

Links Journal

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are at the end of another successful academic year at Links Academy. This year has flown by. We have had many highlights throughout the year which the students should be proud of themselves. Please enjoy reading about the events in this Summer Journal edition.

At the end of this academic year, we bid farewell to some staff; Mr Fuller, Mrs Malpas, Mr Loader, Miss Gray, Ms Douglas, Mr Mallett and Mrs Thomas-Phillips. We would like to thank them all for their hard work, support and dedication to Links Academy and the students during their time with us. We wish them all well for the future and in their next adventure.

I would personally like to thank you for all your continued support and wish you all a restful and, hopefully, a warm summer break.

Charlotte Brown
Charlotte Brown
Head of School

Year 11 GCSE Results Day

Thursday 22 August 2024

School will be open for Year 11 Leavers to collect their exam results from **10 am to 12 noon**. If you are unable to collect your results on this day please email admin@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk

Summer

School Calendar

Term Ends

Friday 19 July 2024

@ 12.30 pm

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Autumn Term

INSET DAYS

Monday 2 September 2024

No Students in school

Tuesday 3 September 2024

No Students in school

Student Parent Review Day

Wednesday

4 September 2024

Form Tutors will arrange convenient time to meet with Parents & Students

Term Starts

Thursday 5 September 2024

Links Academy welcomes comments from parents/carers and families about any aspect of school life.

Please contact us via our email admin@linksacademy.herts.sch.uk

www.linksacademy.herts.sch.uk to view Ofsted reports, key dates, journals and school information

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

The theme of this term seems to have been 'questions and answers'.

It started with a session for Marlborough Science College's VIth Form, '*Answering Questions You Were Too Afraid to Ask*', where students anonymously asked numerous health-related questions, including UK drug laws, drink-driving limits, purity of substances, and how to help a friend or family member who is using drugs or alcohol.



The question box method worked effectively and the students enjoyed this informal approach to health education. They posed some tough questions!



Being glad of any opportunity to break out the '*Alcohol Goggles*', it was a pleasure to work again with the Year 9 at Bishop's Stortford College for a session on '*Alcohol & Vaping*'.

Students love the opportunity to take part in practical exercises with the goggles, which impair vision and make judging distances deceptively difficult.

Then it was onto The Highfield School (Letchworth), to teach the 6th Form about '*Vaping & Drug Awareness*'. As vaping is a relatively new technology, there are always plenty of questions from concerned students – and staff!



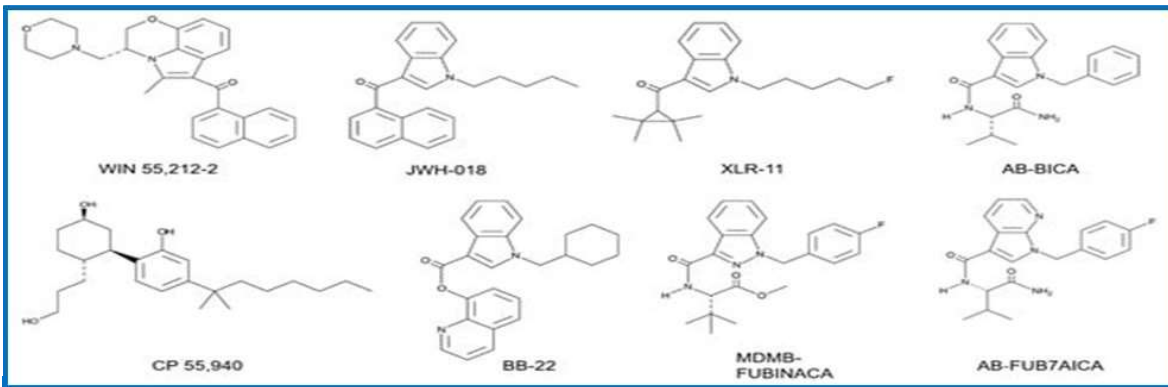
'SPICE' – Synthetic cannabis

We started the term with an assembly about the potential harms of trying '*Spice*' – a man-made, chemical compound which fools our brains into thinking it is cannabis. There have been numerous student questions about it, (prompting our assembly), and it is frequently in the news, on social media and mentioned anecdotally in the local community.

'SPICEOPHRENIA' symptoms:

- Anxiety/panic attacks.
- Delusions/paranoia/psychosis.
- Disorganized thought/confusion.
- Hallucinations.
- Depression/suicidal thoughts.





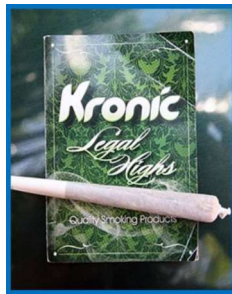
Any idea what these chemicals are?
Or what effect they might have on humans?
Nope. Us neither.

We do know that 'Spice' is causing havoc across some major UK cities and within many of our prisons.

