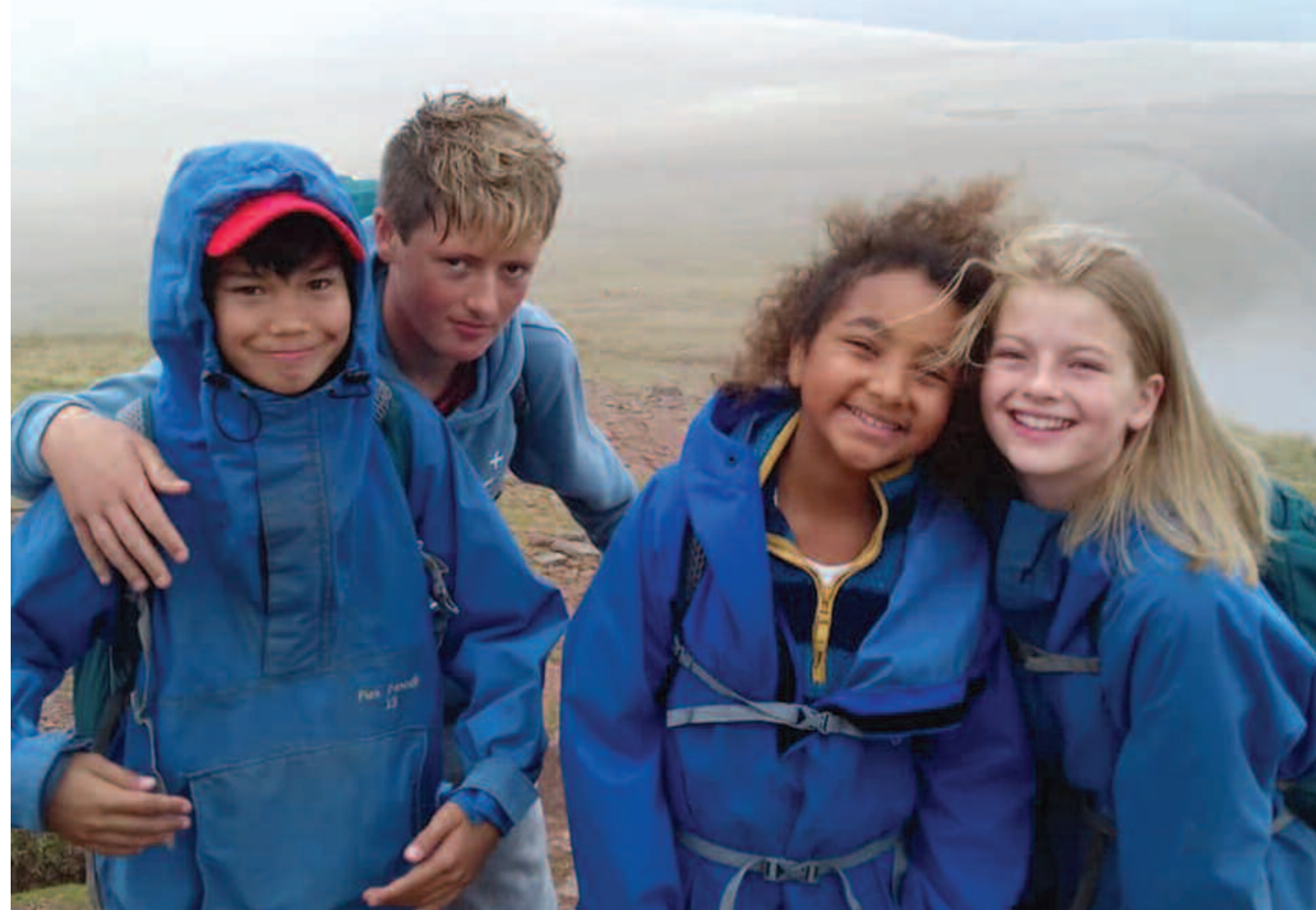
The first day saw us canoeing, caving, mountain walking, climbing and abseiling. As if that wasn’t enough, we packed in an orienteering expedition in the evening.

Day two brought more fun-filled sessions, with the highlight being an evening obstacle course with a twist. The students were blindfolded and tied together before their nominated group leader helped their team to negotiate tricky paths and streams. It was a real test of leadership and teamwork and we saw some really impressive skills in action.

