As the academic year draws to a close we have found ourselves reflecting part in shock and part in awe at what has unfolded since September. We have often spoken about feeling like we are in the Truman Show, or that this is a bizarre, recurring dream that we are waiting to wake from. It just goes to show that no matter how much planning and preparation that is done, there is so much beyond our control.

Thinking back to September and the smooth start to the term, we were so impressed with how our new year 12s settled in. As a cohort they flourished, quickly finding their feet with their academic studies and clearing the jump between GCSE and A Levels with ease. They certainly gave year 13 a run for their money!

Year 13 stepped up to the plate, bridging the gaps in knowledge identified in the first year mocks, while persevering with new content and at the same time juggling UCAS applications, job interviews and planning for life beyond sixth form.

Of course since then life has changed dramatically. Whilst originally expecting the lockdown in March to be lifted within a couple of weeks, it quickly became clear that COVID-19 was to play a bigger role in our lives. For year 12 the initial excitement of lie-ins and time off was soon replaced by a new norm that for many has created anxiety and worry about what September brings. We are determined to minimise the impact on these students and already have plans to support them in their return to school.

For year 13 the impact was more immediate with the cancellation of exams. We understand that many have been left feeling cheated that they have been unable to show all their hard work and just what they are capable of. The uncertainty of relying on grades predicted by teachers and open to adjustment from exam boards has been a further stress for our students but despite this blow, students have remained engaged with us and we are confident that our rigorous internal assessment practices will result in honest and fair grades for all students.

While students, staff and families of our community have faced individual tragedies over the last 4 months, there have been some positives that we have taken from this. In our determination to make sure students are a priority, we have been able to get to know so many families in a way we wouldn’t have in normal times. Between phone calls, e mails and home visits, it has been humbling to hear the stories from our key worker parents about day to day life dealing with COVID-19. We have loved conversing about more than school, learning about your lives, pets, hobbies and plans for the future and it has been a privilege to see the support both students and their families have been offering each other during this time. The strength of our community and the relationships between staff, students and parents has grown immeasurably and we will be eternally thankful for that.

On behalf of both of us, we would like to thank those of you who are NHS workers and key workers for your heroic efforts and selflessness.

To our year 13s, we are so proud of you and the individuals you have become. Do not forget your ‘why’ and remember every hurdle can be jumped even if you have to fall a few times first. You are and will always be part of our Sixth From family.

We wish you all a restful summer,

Stay safe

God Bless

Mrs Robinson and Miss Difusco

Head of Sixth Form and Deputy Head of Sixth Form
Getting Creative in Lockdown

Many of our students have been making the most out of their time in lockdown to learn new skills and find new hobbies. From learning Mandarin and British Sign Language, picking up a sketch book for the first time, to embracing bus and train spotting, they really have embraced the opportunities that the slower pace of life has given them.

Throughout lockdown our tutor time activities have been an ever important part of our week with a variety of challenges from the inspired, to the bizarre and ridiculous. Here is a snapshot of some of the work that students have produced.

Our Thank You to the NHS Video:

Students wanted to show their gratitude to our NHS heroes for their remarkable selflessness during the pandemic. Below is a link to their creation.

https://t.co/N9Mx9umuZG?amp=1

The Coin Snatch Challenge:

The coin snatch sees students balance a column of 2 pence pieces on their elbow before dropping their elbow and attempting to catch them.

Winner – David Kirkham (20 coins)

Runner up – Rachel Redfern (12 coins)

The Oragami Challenge:

The origami challenge required students to master the Japanese art of folding paper to create an NHS inspired creation. We loved these origami stars!

Winner – Caitlin Lewis

The Glass Harp Challenge:

The glass harp is a perfect lockdown instrument. Think Miss Congeniality! Students filled 6 glasses with different amounts of water. By rubbing the rim of each glass different notes are created. Once this has been mastered, students attempted to play the classical piece of ‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star’ on their glass harp.

Winner – Rachel Redfern
Messages from the Sixth Form Team

Both students and staff alike have had to get used to a 'new normal' and while communication between students and staff has continued throughout lockdown, they were keen to sign off the year with an insight into their lockdown lives and a few messages for our students.

