



ISLEWORTH &
SYON SCHOOL
FINIS CORONAT OPUS

ANNUAL REVIEW 2019-20





Welcome from the Head

The academic year will be remembered for the COVID-19 pandemic which spread at an alarming rate across the world. This new virus brought changes to the normal way of life and devastation to families, including members of the school community, who lost loved ones. In school, the most alarming feature of the pandemic was the uncertainty and worry that it brought to us as well as the lost opportunities for our students.

The year had started in the usual manner, and some of the highlights of normal life at Isleworth & Syon School are recorded in this truncated Annual Review. We first started hearing about the new virus early in the Spring Term. My first letter to parents/carers was issued on 26 February and asked all members of the community to focus on cleanliness and to follow any national guidance. This 'contain and delay' phase of the pandemic, however, did not last long and by mid-March it was apparent that our decision to close the school, a few hours ahead of the announcement by the Prime Minister, was indeed the only sensible option. It was really at this point that our lives changed dramatically as the virus spread across the country.

You can read about some of the action that we undertook to support our students (and indeed staff) in the accounts ahead. I want to pay tribute to the staff of the school in how they so magnificently maintained education provision for all of our students throughout this challenging time. At times when most people were 'socially distancing' or maybe even 'self-isolating', many of our staff were in school supporting our most vulnerable students or those children of key workers whose parents/carers were needed at work. Other staff were working from home ensuring that lessons continued to take place throughout the remainder of the school year. I will always be grateful for all of their efforts and unstinting dedication to the education of our children.

I am equally proud of the manner in which our governors and senior staff focused on ensuring that decisions were made in the best interests of our school community, even at times when government guidance seemed rather unclear. Whilst there is no doubt that the pandemic was a great challenge for all, we can be rightly pleased that we managed to get the majority of our decisions correct with the result that the negative impact on our students was at least minimised.

Finally, a word about our fantastic students. Lockdown was an incredibly difficult time for us all and some people coped with it better than others. However, when we opened school again, albeit in a very limited way towards the end of the school year, our students returned demonstrating their own commitment to education, their gratitude to the staff, and showed quite clearly an appreciation of the difficulties of the previous two terms. I remain grateful to them for their maturity and good sense at this time.

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 Wednesday 4 September 2019, as we welcomed our new group of Year 7s for their introduction to life as an Isleworthian. Their journey through the Isleworth & Syon Way continues through their time in the school, as they become Learners, Scholars and then Academics during their time with us.

A week later, we held our Senior Awards Evening, showcasing students at the other end of the school (Years 10-13) and celebrating their achievements during the previous academic year. We were delighted to present a number of prizes and trophies to reflect all aspects of school life, including academic, pastoral, citizenship, progress, sport, and overall contribution to school. The final award - and the most prestigious - was the Headmaster's Trophy, presented to Daniel Ashton. Although the award is usually presented to a Year 13 student, Daniel was given it two years early as a reward for a young man who exemplifies all of our values. Read the live-tweets from this event over on [Twitter](#).

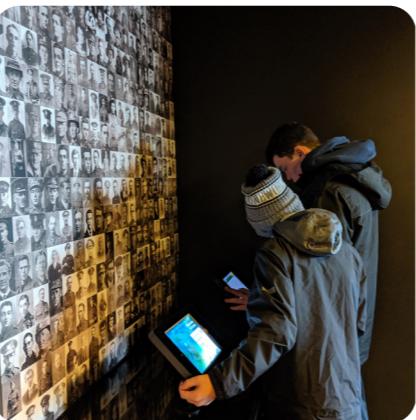


In October, we were delighted with the success of former student Reece James, who made his professional football debut for Chelsea in an EFL Cup game against Grimsby. It was an incredible start, as he scored an outstanding goal and assisted two more. He would go on to make 37 appearances over the course of the season, cementing himself as first-choice right-back ahead of club captain César Azpilicueta. A meteoric rise for a talented young man!

October was an excellent month for opportunities, giving our students the chance to go beyond the curriculum to enrich their learning. Sixth Form students took part in a conference at Gumley House Convent School, debating whether under-18s should be allowed the vote - a topic that was close to their hearts and led to some brilliant interventions, especially from Shyloh McIntyre. Year 12 also went to 'Safe Drive, Stay Alive' at the local Questor's Theatre - an event focusing on the harsh realities of unsafe driving. Students heard from eye-witnesses from the emergency services and those directly affected by accidents, and it was a sobering morning emphasising the importance of being safe.