One of the highlights though has to be scaling Pen Y Fan, the highest peak in South Wales and part of the Brecon Beacons National Park. We enjoyed incredible views from the summit at 886 metres.

There are plenty more photographs on Facebook. Take a look and see some of our adventures for yourself! We’ll be running the Pencelli trip again in 2019, so keep your eyes peeled for information or contact the school office if you’d like to find out more.

## *Plas Pencelli welcomes our adventurers*





# *What a difference a year makes!*

## YEAR 7 SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS ON THEIR FIRST YEAR AT TRAFALGAR

We asked our outgoing Year 7s to talk us through the highs and the lows of their first year at Trafalgar. The feedback was excellent and we got some great ‘no holds barred’ insights. We thought that sharing their thoughts might help our new students joining us in September, so here goes ...

### Highlights

Asked what the best bits of Year 7 have been, the same things were highlighted time and again. School trips, sports tournaments, music events and inter-house competitions were mentioned repeatedly. Also at the top of the list for lots of students was the food in the school restaurant! The opportunity to make new friends, enjoy a new-found independence, study new subjects and share jokes with the teachers were a big feature too.

### First Day Nerves?

Lots of our Year 7s told us that they did feel nervous on their first day but - almost without exception - they also told us the other students and the staff were much more helpful than they'd imagined!

Boys and girls alike reported making new friends and settling in much more quickly than they expected. They also talked about the school's family atmosphere, the supportive staff and how surprised they were that the older year groups were so friendly.

Asked for some top tips to share with the new students, this is what they said:

- Stop your mum trying to buy you a massive PE bag, especially if you'll be getting the bus. It doesn't need to be enormous!
- Be yourself, stay calm and get to know as many people as you can. Don't judge people and try to make everyone feel included.
- Relax about making friends. It just happens naturally. If you're not in a tutor group with your friends from primary school, it doesn't matter because you'll see them at break times. Time apart helps you to make new friends and merge friendship groups.
- Don't worry about getting lost. You'll soon find your way around the school and there are plenty of people who will point you in the right direction. Everyone understands and is happy to help.



- Keep a copy of your timetable in your bag so you don't forget what lessons you have.
- Use the field at break and lunch and enjoy the freedom. You can play football and other sports or just chill with your friends. The library's a good place to go when you want quiet time.
- Enjoy the bus if you have to catch one. It's really fun and you meet lots of people.
- Make a checklist of what you need to take to school each day and pack your bag the night before. Don't overpack or your bag will be really heavy!
- Do your homework as and when you get it. Don't leave it until the last minute!
- Remember that there's always someone to talk to about anything and everything. Mrs Ford is very supportive, as are the other teachers and TAs.
- And finally ... speed walk to the canteen so that you can be the first person there with the hottest food!

### Parent Power

We also asked the parents and carers of Year 7 students to pitch in with their thoughts about the transition from primary to secondary school.

Here are a few of their comments:

- “If you have a concern or question, just ask – no matter how small or silly it seems. Everyone is so keen to help.”
- “Trust the pastoral care system – it is superb.”
- “If you think your child is struggling in any way, refer it to a teacher and they'll deal with it straight away.”
- “The children seem to change and grow up overnight and I suddenly felt quite redundant. It's a transition for us parents as well as the kids.”
- “Don't worry. They'll cope better than you think.”

Moving into secondary school is a time of change and there's no denying that it can be challenging for some children. Most adapt quickly and easily though, stepping seamlessly into their new environment and enjoying the greater responsibility that comes with increased independence.

We work hard to make it a smooth transition and we're always here to answer questions from students or parents, so don't hesitate to ask if you have a query!

## New School PE Kit thanks to Student Voice



The Trafalgar students have spoken out in their Student Voice sessions and, as a result, we have a new PE kit ready and raring to be debuted on the sports field by our Year 7s in September.

“Our new kit is black with blue panelling and is made using the very latest quick-dry fabrics,” says Jo Holden, Subject Leader of PE. “It's smart, comfortable and modern but it's also makes us look a little bit menacing on the pitch!

“The students felt it was time for a change and, having canvassed opinion amongst their peers, it became obvious that the feeling was widespread. As a result, students and staff worked collaboratively to come up with the new design. We think everyone will be really pleased with our new look!”