Because there are numerous ways in which it is smuggled into jails, detection is an incredibly challenging issue.

An estimated 1 in 8 prisoners is using *Spice*, and it has been linked to **62** prisoner deaths over a six-year period, making this chemical cocktail the deadliest illicit substance in jails today.

To help students understand the dangers of this drug, a wide range of information has been made available on the Hall notice board.



YOU are the lab rat!



Take-away messages for students:

- Don't trust the packaging! It might not contain what you think
- This is only about money. There is zero concern for the end user
- Nobody knows what these chemicals might do to us

Mr R Boxer, Healthy Lifestyles Lead

Links Outreach Manager Fiona Haynes and Higher level Outreach Worker Tracy Backhouse attended the last Pastoral Hub of this Academic year hosted by Townsend school.

We were greeted by sunshine, (yes sunshine in June!) and a sausage sizzle.

Pastoral Teams from the thirteen secondary schools across St Albans and Harpenden were invited to attend the Pastoral Hub meeting where they were greeted by a number of agencies and organisations holding stalls bearing their goodies, knowledge sharing and offering specialist support to Pastoral school staff.



Street Kicks



Street Kicks aim to provide inclusive environments for all children to celebrate themselves and each other through music and movement. The foundation of everything that Street Kicks offers is that music and movement can support our emotional health, and they help children and young people to understand how to use it as a strategy when navigating their way through life.

Friends of SADA

Friends of Survivors of Domestic Abuse (SADA) helps to ensure the sustainability of the SADA service, to continue empowering survivors to rebuild lives with hope. The Friends of SADA (FoSADA) charity was established to ensure the sustainability of the SADA (Survivors Against Domestic Abuse) service. The charity raises funds for continued service provision, as well as raising awareness of Domestic Abuse and our service profile.

The Haven

The Haven is committed to supporting young people and helping them to build their mental resilience. Haven works in partnership with local churches and community groups to provide safe spaces for young people (aged 12-18) struggling with problematic anxiety.



Lives Not Knives



Lives not Knives are a team and represent an innovative, award winning, youth-led charity that works to prevent knife crime, serious youth violence and school exclusions by engaging, educating and empowering disadvantaged young people and supporting them to enjoy their lives and improve their future prospects.

Step

Step's vision is for a lively, relevant and consistent witness to Christian truth and standards to be established and maintained in all the secondary schools in St Albans and Harpenden.

iMatter is a phrase Step has coined and has become one of their core values; I am loved, I am created, I am connected, I am eternal and I am responsible - whilst also bringing a wide variety of activities that help to improve self-esteem.



Youth Talk

Youth Talk provide free, confidential counselling to 13–25-year-olds in St Albans and the surrounding areas.



Their Vision - Every young person can talk to someone who can help with whatever's worrying them.

Their Mission - To provide the best possible mental health support to young people in St Albans and surrounding areas.

DSPL7

DSPL7 is a Hertfordshire-wide partnership approach where parents, carers, staff in early years settings and schools, further education colleges, local authority officers and representatives from other agencies, work together as part of an Area Group to ensure that there is a range of provision and support services available in their local community.



Delivering Special Provision Locally

HCC Services for Young people

HCC Services for Young people provide youth work, information, advice, guidance, work related learning, outdoor education and wider support for young people. The majority of its work is with those aged 13 to 19 and up to 24 for young people with learning disabilities and care experienced young people.



The event was well attended by professionals from St Albans and Harpenden schools. The event provided interesting and exciting content and the atmosphere was positively buzzing.

Cedars

The Summer term at Cedars has been an exciting one. Although we have to say 'goodbye' to four of our wonderful students, we are so proud of the progress they have all made and wish them all a successful return to their mainstream schools. We also look forward to welcoming four new fantastic children to our class in September. Throughout the term, we have had plenty of time to enjoy the sunshine, soaking up the sun with the occasional ice lolly treat. Although we have welcomed the summer sun, our children have also been working exceptionally hard in all areas of their learning.

Throughout the week, children engage in a range of different lessons, completing lessons in the core subjects of Maths and English and engaging in a more practical topic lesson at the end of the day including: Gardening, PE, Art and Food Tech. We also incorporate time for sensory input, phonics, Epic Reading, Maths games and of course some motivational activities. We have also tried to incorporate a range of activities that target and improve the children's fine motor skills. In addition, the children are enjoying having added responsibilities through completing a weekly job. The jobs have included setting up the placemats at the dining room table, cutting the fruit for snack time, handing out books and setting up the morning soft start activity for the next day.

