



ISLEWORTH &  
SYON SCHOOL  
FINIS CORONAT OPUS

# YEAR IN REVIEW 2020-21





# Welcome from the Head

Welcome to our brief Review of 2020-21. This school year was, along with every school in the country, impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, hence this rather short review. However, we still endeavoured to provide the very best opportunities for our students, despite lockdowns, remote learning and the various control measures being in place on site. The publication records some of the notable events and stories from the academic year.

Our boys out-perform boys locally and nationally. At GCSE level, all indicators are significantly above the performance of boys nationally, a pattern that has been the case for many years. We do not have national data for 2020 and 2021 as students did not sit formal examinations, so recent comparisons are not possible. However, we remain confident that our boys continue to perform very well and, as importantly, are well-prepared for their next steps.

In the Sixth Form, our students also continue to excel. Again, despite not sitting formal examinations, our top-performing students have taken up places at some of the world's most prestigious universities, including Durham, Exeter, King's College London and Warwick.

We were delighted to open three new dining rooms, a refurbished kitchen, a Sixth Form Study Room and new drama and music suites, facilities that will all enhance the student experience at school. The £1 million project was delivered to a very high standard and completed work that was three years in the planning.

I do hope that you enjoy reading about some of the activities, ventures and opportunities from the school year. Our hope for the 2021-22 school year is that we will see a return to normal or at least near normal; that we can be on site without interruption for the school year; and that we can provide our usual full range of additional extra-curricular activities for our students.

*e Ferguson*

Euan Ferguson

I am grateful to Michael Kettle, former student and the school's Marketing & Communications Manager, for compiling this Review.



# Autumn Term



The Autumn Term began on 7 September as we welcomed a brand-new cohort of Year 7 students into school for an extended induction programme - designed to fully introduce them to life as an Isleworthian and their new surroundings. Although starting a new school can be intimidating, we always do our best to ensure that students feel safe and secure as they transition from primary school.

This September was particularly challenging as it marked 171 days since we had had a full school timetable in place - due to the COVID-19 pandemic. School was very different to usual, as we introduced many new protocols to ensure students and staff alike were COVID-safe.

These included a staggered school day (different start times for KS3 and KS4); each year group in their own "bubbles" in separate parts of the school site; and enhanced hand sanitisation regimes as part of students' daily routine.



We continued to post regular wellbeing resources from our partners at the mental health charity, Mind, and made sure that all students felt secure and safe in these unfamiliar environments. This would continue throughout the Autumn Term, even during the November national lockdown, during which we stayed open.

We were determined to carry on with school life as much as possible - which meant an adjustment to a new way of holding school events.

We have been holding Awards Evenings in the Autumn Term for over twenty years - inviting parents/carers to celebrate students' outstanding commitment to every aspect of school life. The COVID restrictions meant that these events - for both the KS3 (Years 7-9) and Senior (Years 10-13) events - were entirely online and pre-recorded. Although we missed celebrating in person, we knew it was of critical importance that these boys' dedication was acknowledged and rewarded. This tradition is a key component of life in school.

Moving to a "new normal" also meant continuing our commitment to community and charity work. One example is our Remembrance Commemorations - honouring those who have sacrificed their lives during war. Although we could not hold our in-person assemblies, students took part in tutor activities to get them thinking about what remembrance really means, and we took some students to lay a wreath at the Borough Road memorial.

For charity, we continued our recent tradition of taking part in Christmas Jumper Day, where we raised £400 for the Save the Children charity - helping those in need both at home and abroad.

We were also delighted that our caterers CucinA were able to put on a full Christmas lunch for the students, which was a much-needed slice of normality in the term.

At Christmas, the performing arts department always put on a spectacular Christmas Concert to finish out the term. Although the event took place virtually, it was no less successful! We showcased singing from all students in Years 7 and 8 and drama from Years 7 to 9. Everyone agreed that this event was another wonderful showcase for the talent in school! The department also hosted several virtual theatre trips across the term, including live screenings of 'Romantics Anonymous' (Bristol Old Vic) and 'A Christmas Carol' (The Old Vic).