For our Year 7s, the PGL excursion took place from 8-11 October, and over 100 students stayed at the PGL centre in Liddington, Wiltshire. Students were lucky to take part in a number of outdoor activities including climbing, archery, zip-lining and much more. It was a great opportunity for the boys to enrich their mental and physical health by being physically active and experiencing nature! It was also a fantastic peer bonding activity, and all the boys were extremely complimentary afterwards. Check out some photos from the event via [Twitter](#).



Another important event in the school calendar is the November Year 9 trip to the Ypres battlefields in Belgium - one of the main sites in World War II. This trip allows students to build on their classroom studies of the Holocaust by witnessing some key sites in person. Oliver Hone (Year 9) wrote a [great piece](#) about his experience on the website; we'd also recommend checking out the [tweets](#) from the trip. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these 30 boys, who were a credit to the school throughout. Back in school, we continued our tradition of remembrance commemoration on Armistice Day, taking part in a [number of events](#) to mark those who gave their lives across all world wars.

There were a number of other trips and events during the Autumn Term, showcasing how our breadth of opportunities makes us the best for boys. These included:

- The National Theatre set up in the Sports Hall for a special performance of their West End play, 'A Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time' - including question and answer session for Year 9 at the end.



- Year 10 and Year 12 Physical Education students visited the 'Body World' exhibition in London to apply their learning of the human body to "real" examples.
- The Army STEM team came into school to run a Science Challenge for Year 9 students - encouraging the boys to apply maths and science principles to creative thinking.
- The English team invited Seth Burkett - former professional footballer turned ghostwriter - into school to talk to Year 10 about how best to structure autobiographical stories.
- Selected Gifted & Talented students took part in a Climate Change conference at Hounslow's Civic Centre.



During the Autumn Term, we also launched a brand-new series of events called 'I&S Inspires'. Featuring a different motivational speaker in the first week of each month, I&S Inspires is designed to peel back the curtain behind some of the top career pathways, offering our students unique opportunities to hear a range of different voices. In the Autumn Term, we had two speakers - [BBC journalist Gabriel Gatehouse](#) and [civil engineer Ed McCann](#). These events were extremely well-attended and gave a fascinating insight into very different careers.



In school, sport is a key feature. We are still the only local state school that runs a full Saturday morning programme of sport, and our specialist teaching team offer expertise in a range of sports. Training sessions cater for different ability levels with the primary focus of encouraging a love of sport at all ages. However, we are also fiercely competitive and have a strong record of success! In the Autumn Term, we were delighted to see our first XV Rugby Team win the Middlesex Plate in November with a victory over Wetherby Senior School; [read the full report](#) on the website. It did not stop there, though - both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 teams won the National Schools borough badminton tournament in November. Remarkably, this was the twelfth year in a row that we have been the best in borough at both age ranges - a testament to the coaching skill from Miss George and the students' hard work in training. Read more about the victories [online](#).

Isleworth & Syon School is renowned as an outstanding place for the performing arts. We are firm believers that the arts are a brilliant way to enrich students' wellbeing and do everything we can to nurture these passions. We have an outstanding teaching team who are experts in their field, and this always manifests itself through our two showpiece events at the end of the Autumn Term. First up was the school production, a full-scale theatrical production taking place on our stage across two nights in December. This year, we performed David Holman's adaptation of 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens. It was one of our biggest shows ever, with over 50 boys plus students from The Green School for Girls taking roles on stage, backstage, or as part of the technical team. With full lighting rig and music compositions from beneath the stage, it truly felt like an experience - do read [the full report](#) for more.



The term ended where it started, as Year 7 had their [Induction Assembly](#). Each student became an "Inductee" and took their first step along the Isleworth & Syon Way. They were all given a medal to reflect their current level of progress, and it was lovely to see many students wear their medals for the rest of the day. Parents/carers were invited to the event, and it was brilliant to share in the achievements of this talented group. Students went off for the Christmas break feeling fantastic about their first term, and excited about what would come next.



Spring Term



Trips and events continued apace at the beginning of 2020. We were delighted once again to take part in a number of exciting [drama events](#). The first was the Old Vic Schools Club, a unique opportunity which gave students unrivalled access to one of the top West End theatres (see below). We also partnered with another renowned London theatre, the Donmar Warehouse, for an interesting workshop.



As Christmas passed and January began, students returned to school for the start of the Spring Term. We were thrilled to publish some great news at the start of term - our fundraising totals from two important charity appeals. The first was Children in Need, where the house team set up various staff versus students events in school, including table tennis and debating. This raised an outstanding £633.32. At Christmas time, we had taken part in the annual Christmas Jumper Day to raise money for the Save the Children charity. There were some very creative jumpers worn, and we raised £330.97. A fantastic effort from our school community!