Dr. Mistry SF/MM

Our form have been very creative in their lock down activities from learning how to cook, learning another language and tidying their bedrooms. They have coped extremely well managing their time and keeping up with the changing situation week by week which is a real credit to their resilience.

Personally, lockdown has been an interesting time. Juggling school work, home schooling and being at home for such a long time has meant routines have changed. I have never walked so much, some weeks, 25 miles, discovering new footpaths. A favourite moment was discovering where the wild orchids grow. They prefer limestone (alkali) soils.

Having my boys at home, meant that we had to have events during the week to have something to look forward too. So we re-created a McDonald's meal and a posh cream tea.

Home schooling has been interesting. I have learnt a lot about grammar and punctuation. However I couldn’t resist a few science experiments ranging from making rafts, sundials and investigating acids and alkalis in the home using red cabbage.

I can’t wait to see you all in September and welcoming our new Y12’s. Next year will be different, but we will do it together.

Have a wonderful summer holiday.

Dr. Mistry

Miss Slater SF/AS

Lockdown has been a unique experience; and while I wouldn’t wish for it to be repeated, I have tried hard to do something positive every day. These positives have included:

- Communicating with students about work and life
- Catching up on my reading
- Writing a novel (or at least the first third of one)
- Eating healthily
- Growing wild flowers in my garden
- Taking regular walks in the local park
- Having lots of cuddle time with my three cats
- Seeing my family as often and safely as I can

Still, September cannot come soon enough. What people need more than anything else is contact with other people, and there’s a reason teachers choose to be in such a busy profession. We’re all naturally gregarious! So to my form, I want to say that I am looking forward to seeing your lovely faces again more than you can know. In the meantime, have a glorious summer! Read, get plenty of sleep, eat well, take advantage of the fresh air when you can, and above all be kind to yourselves.

To my Year 13s who have now finished their school careers, all of my best wishes and hopes go with you.

Much love to you all, Miss Slater.
Mr Booth SF,MB

Due to having a new baby, the 5.30 get up has continued during lockdown 😊. After feeding her and doing some school work, it has been time for us all to do the 9am Joe Wicks workout. We then fit in a walk with the dog and pram for about 45 mins. It is then school work and home schooling with my stepson. After dinner it is more schoolwork for me - Xbox for him.

The evenings have been spent watching TV programmes such as Tiger King and Ozarks. Luckily the Boxing club has recently reopened to try to get fitter.

To my year 13 - it has been an absolute pleasure to be your tutor, and my 'big group' on the middle table in Elmwood are some of the kindest, nicest pupils I have ever taught. I wish you all the very best for your future - whether it be university, apprenticeship or job. Please stay in touch and let us know how you are getting on.

To my year 12's, have an amazing summer and I look forward in seeing you all in September. Remember - if you need anything before then, I am always at the end of an email.

Have an amazing summer. Mr B

Mrs Vause SF, FV

As you may have heard by now, I am semi-retiring this summer, although I am already really looking forward to continuing to teach A-level Biology next year.

It has been a great privilege to be a sixth form tutor - spending time every day with such incredible young people is a very rewarding and often humbling experience. I want to thank all those who have accompanied me on that journey - your support has been invaluable.

During lockdown, I have relished the opportunity to walk much more, having the time to appreciate small changes in the natural world every day. Fortunately my fitness sessions went online, which was a life saver. I have also taken up painting with water-colours and started to learn Italian (slowly).

I have really enjoyed hearing about the achievements made by so many of my form in this challenging time - whether it was 'hanging on in there' with school work, doing the 'couch to 5k', cooking for the family, learning new skills in film production, improving guitar playing, organising quizzes for the sixth form and so many other great uses of time.

Have a relaxing summer, ready to come back refreshed in September.

Take care, Mrs V

Mr Booth SF,MB

Due to having a new baby, the 5.30 get up has continued during lockdown 😥. After feeding her and doing some school work, it has been time for us all to do the 9am Joe Wicks workout. We then fit in a walk with the dog and pram for about 45 mins. It is then school work and home schooling with my stepson. After dinner it is more schoolwork for me - Xbox for him.

The evenings have been spent watching TV programmes such as Tiger King and Ozarks. Luckily the Boxing club has recently reopened to try to get fitter.