Our timetable this term can be seen below:

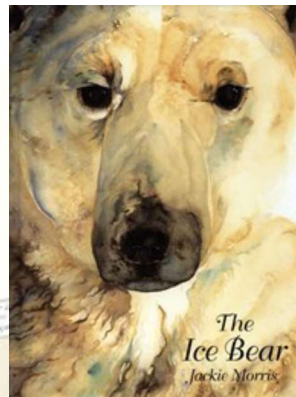
 welcome	 Washing hands	 Soft Start	 English	 Choosing
 Body Time	 Brain Break	 Phonics	 Break Time	 Snack time
 Epic Reading	 123 Maths	 Choosing	 Body Time	 Break Time
 Lunchtime	 Maths Games	 Topic	 Golden Time	 Home time



English

Each term, our English lessons are based around a book. This exposes children to a range of different texts and authors and focuses our writing around a theme. During the first half of the term, our lessons were based around three texts: Ruby Finds a Worry, The Day the Crayons Quit and The Tin Forest. These texts provided a cross curricular link with PSHE and allowed children to develop strategies to deal with various anxieties they might face and strategise and develop problem solving skills.

During the second part of the term, lessons focused around Jackie Morris's *The Ice Bear*. Once again, children engaged eagerly and offered their thoughts and perspectives around the text with insight. Children conducted their own research on Polar Bears and produced incredibly written tasks producing texts such as letters of advice, diary entries and a non-chronological report on Polar Bears.



Maths

In Maths, we use a range of resources to support our learning. We teach concrete, abstract, pictorial Maths ensuring that concepts are first taught through concrete resources such as unifix cubes or base ten before showing a concept through pictorial representation and finally applying the concept in the abstract through calculations. We have also been practising to recognise fact families and number patterns in order to help us solve equations. Throughout the term, we have covered various topics, including multiplication, division, formal written methods for addition and subtraction, time and fractions. We have also enjoyed applying these mathematical concepts to real life situations in order to deepen our understanding.



Cedars

Topic

Throughout the term, children have engaged in various topic lessons. These lessons aim to be practical in nature in order to encourage enjoyment for learning and to provide children with certain life skills that can be implemented outside of the classroom. Throughout these lessons, children participate in class discussions, relating the topic being discussed to many of their personal experiences, sharing stories and facts openly and confidently. Activities that have been covered include baking cupcakes and food art in Food Tech and growing and planting our own pumpkin seeds during gardening.



During Design and Technology, children tried their hand at designing, creating and grouting their very own mosaics, producing fantastic mosaic photo frames. Children were given wooden frames and a backboard which they needed to construct together using wood glue and patience. Thereafter, children choose their colour scheme and design, choosing their tiles accordingly. Thereafter, they showed their patience and determination by placing their tiles along the wooden frames to create their mosaics. Children learnt to grout, finishing off their frames and showing great pride in their creations.



On Friday afternoons, children were allowed a 30 minute film treat as part of their Golden Time. This provided children with a prosocial experience and the opportunity to engage in a class activity to harness and build positive relationships amongst the class. During this time, children were treated to a cosy bean bag and some tasty popcorn.

Extra Curricular Activities

With so much learning taking place, we have also managed to squeeze in a range of fun activities. Throughout the term, children have received weekly football sessions from St Albans City Football coaches. These sessions have taught children a range of skills including teamwork, turn taking, perseverance and of course gross motor skills.

Cedars

We have seen improvement in various aspects and are proud of the engagement the children have demonstrated. Children have enjoyed being outdoors and having the time to run off their energy in a constructive and directed manner.

We also took a trip to our local Library where children were able to choose a book of interest and enjoyed reading independently and listening to an adult reading a story aloud.



We celebrated the fantastic attendance of the children with a visit from our Attendance Officer who congratulated the children on their fantastic attendance for the term. Children received a certificate and special sticker to acknowledge their success.

Children ended the term with a visit to Pizza Express, St Albans. We were accompanied by five of the secondary children who supported and encouraged our younger ones and formed very positive relationships. During the visit, children learnt the importance of cooking basics including how to stay safe in the kitchen.

A Pizzaiolo (pizza chef) taught the children how to make the famous Italian classic, the Margherita. Everyone got the opportunity to make their very own pizzas that they cooked in the giant pizza oven. They also participated in an ingredients quiz where children got to taste an array of different and unusual pizza toppings. At the end of the visit, they all received a Junior Pizzaiolo Certificate which they were very proud of. Once the workshop had been completed, we took our pizzas to the local park to enjoy our pizzas and have some time to enjoy the outdoors with some time playing in the park.



We have had an incredible term filled with learning, fun and laughter and of course our bacon roll Fridays! We wish everyone a relaxing summer break and look forward to another exciting term ahead.

Mental Health Week

The team at Woollam took part in Wear It Green Day to support Mental Health Week in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation. This year's theme is **Movement**.

Since 2001, the Mental Health Foundation has been leading Mental Health Awareness Week - bringing together the UK to focus on getting good mental health. Each May, millions of people from every part of society take part. They include people in schools and further education; private, public and charity sectors; families and individuals.