We know that our drama department has an excellent track record of producing students who go on to a career in the arts. One such example is the actor, Taheen Modak (pictured above). He left us at the end of Year 13 for drama school and has quickly made a name for himself as a star of stage and screen. This year, he appeared in series 2 of ITV police drama 'The Bay', taking on a difficult role with consummate ease. We are delighted to follow Taheen's professional career - he is clearly going from strength to strength! Another student with a bright future is Head Girl Alina Gangotra, who placed second in a national photography competition in December. Her keen eye for composition marks her out as a great talent - well done Alina for this brilliant achievement.

# Spring Term

As the COVID-19 situation worsened, Prime Minister Boris Johnson took the decision that schools would not open to the majority of students after Christmas. Instead, we moved back to remote learning. Due to our exceptional IT provision, all the systems for learning online were already in place within school, so students could continue following the usual structure of the school day and keep to their usual timetables. Pictured above top right, you can see Mr Mullins demonstrating for students learning at home.



We quickly identified students who did not have sufficient IT capability at home and provided them with laptops so nobody would miss out. The only exception to this was students identified as vulnerable, plus children of key workers. Systems were put in place to allow those students to be targeted and then invited into school to continue with their learning.

As with March 2020, it was impressive how quickly school staff were able to adapt to these changes, all with a singular goal - to make sure that no child was left behind.

Throughout the closure of January and February, we continued our outstanding extra-curricular offer, giving students virtual opportunities. These included:

- An excellence performance in the Urban Debate League - via Zoom!
- Gifted & Talented virtual visit to Somerville College, Oxford - to get a taster of life at an elite university.
- Continued participation in the Old Vic Schools Club - run by the famous London theatre and providing free theatre workshops and access to live-streamed performances.
- A virtual talk by two members of NHS staff for interested students, covering what a career in the NHS is like - especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A virtual careers fair, where students in Years 9-13 could explore a variety of potential pathways and careers.

As we moved into March, the decision was taken to bring students back into school. A new set of challenges presented itself, as the Sports Hall was transformed into a mass COVID-19 testing centre for all students with consent (pictured above top left).

We taught students how to administer the tests and were very impressed with how quickly and capably students dealt with this change. Home testing continued for the rest of the school year.

Throughout the next few months, the chief goal was to keep students on track with their progress. With this in mind, we hosted online Parents' Evenings for all year groups - online face-to-face meetings between teachers and families to reflect on how students were getting on. This was yet another example of the school using technology to seamlessly adapt what we do to achieve the best for our students.

From 16-19 March, we took part in important fundraising for the Comic Relief charity. There were activities for students to complete both in tutor time and at home, and also ran a JustGiving page for donations. Our target was £1,150 - equivalent to a £1 donation

from every student in the community. We were delighted to smash this target on our way to raising over £1,600! These donations will make a huge difference to so many lives.

At the end of the Spring Term, two teams (a Year 10 and a Year 11) took part in the Row the Thames challenge (pictured above bottom), meaning they had to row a 346km distance over five days. The one advantage, though, was that it took place on dry land! They had sessions before and after school, rowing in total for about 20 hours! With the music pumping, this was a real test of resilience for the boys.

The difficult challenge came to an end on Friday afternoon at about 6.00pm, with both teams finishing the challenge.

This really had become a test of mental toughness to get over the line, and we were so proud of our boys' commitment to the cause. Year 10 finished first, but Year 11 had the fastest overall combined time. Our boys came an impressive 14th (Year 11) and 15th (Year 10) out of the 180 teams from across the country. In the U18 category, this improves to a fantastic 4th and 5th. A magnificent effort, especially as most of the other competitors were rowing clubs.



# Summer Term



The Summer Term began with some sad news, as we learned of the death of our much-loved and highly-respected serving colleague, Ray O'Neill. (pictured above) Ray taught at the school for thirty-six years and left a lasting imprint on everyone who was taught by him. A digital book of condolence has been created for Ray which will be published during 2021-22 - so that everyone can read some lovely memories of Ray told by those who knew him best. We are thankful for his company and indebted to Ray for his selfless contribution.