Following on from their successful debate against the staff for Children in Need, the Debating Club continued to go from strength to strength at the start of the Spring Term. In February, they took part in round 1 of the Urban Debate League. The very young team - made up of four Year 7 students (pictured below) - showed excellent promise in their first-ever competitive debates! During 2019-20, we also started our very first Aspiring Journalist Club, run by Mr Jackson and Mr Jones. The aim of the club was to teach some tricks of the trade to our budding journalists, and the club was extremely popular. We hope to run it again in some form during 2020-21.



At the start of March, we ran a series of activities for National Careers Week, including Sixth Form students visiting the National Apprenticeship Show and three former students visiting school to discuss their careers in construction (for McCarthy & Stone) and aviation (British Airways). Our thanks to Behdad Shabani, Bahador Eskandari and Joe Butler for giving up their time to speak to our students - it was certainly an eye-opening experience for many of the boys, who perhaps had not considered careers in those industries.



Another former student who continued his rise through his chosen profession was actor Taheen Modak (pictured above), who left us at the end of Year 13 with a dream of pursuing a career in acting. Taheen's story is an excellent one. At Key Stage 3 level, he showed no real interest in drama, but the work of the teaching staff sparked a passion inside him which led him to a place at Bristol Old Vic drama school in 2015. After graduating three years later, he quickly made a name for himself, earning starring roles on stage - at The Old Vic theatre - and television. The latter role, as D.C. Ahmed 'Med' Karim in ITV drama 'The Bay' (March 2019), received rave reviews. In 2019-20, he starred in Sky Atlantic comedy-drama 'Two Weeks to Live', alongside 'Game of Thrones' actress Maisie Williams and 'Fleabag' star Sian Clifford. We can't wait to see what Taheen does next!

It was not just our former students, though, who were experiencing success - we were thrilled during the Spring Term to learn of several amazing achievements by current Isleworthians. In February, Year 13's Ryan Peries received his first international football call-up, and he was very proud to represent Sri Lanka. It was a fitting triumph for a student who has been a fixture of our football teams over the years. Later in the term, we [congratulated Albert Campling](#) for his performance in the Poetry by Heart competition, where he became a national finalist for his outstanding recitals.



In February, we launched two overseas trips. First was the annual Ski Trip, which was as popular as ever. Students spent six nights in Worgl, Austria and had an incredible time. The trip catered for all ability levels, from experienced skiers all the way to those who had never even seen a pair of skis before - with qualified instructors putting the boys through their paces and ensuring that safety was paramount. In the evenings, students enjoyed a range of activities, including a Tyrolean evening, quiz night and bowling competition. We really do recommend checking out the updates from [Twitter](#).

Also in February, we arranged another French Exchange excursion for students in Years 9-12. This activity continued our partnership with the French school Lycée Xavier Marmier, as students visited the town of Pontarlier in the Jura region of France. Students had lots of opportunities to practise their language with the host students, and it was a brilliant way to find out more about French culture - and enjoy a snowball fight (pictured below)! Again, [check out Twitter](#) for more.



On Wednesday 18 March, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that all schools would close for most students from the following day as a result of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic that was sweeping not just the country but the whole world. This confirmed a decision that we had taken earlier that same day.

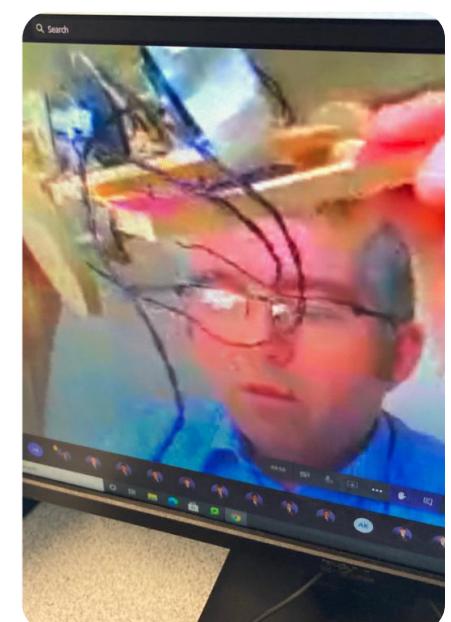
The only students permitted to attend school were the children of key workers, as well as certain "vulnerable" students. To the best of our knowledge, this was the first time that the school had been forced to close its doors in its entire history, including during the Second World War.