About the Mental Health Foundation

- Our vision is for good mental health for all
- The Mental Health Foundation works to prevent mental health problems
- We drive change towards a mentally healthy society for all and support communities, families and individuals to lead mentally healthy lives with a particular focus on those at greatest risk
- Mental Health Foundation is committed to promoting an anti-racist, inclusive community where we can all be ourselves
- The Mental Health Foundation relies on voluntary donations to provide evidence-based advice and carry out vital work to prevent poor mental health

Boost your Mental Health by Moving More

One of the most important things we can do to help protect our mental health is regular movement. Our bodies and our minds are connected. Looking after ourselves physically also helps us prevent problems with our mental health.

Movement is a great way to enhance our wellbeing. Even a short burst of 10 minutes' brisk walking can boost our mood and increase our mental alertness and energy. Movement helps us feel better about our bodies and improve self-esteem. It can also help reduce stress and anxiety and help us to sleep better.



Mental Health Week

Find Moments for Movement Every Day

Life gets busy and it can feel like we don't have time to spend on activities to improve our wellbeing. But, finding moments for movement throughout the day might be easier than you think.

How often do you find yourself 'waiting' throughout the day? Waiting for the kettle to boil; for your children to come out of school; for a bus to arrive; or for a delivery. These moments can add up. If you use the time to get moving, that will add up too. You could march on the spot, do some stretches, or try some chair exercises.

Give it a go! You'll be surprised how much time you can fill with movement.

Take a Break from Sitting

Many of us are sitting for long periods during the day: working at desks, driving, sitting down to browse the internet or scroll through social media, watching our favourite television show or reading a book.

Research shows that it's unhealthy to be sitting or not moving for long. If you are sitting for large periods of time throughout the day, set a timer to take regular breaks to stand up, walk around and stretch your body.

Find the fun

However, you choose to get moving, the best option is usually the one we enjoy the most.

Do you remember the joy and excitement when the school bell rang for break time? We couldn't wait to get outside to run around and play.



As we get older, we sometimes forget that movement can be fun! Instead of thinking of exercise as a chore, embrace your inner child and find the joy in movement. Fun and laughter alongside movement will increase your motivation and the psychological benefits.



Hygiene Bank

Everyone Deserves to Feel Clean

Following the last Pastoral Hub, the Outreach Team have joined up with the Hygiene Bank to provide all our families with everyday hygiene and personal grooming products.

At The Hygiene Bank, they believe it is not right that feeling clean should be a luxury or a privilege for anyone in our society, yet many are living in poverty and cannot afford to stay clean. That is why their network of projects exists – to give people access to the basics they need.

The Hygiene Bank are a grassroots, people-powered charity and social movement, grounded in community.

Their passion stems from the injustice that people may be unable to fully participate in society due to hygiene poverty. This is why they work to inspire social change.

What is Hygiene Poverty?

Many people locked in poverty or those who find themselves in times of crisis often experience restricted options. This leaves them caught between being able to heat their home, pay their rent, buy food or keep clean. Hygiene poverty can be shaming, humiliating and excluding and can result in social isolation. It can lead to a lack of confidence and can negatively affect good health and mental well-being which can impact early childhood development, learning, employability and social interaction.



Hygiene Bank

It is struggling to wash your hair because you can't afford shampoo.

It is not being able to purchase deodorant because money is needed for the electric card.

It is not being able to replace a toothbrush when needed or sharing a toothbrush because one each just isn't an option.

It is being unable to change your baby's nappy as often as is needed and scraping out the contents before reapplying it.

It is washing hair, bodies, faces and clothes in the same cheap washing up liquid used for the dishes.

It is being housebound because you can't afford period protection or have to improvise with rolled up loo roll and socks.

It is having to choose between shaving foam and razors or the transport fare to a job interview.

It is going to school with matted hair because there is only one hairbrush in the household and there's no time for everyone to get a chance to use it.

It is not being able to launder clothes, school uniform and muddy sports kit when needed.

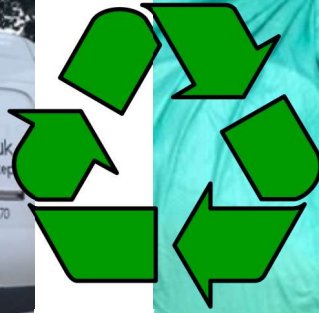
It is being 'judged' for living in an unclean home, because you can't afford the cost of household cleaning products.

We will continue to work with the Hygiene Bank to support our students and their families - basic hygiene is not a privilege, it's not right that anyone should experience hygiene poverty. Everyone deserves to be able to care for themselves and their families. We know access to hygiene products is key to anyone's health and wellbeing.



The Little Recyclers

Thank you to all the staff who brought in their unwanted clothes. They were collected by reDONATE and any proceeds will go to the Maypole Charity and the purchasing of two wormeries for the school supporting our Eco-School Bid.



GCSE Exams

Well done to all Year 11 for your attendance during the GCSE examinations.

Your efforts are to be applauded!