To my year 13 - it has been an absolute pleasure to be your tutor, and my 'big group' on the middle table in Elmwood are some of the kindest, nicest pupils I have ever taught. I wish you all the very best for your future - whether it be university, apprenticeship or job. Please stay in touch and let us know how you are getting on.

To my year 12's, have an amazing summer and I look forward in seeing you all in September. Remember - if you need anything before then, I am always at the end of an email.

Have an amazing summer. Mr B

Mrs Vause SF, FV

As you may have heard by now, I am semi-retiring this summer, although I am already really looking forward to continuing to teach A-level Biology next year.

It has been a great privilege to be a sixth form tutor - spending time every day with such incredible young people is a very rewarding and often humbling experience. I want to thank all those who have accompanied me on that journey - your support has been invaluable.

During lockdown, I have relished the opportunity to walk much more, having the time to appreciate small changes in the natural world every day. Fortunately my fitness sessions went online, which was a life saver. I have also taken up painting with water-colours and started to learn Italian (slowly).

I have really enjoyed hearing about the achievements made by so many of my form in this challenging time - whether it was 'hanging on in there' with school work, doing the 'couch to 5k', cooking for the family, learning new skills in film production, improving guitar playing, organising quizzes for the sixth form and so many other great uses of time.

Have a relaxing summer, ready to come back refreshed in September.

Take care, Mrs V

Mrs Banks SF, CM

During Lockdown the Morris household, has relished the opportunity to have lots of family time together. We have been on lots of walks and hikes. And explored lots of new places in our beautiful country.

Done lots of baking, started making homemade bread/ garlic bread, pizza. Our favourite goodies to bake are Victoria sponge cakes, brownies and homemade Millie's cookies.

We love crafts and getting creative, we have delivered pictures and crafts to children on our street, we have done lots of lockdown creations that are proudly displayed in our home.
Lisa,

So as many of you know I suffered a stroke at the end of February and was in hospital for 10 days. Not long after coming out of hospital lockdown happened. This meant that all my rehab and hospital appointments were all postponed and all done virtually. I have spent a lot of my time at home doing physio and rehabilitation exercises to regain my movement in my hands.

A few days before lockdown we had a new rescue dog called Evie. My boys Luca and Eddie absolutely love her and have enjoyed the many walks through the woods at Allestree Park.

I hope you have all managed to keep safe and well.

Year 12 Keep safe over the summer and I look forward to seeing you in September.

Year 13 I hope you have a great summer and wish you all well.

Good luck in the next part of your journey.

Mr Bounds SF. SB

During lockdown I’ve kept myself very busy with school work and years 7 and 8 will hopefully enjoy what I’ve done next year.

I’ve also spent a lot of my time with my hands on a paint brush, drill or lawnmower.

In my spare time I practice jujitsu but that’s been put on hold for the foreseeable future so I had to find a new hobby. I dusted down some old demijohns and for the first time in about 20 years have made some homebrew wine so we’ll see what that tastes like next year.

To my year 13s, I’m sorry the year has finished as it has but I have every faith in you and look forward to hearing what you’ve been up to in the future.

Year 12, have a lovely summer and stay safe.

Mr Buxton SF. AB

Like many of you, my PlayStation has seen more action than it’s been used to in the last 4 months. It has been a temptation that has been hard to resist at times.

To get myself out of the PlayStation rut I have tried to get myself into a good routine. Setting work, responding to emails and making sure my maths students and form are OK.

One day a week I have been in school running the nano-school. Mornings are spent working through lessons and afternoons we do an activity. When the weather has been good we’ve been out playing sport, when it’s not so good we’ve been crafting or watching films.

Film club has really taken off since lockdown. Once a week we get together online to discuss the latest films we’ve been watching. Thank goodness for Netflix!

I’ve also been trying to keep myself active by getting fresh air. I’ve been doing some training for DofE and walk or run most days, often taking a stroll around Elvaston Castle. It gets me out the house helps to clear my head. I don’t feel so guilty when I get on the PlayStation then.

As we sign off this difficult year, I hope you all have a restful summer. Year 13, good luck with everything, year 12 I’ll see you in September.

Mr Buxton SF. AB

The sticks for Hattie’s name were collected on our walks during lockdown.