During the term, we were delighted to hear about more success from former students - both in performing arts fields. Sophie Muringu earned a place in the National Youth Music Theatre (NYMT) - a prestigious organisation whose alums include Idris Elba, Sheridan Smith and Jude Law. Earning a place in the NYMT meant a co-starring role in their musical 'Billy the Kid' in August 2021 - a fantastic achievement! This will help continue her dream of a career in the music industry. We were also delighted to hear about the progress of Terrence Stevens, who left us at the end of Year 11. He got a spot in the National Youth Theatre (NYT), the most famous youth acting troupe in the world. Terrence is the thirteenth student in the last nine years to successfully join the NYT, with many going on to work in the West End. Well done, Terrence!

The slow return to normality in the Summer Term - with certain COVID restrictions being released - meant that some trips and events were able to resume. Bronze, Silver and Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions took place (pictured right) - check out their Twitter @IsleworthDofE to view some photos from their expeditions! Year 12 geography students were able to undertake some important fieldwork at the Docklands in London, while we hosted our annual cricket match against the MCC in June.



We were also thrilled to run our Track & Field Championships (pictured right) over the road at our track. This was a full programme of athletic events with all students in Years 7-10 invited to take part during the day. The standard was as high as always, and it was great to see students displaying house spirit to cheer on their compatriots during the competitions! In the last week of term, we also held our Virtual Summer Arts Festival, which unfortunately could not be held in person. However, the pre-recorded event was still a performance extravaganza, featuring music and drama of the highest calibre.



In the summer, we also revelled in some incredible success from students in extra-curricular activities. A group of Year 9s (pictured right with teacher Mr Elliston) took part in the Shell Bright Ideas Challenge, and their idea placed in the top 5 in the whole country - out of 700 schools! They won £4,500 to support STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education in school. Meanwhile, a group of Year 10s entered the Amazon Longitude Explorer Challenge, designing an innovative dementia app for their submission. They reached the national final of the competition and were highly commended.



Finally, Year 10 maths supremo Mikaeel Shah (pictured right) achieved a staggering 100% score in the Senior Maths Challenge - a competition designed for students in Years 12 and 13! He then achieved a distinction in the follow-up round to qualify for the British Mathematical Olympiad, Round 2. To put this into perspective, only 100 students in the whole country qualified. Well done to Mikaeel for an extraordinary achievement.



The success did not stop there! Two more former students reached new heights - both as professional footballers. First, Myles Peart-Harris' reward for an outstanding season with Chelsea's development squad was a professional contract with Brentford FC. A dynamic midfield player, Myles clearly has a bright future and we look forward to following his progress in seasons to come.

Another alumni continued his meteoric footballing rise during 2020-21. Reece James (pictured right) established himself as Chelsea's starting right back, making 32 appearances during the season (25 of them starts). He was instrumental in helping the team win the Champions League in May. This earned him a call-up to the England squad for the European Championships, where he started one game. Well done to Reece for his incredible progress - he still only 21 years old!



This booklet gives you just a snapshot of the school year - no doubt there are lots of other achievements and successes that we do not have room for here. 2020-21 was another difficult year in education, with COVID-19 restrictions causing untold problems.

However, our core commitments remained unwavering - to offer:

- the best academic experience
- the best opportunities beyond the classroom; and
- outstanding pastoral care to allow students to be the best that they can be.

Everything we do focuses on one goal - getting the very best out of our boys.

That's the Isleworth & Syon way.

And we are committed to it every single day.





## **Isleworth & Syon School**

Ridgeway Road, Isleworth  
Middlesex, TW7 5LJ

T: 020 8568 5791 • F: 020 8568 1939  
[school@isleworthsyon.org](mailto:school@isleworthsyon.org)  
 [www.isleworthsyon.org](http://www.isleworthsyon.org)  
  /IsleworthSyon

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