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on **results day Thursday 22 August between 10am – 12pm.**



Year 11 Leavers Celebrations



I would like to say a big thank you to all staff, students and parents/carers for such a wonderful event. The weather was on our side and it was lovely to see so many people turning out to celebrate the successes of the Year 11 and their time with us at Links Academy.

Well deserved.

Please do not forget us — you know where we are. We are always interested in what you are up to and your future achievements.

Year 11 Leavers Celebrations



School is Cool – Attendance Rewards at Cedars PSB.

As we come to the end of yet another school term, it was time to celebrate some fantastic attendance to school for our students at Cedars.



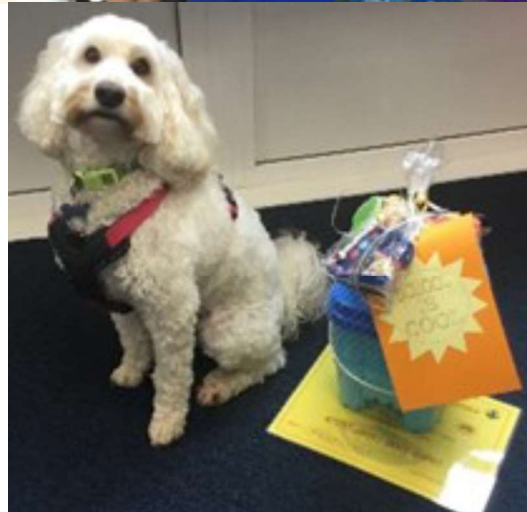
Out of the 53 school days since returning from Easter, Logan and Charles had achieved an amazing 52 days (98%), closely followed by Nayan with 51 days (96%), then Chloe 48 days (91%), Emily 47 days (89%) and Billy Sam 39 days (74%) all making a great effort in coming to school every day.



Mrs Porritt and Mrs McGleish handed out well earned '**School is Cool**' prizes and certificates to all the Cedars students in recognition of their amazing attendance and resilience in attending school over the past term.

A special guest appearance was made by Daisy, who also wanted to congratulate her Cedars friends on how smart they were for coming to school.

Mrs S Porritt, Trust Attendance Officer



Addressing Student Absences – New Legislation

As student attendance to schools is continuing to recover post pandemic, a new National Framework for Penalty Notices for school absence, including unauthorised holiday absence, is being introduced following changes to the law and will come into effect in all schools (including Links Academy) from 19th August 2024.

What are the changes?

1. A new threshold of **10 unauthorised sessions** (previously 15 sessions) for any reason (equivalent to **5 school days**) within a rolling 10 school week period for when a penalty notice must be considered.
2. You will **no longer** be able to take your child out of school for **one week's holiday without a penalty notice being issued**.
3. The penalty fine is increasing **from £60 to £80 if paid in 21 days**. If the fine is not paid by the first 21 days, it will rise to **£160 if paid within 28 days** of being issued.
4. Should a second penalty fine be issued to the same parent for the same child within a **3-year rolling period**, the fine will automatically rise to £160 with no option to pay the lower rate of £80. Should your child move school during this 3-year period, the previous school action will still apply.
5. If there is a third offence in a 3-year rolling period, the Local Authority will need to consider other enforcement options available to them.

What is considered an unauthorised absence?

Please be aware that the penalty notice does not just apply to an unauthorised absence from school for a holiday taken in school term time.

Unauthorised absence includes other absence from school that has not been agreed such as, **truancy, refusal, arriving late after the register has closed and failing to provide valid reasons for absences**.

The **10 sessions (5 school days)** can be a combination of these absences and can be consecutive or non-consecutive.

Why am I being penalised?

The law entitles your child to an efficient, age appropriate education and suitable to any special need they may have and it the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education.

Where a parent(s) decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.

What should I do if I am worried about my child's attendance?

This can be scary news, particularly for all the parents reading this, who find trying to get their child to school a challenging, unpleasant, traumatic event at the start of each school day.

In recent weeks, I have spoken to a number of parents who for a variety of reasons endure a daily battle with their child with the hope that the promises and bargains made to get them into school will pay off, sometimes they work, and sometimes they won't.

Now a potential further drain on household incomes to pay penalty notices for their child's refusal to go to school is probably not a welcome one.

As a school, working collaboratively in partnership with families, treating the root causes of absence, removing barriers to attendance and signposting families to support, is our preferred option.

A 6-week summer holiday break from school offers a temporary reprieve from the daily battle, but can just delay the inevitable when September looms closer.

If this sounds familiar, don't wait until September when school starts again, feel free to access the below resources which may be helpful to re-establish routines a week or two before the new academic year begins.

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/Local-Offer/Media-library/Documents/Emotionally-Based-School-Avoidance-Parent-guidance-PDF-642kb.pdf>

<https://nessieined.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/EBSA-toolkit-booklet-Edited-ET.pdf>

<https://thesandbox.mindler.co.uk>

[Families First \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/families-first)

If you have any further concerns, please speak to your child's form tutor at their Student Performance Review Day in September.