I am very much excited to be part of the Sixth Form team next year, and I look forward to seeing you all back at school.

I hope you all have a great summer, take care and stay safe.

Mr Buxton SF. AB

During lockdown I’ve kept myself very busy with school work and years 7 and 8 will hopefully enjoy what I’ve done next year.

I’ve also spent a lot of my time with my hands on a paint brush, drill or lawnmower.

In my spare time I practice jujitsu but that’s been put on hold for the foreseeable future so I had to find a new hobby. I dusted down some old demijohns and for the first time in about 20 years have made some homebrew wine so we’ll see what that tastes like next year.

To my year 13s, I’m sorry the year has finished as it has but I have every faith in you and look forward to hearing what you’ve been up to in the future.

Year 12, have a lovely summer and stay safe.
**Year 12 Summer Guidance**

Teachers have been meticulously ensuring that learning has been consolidated and new learning has been supported with Loom videos. As in any other year, students have been set work over the summer period on Show My Homework to ensure confidence remains high on our return in September. This work will be submitted during the first lesson of the new academic year. Whilst this learning is important it is equally imperative that students take a well-earned break and recharge so they can hit the ground running in September. We encourage all students to manage their time effectively by either completing work in the first week of the holiday or spreading out their learning at regular intervals throughout the 6 weeks.

**Plans for September**

Since the government’s announcement that all schools will fully open in September, staff have been busy putting plans together to allow for social distancing and deep cleaning following government guidance. The government has made it clear that it is an expectation for all students to return to school and so normal attendance procedures in regards to maintaining a 95% attendance will be followed.

There will be some changes to the routine that students are accustomed to and these have been set out by Mr Gritton in his correspondence sent to all parents/guardians. Students have also been sent an email and requested to show this to parents/guardians.

We ask that you support the school in implementing these plans by making sure students come prepared each day. We will no longer be able to share resources with students so it is essential students bring all equipment and resources they will need for their lessons. In addition, to reduce unnecessary contact outside the school bubble, students will not be allowed to leave the school site at lunch time.

The government is due to finalise schools reopening on August 11th and so there is a possibility that plans may change. Mr Gritton will update parents/guardians after this date when more information is available.

We encourage all members of the school community to regularly check their emails and ask students to do the same. All updates will also be posted on our website.

**Goodbye and Hello**

It is with a heavy heart that the sixth form team says goodbye to Mrs Vause as she embarks on semi-retirement. Although she will still be teaching some lessons she will no longer be a sixth form tutor. Mrs Vause has been a central and instrumental part of our school community for over 30 years, and will be a huge loss to the sixth form team.

As a teacher and form tutor she has been an inspiration, able to balance nurturing our young people while still knowing when to give students the kick up the bum that is sometimes needed to keep them on track. Her investment in their personal well-being and academic success is a testament to the wonderful teacher and person she is.

For many staff, Mrs Vause is the wise owl that we go to for advice and who we look to for support in challenging times. She has been a constant anchor in our most fraught moments and she will be sorely missed.

Mrs Vause, thank you for everything you have done for our students and staff. Enjoy your semi-retirement, you deserve it!

While we say goodbye to Mrs Vause, we would also like to welcome Mrs Morris to the team. We are excited to have her on board and know that she will bring and wealth of energy and experience.
Our New Student Leadership Team

Over the last few weeks students have been submitting applications for the student leadership team. The quality of these was outstanding and a real credit to those who applied. After two rounds of interviews we are delighted to announce the new leadership team for 2020/2021. Congratulations to all of them.

Head Girl – Rebecca Phelan
Head Boy – Joshua Prosser
Deputy Head Girl – Orla Lobb
Deputy Head Boy – Ben Kendell
Year group leaders - Olivia Cuomo and Declan Webster
Catholic Ethos Leaders - Renju George and Catherine Joao
Charity Leaders - Lewis Cox and Gloreena Raju
Wellbeing Lead - Mollie Smyth
Pastoral Lead - Isobel Moore
Year Group Links - Abisha Sritharan, Ithisham Mehmood, Harun Yusuf and Ellie Wood

The Old Guard

With our new student leadership team raring to go, we couldn’t end the year without a nod to the leadership team of 2019/2020. You have worked tirelessly to ensure sixth form students have a voice and have eloquently and doggedly advocated on their behalf. While the work you put into the Leavers Prom didn’t quite manifest, there were many successes along the way. We might have taken a little persuading but are sure most students would say the addition of a microwave to the common room was a big win!