In order to avoid additional expense for current parents, the new PE kit is only compulsory for our incoming Year 7 students and will be phased in gradually throughout the school.

Current students will continue to wear the existing PE kit until they outgrow it (or it wears out), when it must be replaced with the new uniform.

To order (or just to take a look), go to the online uniform shop via our website.

Student Voice sessions take place as part of our School Council and allow elected students to discuss school life and influence policy.



A large background image showing a student's hands working on a wooden mechanical model on a workbench. The model consists of a base, two vertical supports, and a horizontal beam. A wooden rod is inserted through the supports, and a circular wooden piece is attached to it. The student's hands are visible, one holding the rod and the other supporting the base. The workbench is made of wood and has some paint and wood shavings on it.

# Spotlight on . . . Design and Technology

## **Opportunity Knocks**

Design and Technology opportunities abound at Trafalgar. We introduce them from day one and offer them right up until the final hour!

We're one of very few schools to offer technology courses in Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) and we also offer GCSE Design and Technology students the chance to specialise in a wide range of options including textiles and timbers.

In the earlier years, students who want to immerse themselves in Design and Technology beyond their timetabled classes have masses of opportunities to do just that. They can take part in extra-curricular Design and Technology clubs (focussing on packaging and 3D printing, for example) and also in a range of competitions (such as our seasonal textiles projects and bake offs).

We're pleased to report that we have a strong level of engagement from both boys and girls across the school, with the students unanimously telling us how much they enjoy learning Design and Technology at Trafalgar.

The teaching team work hard to stretch and challenge learners of all abilities. Knowing their students well means our Design and Technology staff can identify each individual's strengths, as well as any barriers to learning, and tailor their teaching accordingly in order to raise the bar in the classroom.

## **At the Helm**

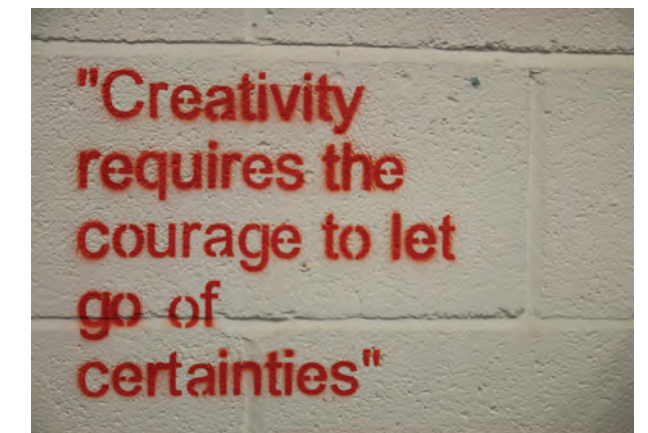
The department is led by James Doran, who's supported by inspiring technology specialists Lizzie Guasch (Textiles Technology) and Louise Goodwin (Food Technology). Each teacher also has a dedicated technician working alongside them: Alan Watling (Resistant Materials), Vicky Bilton (Textiles) and Jenny Saxby (Food).

"The skills learnt in DT are great for anyone thinking of a career in design engineering or manufacturing," says James Doran. "Students have to think creatively and work independently to design and make products to meet human needs. They then have to use their practical and technological abilities to make them. Our students really enjoy the opportunity to spread their creative wings and consequently their levels of engagement are excellent.

"It's all about problem solving – designing something using current technologies that will improve our quality of life. Working as individuals and in teams, it's a real confidence builder and we see our students really starting to consider how and why products are used and then learning to innovate."

Under the new curriculum, all GCSE Technology students focus on core topics and then move on to specialise in the discipline of their choice (such as timbers or textiles), in which they complete an assessed project – ultimately creating a portfolio and a prototype.

Food Technology students study for a vocational qualification in Hospitality and Catering which imparts a range of general and specialist skills and is a fantastic foundation for further study and employment.



## **Successful Outcomes**

An impressive 67 per cent of our students opt to take Design and Technology for GCSE and their success rates are high. Previous students have regularly exceeded the three levels of progress expected at GCSE level and some have leapt five, six and even seven levels!