Coming Soon...

New weekly voucher draw for *100% attendance* in school!

Mrs S Porritt, Trust Attendance Officer

TRIPS

Fun in the forest

During the summer term, Miss B and I had the pleasure of taking a small group of students each week to Hudnall Park to engage in the 'Go Wild' programme facilitated by Services for Young People.

These sessions have provided great opportunities for the students to connect with the beauty of nature; to see, smell, touch and listen to the sounds that are lost within the hustle and bustle of cityscapes.

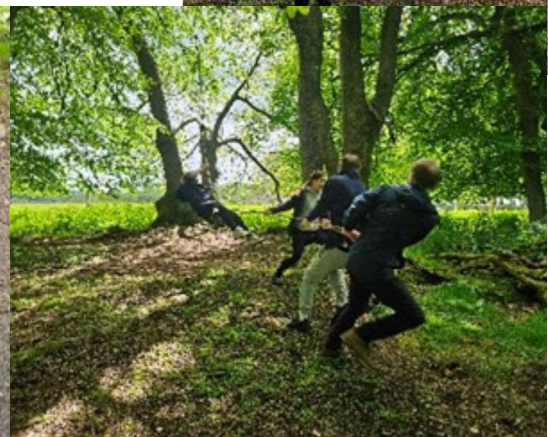
It was nice to see the students laughing and smiling together and engaging in activities that can't be offered in the class such as: learning how to make/start camp fires, constructing hammocks, building dens to hide from the weather and tracking/searching for the local wildlife of the forest.

The students thoroughly enjoyed the rewards of their labour, with hotdogs and roasted marshmallows on the campfire

These experiences provided fantastic opportunities for the students to develop the key character traits of Links, **respect** for one another and their environment, taking **responsibility** in preserving the natural space and building on their **resilience** by persevering in activities

Seeing how much benefit these sessions provided our students, we hope we can continue expanding on the opportunities we provide the young people we work with and provide more opportunities such as this!

Mr T Holgate—Lead Inclusion Teacher



TRIPS

Henry Moore Art Trip

On the 8th May some of our staff and students were fortunate to be able to experience the works of Henry Moore by visiting his home, studios and sculpture garden in Hertfordshire.

We were allocated a Tour guide who was able to help us navigate the sculptures and surroundings and provide an awe-inspiring portfolio of Henry Moore's life and works.

The staff and students were shown Mr Moore's home and work spaces. We soon learnt that his primary workspace was known as the 'Top' studio which distinguished it from those he later developed around his estate. It was in that very studio that Moore made his maquettes; small models for developing his sculptures.

The Gardens were beautiful and provided an opportunity to see the connection that Moore made between his sculpture and the landscape. Our guide informed us that the Gardens had been created by Moore over many years as they had once been just a sea of rough farmland. He has now around 20 sculptures in his garden at any one time. Our students enjoyed exploring the space and were keen to talk about and decide what 'subject' each sculpture related to. Moore was inspired by the human body and natural forms and often made work on the subjects of mother and child, the reclining figure and external/internal forms. The students have been able to utilise and apply the skills and knowledge learnt on the trip back at school during Art lessons.

One student shared that: 'the tour guide was a lovely man and I actually enjoyed the trip!' He initially had reservations about attending but he was very glad he did.

A thoroughly enjoyable day was had by all.

If you have some time during the holidays a trip to the gardens would definitely be recommend.



Miss G Nash, SEN Coordinator

TRIPS

Climbing & Badminton

Hertfordshire Sports Village in Hatfield was a great venue to allow our KS3 and year 10 students an opportunity to play both badminton and try out a climbing wall. Overall this trip was a great success with most students engaging in the activities. Watching students take on the daunting task of the climbing wall under the supervision and support of David was a great experience.

Some students traversed the wall with ease, whereas others had to dig deep and muster all of their resilience to have a go. It was a pleasure to listen to the students supporting each other with empathy and understanding for those that found it most challenging. The students also had the opportunity to play badminton alongside staff. This turned out to be quite competitive with Mrs Trotman staying keenly engaging throughout.



Heartwood Forest

On the 10th of May we took our students to Heartwood Forest. This is an area that was farm land and has been reclaimed as a natural forest to maintain biodiversity. The students enthusiastically decided to lead the way and created our route. Although it was lovely weather, the extremely muddy tracks left us practising our balancing skills - this also brought out the kindness of our students as they helped a mother with her buggy across a muddy path.



TRIPS

Oaklands Zoo

On the 16th of May we took our students to Oaklands Zoo. Who would have known that we had such a collection of fascinating exotic animals right here on our door step?

The hairless guinea pigs had Mrs Trotman staring for far too long. With all the exciting animals, giant spiders and huge snakes it was the goats that captured the student's interest the most. The trip also gave the students the opportunity to see what the college, their possible destination when they eventually leave Links, would be like. They really enjoyed the afternoon and are eager to return.