From the entire sixth form team, and on behalf of the students you represented, thank you.

Final Words from Them ....

As we all know, the year didn’t end how we all planned but that doesn’t mean our success and hard work are not recognised. Year 13, our two years of sixth form have definitely not been easy but it’s safe to say that it has been memorable, although there were obstacles, there were many times of laughter and joy. From being banned from study rooms to being the first year of having a designated seating plan in Elmwood, we are definitely a year group to remember. Nationwide, we are the first year to not even sit exams and to be honest, I think that sums up our year group as a whole. In these uncertain times, it is important to remember our ‘Why’s?’ During our time in sixth form, Mrs Robinson and Miss Difusco asked us why we started the journey to our goals, we all had very different answers but every single one had the same level of importance, so never forget why you started and what you want your future to look like. Carry your ‘Why’ into the next chapter of life, whether that be university, an apprenticeship, a gap year or a full time job- never lose sight of what you want to achieve. Speaking of new chapters, it’s scary to think that for most of us, we will not be returning to Saint Benedict’s but that doesn’t mean the support from the teachers will be gone. These opportunities are a time to open doors and start new adventures, it’s a time to truly find ourselves and discover the people we want to be, so say yes to every chance you are given. Do not live with excuses and let there be no regrets.
Remember at the start of year 12 and we all thought three subjects would be a breeze compared to doing G + GCSE’s but we soon realised that was not the case. Sixth form is a place full of personal and academic challenges but you do become one big family, ready to support and look after each other. Year 12’s as daunting as you think sounds, you will all achieve so many great things as you all work so hard, please go easy on the teachers, they do mean well. Year 11, you are soon to be year 12’s, you have probably heard from the older years that sixth form is a big jump from GCSE’s and it is but if you strive to do your best, you will all accomplish great things. Whatever you do, do not underestimate the work load you are given, it will catch up on you! All year 13’s have said this to year 12’s and all year 12’s have said this to year 11’s and no one seems to listen but please “revise content as soon you learn it” and with that said we wish you all the best for the future and for many blessings to come.

Mrs Vause, where do we start. 31 years you have worked at this school and what a time it has been. You have seen many different students who you have seen become young adults as to which we are the last and what an impact you have had on us, whether it was a friendly conversation or a boring biology lesson. You have always been there for us, for which we are so grateful for. In your years of teaching, you have helped many students reach their goals and aspirations from becoming doctors to teachers, you have guided them on their path. Thank you for everything you have done for us, we only wish we could be there to say goodbye to you in person but we genuinely hope you enjoy this new chapter and that this isn’t our final goodbye.

To our wonderful form tutors, for the last two years we have been a pain in the backside but that still hasn’t stopped the constant support and care you give. You have done more than we could have asked in the two years that we have been under your care and we cannot thank you enough for how much you go above and beyond and we only hope that we have made you proud and become the people you wish to see in charge of the future. To say you have impacted us, is an understatement, you have set us up for the world in a way only you guys could and for that reason we know we can achieve many great things. Not only have you taught us knowledge for exams but you have taught us so much outside of the classroom which has moulded us into the adults we are becoming. Thank you so much for everything and we really wish we could say goodbye in person but this is the best we can do and we hope to see you all soon!

To our dynamic duo that is Nat and Kat AKA Mrs Robinson and Miss Difusco, these two years have probably caused you more trouble and torment than you had expected however, we know you wouldn’t have it any other way. Thank you for being true inspirations and never giving up on us even when we gave you every reason to. Your dedication and determination to see us succeed will never be forgotten and we will use this example in the future to get us through the difficult times we may face. Thank you for never giving up and always having your door open for us, we hope to see you soon and to make you as proud as we are for having you as the best heads of sixth form ever.

With all this being said, we wish everyone reading this right now, the very best for the future and to prosper in everything they do.

Yours sincerely, Head Girl and Head Boy- Bernisha and Noah.