They've generated stunning pieces of work in the process. Some are photographed here but there's plenty more on display in the classrooms, so do ask to see it if you're interested or just want to find out a little more about what Design and Technology at Trafalgar involves.



## Saluting our dressage champ Isobel Beales!



Massive congratulations to our very own dressage superstar, Isobel Beales, who joins Year 9 in September. Isobel has been riding horses since she was just three years old but has only recently started competing in dressage competitions.

Her latest win was at an RDA (Riding for the Disabled Association) dressage competition held at Warminster Show in June. Isobel and her horse, Frodo, came third – pipping 12 other contestants to the podium in the process. The other competitors were from riding schools across the region and many were older than Isobel.

Frodo and Isobel have only been together since September 2017, making their partnership a fairly new one in equestrian terms. Their union seems set to be highly successful though, with the dynamic duo scoring a massive eight out of ten for skill and accuracy on the day.

Isobel and Frodo had to perform a number of set manoeuvres, including walking around the dressage arena at a steady pace, making left and right turns at set points, as well as coming

to a halt and saluting the judges at an appointed spot.

In 2012, Isobel was lucky enough to meet and ride in front of HRH Princess Anne at the Wilton branch of the RDA. Since then, Isobel has taken several riding exams and has achieved Grade Three in the RDA's proficiency tests, which assess riding skills and knowledge of horse care.

Well done, Isobel!

## College Beaulieu comes to Trafalgar

It may sound local ... but it's not!

College Beaulieu is a small school in Joue-les-Tours in France's stunning Loire Valley and we've been forging ever-closer links with them over the last couple of years.

Excitingly, a group of staff and students from the College came to visit us towards the end of the summer term. They spent a day at Trafalgar as part of their visit to the South West, which also included trips to Salisbury, Bath and Bristol.

Andy Cleeter, Subject Leader of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), says: "The visiting students were very well received by everyone here at Trafalgar and they obviously enjoyed seeing a British school first-hand.

"Our Year 7 students are now recording some presentations which we will send over to our French counterparts to help them with their learning.

"There's no doubt that experiencing the language as a real and living thing is extremely motivational, bringing a different angle to our studies and this is a project that we hope to develop." "Vive l'entente cordiale!"

## Students go stir crazy for Chinese cookery

Our Year 9 Food Technology students had a fantastic time taking part in a healthy Chinese cooking workshop in the summer term.

We were lucky enough to welcome two Ambassadors from London's Healthy Chinese Cuisine Foundation. They taught our students about Chinese food culture and also passed on some Chinese cooking skills (including the correct techniques for successful stir frying), all within a healthy eating agenda. Each student learnt how to rustle up an authentic black bean chicken dish.

It was a really successful day – helped, no doubt, by the opportunity for students to take home a delicious, healthy meal for their families and friends!



We regularly post photographs, announcements, achievements and information about life at Trafalgar on Facebook and Twitter. It's a fantastic way to find out what's going on and may help you decide if you would like to visit and become part of our school family. Do **'like'** us now, we love to connect!



# Morgan McNiff joins our PE teaching team



We are delighted to extend a warm welcome to Morgan McNiff, who joins us as a PE teacher and is also also our new Head of Radnor House.

Morgan qualified as a teacher four years ago and has been working at the Lord Grey Academy in Milton Keynes until now.

"I didn't start my working life as a teacher but I coached cheerleading in my spare time and realised that I loved it much more than my actual job, so I decided it was time for a change," says Morgan.

"I bit the bullet and enrolled on a four-year Physical Education QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) course at the University of Bedfordshire. It was focused on secondary school education so gave me a great grounding and I haven't looked back since."

Morgan, who was born in the UK but spent her toddler years in the USA, has been a cheerleader for over 20 years and is fanatical about sport. She loves being active and goes to the gym six days a week (sometimes twice a day, if possible). Even Morgan has some downtime though and in her less active moments, she enjoys the cinema, reading and spending time with friends and family.

"I loved the atmosphere and all the friendly faces around school when I came to look at Trafalgar," adds Morgan. "My interview lessons went really well and I was inspired by the enthusiasm of the students I taught, as well as their excellent behaviour and openness to learning.

"I can't wait to get started on a new chapter in my life and face some new and exciting challenges. I'm really looking forward to working at The Trafalgar School."