St Albans Museum



On the 6th June we took the students to St. Albans Museum to learn about the history of St. Albans.

We went down into the holding cells where the students were shocked to hear that the prisoners were all held in one room while they awaited trial. The prisoners ranged from children arrested for stealing apples to murderers. We then went upstairs to the ball room where the history of Samuel Ryder was on display showing his homes, shops and businesses that eventually led to the world famous Ryder Cup Golf competition.

Orbital Jump Trampoline Park

On the 10th of June we took the students to Orbital Trampoline Park. They really enjoyed this trip especially since Mr Broadbridge was determined to be the undefeated gladiator on the pugil sticks event.

The students started off coy at the beginning but soon gained confidence and were jumping off the highest podium. All sweaty but happy we left to enjoy an ice-cream!!



Breaking News

Student achieves award!

This year we have forged a partnership with Watford Football Club via the Premier League Inspires Campaign (<https://www.premierleague.com/footballandcommunity/community/premier-league-inspires>).

Students have been using sessions with the outreach team to do their Junior Sports Leadership Award and general Coaching Level 1 Award. Bruno in Year 11 successfully completed the course and so impressed the Watford coaches that they put him forward for a Jack Petchey Award (<https://www.jackpetcheyfoundation.org.uk/>).

As a result, Bruno has been awarded £300. It is hoped that he can use this to achieve his Level 1 Football coaching award and that they may facilitate him supporting the outreach work done by Watford. What a fantastic effort – well done, Bruno. We hope to be able to keep this association going into next year and for more students to emulate Bruno's achievements.

The Place to Bee

Exciting news at Links Academy as we have adopted our first swarm of bees. Huge thanks to Mr Allen who went all the way to Andover to collect our superb Buckfast Bees in May half term. The Buckfast bees are famously friendly and easy to handle.

Mr Buckland became Mr Allen's willing apprentice as they transferred the bees to their new home – a hive behind the staff room. Mr Allen reports that the bees have settled in well and are making a home of the new hive. So successful has the initiative been that we are considering adopting a second swarm. We have also redoubled our efforts to plant bee friendly plants and fruit trees near the hive to help them settle in.

Although the delicious prospect of some Links Academy honey is a little way off yet (possibly next year) we are hoping to get some wider participation from our students in helping to care for our bees and bring about a successful 'honey harvest' in the future. Photo of Mr Allen, Mr Buckland and Mrs Heagren inspecting our bees – happy to report the Queen was present and correct and honey was collecting in the 'supers'.



Beauty Taster Morning

On our Hixberry site, we had Ms Elliott from Oaklands College come and deliver some Beauty taster sessions for our Hatfield and St Albans learners.

Learners first identified the areas of beauty they had interest in and then did taster sessions with Manicures and Make-up application.

All learners enjoyed their sessions and identified the correct way to maintain their nails when filing and applying polish.



Beauty Taster Morning



Duke of Edinburgh Expedition

This term our year 11 students have completed both their practice and assessment Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) expedition. The practice took place in The Chiltern Hills on 24th-26th April and the assessment took place in The Peak District on 24th-26th June. All students did extremely well and should be proud of themselves. This year's DofE group were our first ever Silver Expedition and due to the success, it'll continue on.

The two expeditions had very different weather, in April it was very cold getting below minus compared to the heatwave of 28 degrees. All the students showed real resilience, responsibility and determination throughout both trips, and because of their polite, respectful manners and behaviour, we were invited back to each campsite.

In April, we walked from the WW1 training trenches in Berkhamsted to Ivinghoe on day one. Day two, we walked to Tring and on the third and final day walked to Ashridge Estate. The assessment expedition took the students to The Peak District where they walked along Dovedale and across the stepping stones, day two they walked to Thor's Cave and on to the campsite. Finally, they had a long walk to the pick-up point.



Duke of Edinburgh Expedition



Vote Links

Following the announcement of the General Election, we seized an excellent opportunity to encourage our students to engage in political discourse and learn about the importance of exercising our right to vote. The *VOTE LINKS!* election was born. Our 4 volunteer candidates each had to represent their **OWN** fictional party – producing poster campaigns, a mini manifesto, and whatever tactics they wished to employ. Then, the campaigns were launched, the voters were wooed and, had there been babies present, they would have been kissed.



NOTICE OF POLL
 04/07/2024 8.30am 2pm
 DATE OF ELECTION TIME OF POLLING
 Links Academy School Hall
 LOCATION OF POLLING STATION

CANDIDATES

NAME	PARTY
Mr R Boxer	"Let's Have A"
Mr J Buckland	"Edam is Criminally Underrated"
Mr M Fuller	"Careers for You"
Miss G Nash	"All About the People"

DO NOT REMOVE - ISSUED BY THE ELECTION RETURNING OFFICER

Notifying the electorate.

Election of the Member of Parliament for the Links Academy Constituency
 Vote for only one candidate by putting a cross, in the box next to your choice.

BOXER, Mr R	
The "Let's Have A" Party	
BUCKLAND, Mr J	
The "Edam is Criminally Underrated" Party (ECUP)	
FULLER, Mr F	
The "Careers for You" Party	
NASH, Miss G.	
The "All About the People" Party	

LINKS Ballot paper.

Dirty tricks?

Campaigning lasted a fortnight and the competitive spirit of the staff rapidly emerged. This political rivalry and gamesmanship escalated, as posters were defaced or covered over; photo-shopped taunts were made; and 'edible incentives' were offered (let's not call them 'bribes').

There were subliminal messages, empty promises, free stickers, and even a Campaign Manager appointed!

Whether students viewed these as 'hidden talents' or 'dark arts', the tactics employed were worthy of a governmental spin doctor.

Immature tactics.

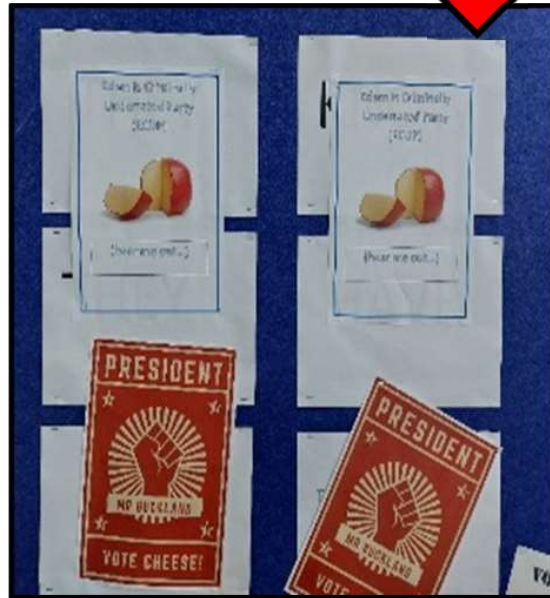


Vote Links



Mr Fuller raised an important point: Always read the small print!

A 'cheesy' campaign from Mr Buckland...



At the end of the week, the students and staff voted for their favourite candidate/ party, based upon their campaigns and manifestos – not personalities, (such as they are).

Our wonderful electoral officials, Miss Malpas and Miss Porritt, conducted their tasks with the rigour and gravitas befitting such important posts:

- * They issued reminders that every voter needed to provide proof of identification – students were asked to show their green cards, and staff their personal ID.
- * They talked the students through the process of voting and how to mark their ballot papers.
- * They presided over the ballot box, ensuring no tampering was allowed.
- * They counted the votes and (with a student's help), made a winners rosette and certificate.



The electoral officials protecting the ballot box.



Vote Links



The candidates present their manifestos.
Left to Right: Clap if you love Miss Nash / Hands up for Edam / Virtual insanity / Hands down the winner.



Student Maddy, keen to vote for her candidate as the Presiding Officer looks on.



Disproving the myth that 'A policeman's (bal)lot is not a happy one...' – PCSO Bunn votes.

Ultimately, it was a hard-fought competition, with only **1 vote** separating the top two candidates – demonstrating beautifully the importance of every single vote. It was more a 'narrow squeak' than a 'super-majority', but a win is a win!

Following the announcement by the Returning Officer, there was a brief inauguration ceremony, where all the candidates were thanked and applauded for their efforts, and Mrs Brown awarded the winner their spoils.

Vote Links

Capitalising on a captive audience, there was a follow-up assembly to emphasize the importance of the democratic process and identify how politics affects every aspect of our lives.

Examples were shared, such as how school rules are made, age-restrictions are imposed, and laws are enforced.

Guidance procedures were on view, to make the experience as realistic as possible.



Students and staff 'eagerly' await the results...

Now is a particularly apt time to speak to our children about democracy – not just in terms of world events, but in view of potential changes to voting in our own country.

The prospect of lowering the voting age to 16yrs is on the horizon, (which may or may not happen), but we are pre-empting the possibility and encouraging our students to make informed choices when they hit the magic age.

A week is a long time in politics, so our fortnight must have felt like a lifetime! But, hopefully the students have come away from the event enthused, interested and excited at what's to come.



Mr. R Boxer, Healthy Lifestyles Lead (and now President for Life)

Summer Break Activities

The six weeks can seem a very long period at times, so we have put together some activities and signposting information that you can access.



Sport in Herts offer a range of free activities for all ages ranging from arts and crafts to sports clubs.

<https://sportinherts.org.uk/happy-activity-camps>



Place 2Be offer a range of advice and information for support during the holidays.

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/parents-and-carers/tips-and-support-for-the-holidays/>



<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Young Minds offer a range of advice and support for young people and parents/carers who may need to talk.

Please enjoy the holidays and encourage your young people to stay safe and look after each other.

Miss G Nash, SEN Coordinator