However, we knew that closing school was the only way to keep our school community safe.

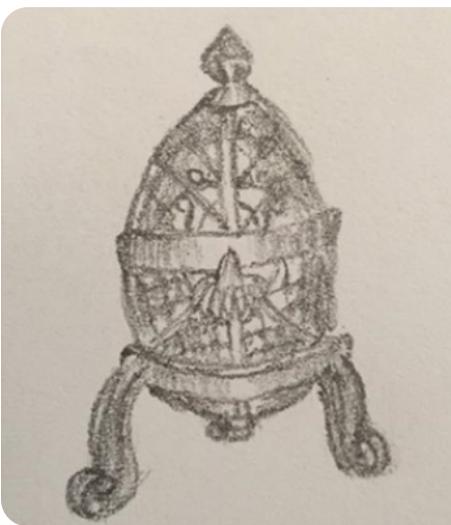
We had to move very quickly to Remote Learning for almost all students. The school's IT provision has been nothing short of exceptional for a number of years, meaning that many of the systems for learning online were already in place within school.

All student work was distributed through our PARS system, with students and parents/carers able to follow it all through the INSIGHT app and the Parent Portal. Lessons followed the usual structure of the school day, with students keeping to their timetables. Pictured above is Mr Elliston leading a remote DT lesson.

Although this was not an easy step for anyone to take, we were very impressed with how students adjusted to the changes. School staff supported students at home by heading out in the school minibuses to deliver laptops and IT devices, stationery and even dropping off musical instruments to allow for additional practice sessions. This school closure would end up lasting for the rest of the school year, meaning that all examinations for Years 11 and 13 were cancelled.



Summer Term



After the Easter break, the school shutdown continued. We wanted to do our bit to help during the crisis, so we were involved in a project to provide supplies for the manufacture of PPE (personal protective equipment) as well as 250 pairs of safety goggles. All of this went straight to doctors dealing with the virus on the frontline. Students continued their adjustment to a whole new way of working, and we published a 'Student Showcase' on the website to reward those boys going above and beyond with their Remote Learning. We also published a swathe of useful resources, in partnership with our friends at mental health charity Mind, to aid our community with their wellbeing. These online booklets, posters and help sheets gave a range of helpful tips for both parents/carers and students - you can view them [on the website](#).

Everything going online meant many changes to the day-to-day routine of school life. However, it was important that there was regular contact between school and home. Every week, the school staff made a thousand telephone calls so that every student received a personal contact - to check in and monitor how students were coping with any challenges that had arisen. The House Team ran a series of lockdown challenges to inspire the students - one great example promoted positivity, asking students what and who they were proud of during the lockdown. Student response to this was fantastic! Meanwhile, Careers Leader Mr Adams organised an engaging and fascinating virtual careers talk with local community partners EcoWorld, focusing on the construction industry.



We were thrilled to hear of more student successes during the Summer Term. We learned that Year 9 students Harry Doherty and Aryan Sarna were accepted into the National Youth Theatre (NYT), the most prestigious youth acting in the programme in the UK, which calls Daniel Craig, David Oyelowo and Dame Helen Mirren amongst its graduates. This means the school has sent 12 students to the NYT (and its sister programme, the National Youth Music Theatre) in the last eight years. Raphaël Wreford (8Tu) reached the final of the BAFTA Young Game Designers Awards, while Albert Campling received a special commendation in the national finals of Poetry By Heart. Finally, well done to Year 13 student Alec Brundle (pictured below), who earned a rugby scholarship at Siena College in New York, USA. He will also read chemistry. What a fantastic opportunity for a young man who has been a staple of our rugby teams throughout his time in school.



In May, we received notification of two awards which signalled how hard we work with our students. First, we were nominated for membership of Music Mark, a prestigious prize which reflects a commitment to high-quality music education. Our thanks to the Hounslow Music Service for the nomination - they are a local partner who have been a key part of our extra-curricular provision via music instrument lessons for years! We also received an award from the schools, students and teacher network SSAT, showcasing the exceptional progress in the Sixth Form during 2019 in applied general subjects. We continue to put great thought and care into our vocational offer, so that we can provide a high-quality education for all students.



A few weeks later, it was time to say goodbye and good luck to our departing Year 13 students, the vast majority of whom had spent the last seven years at Isleworth & Syon. As you can imagine, there was much to reflect upon at the end of the most unusual year they had ever had, and Mr West did a great job during the virtual assembly of encouraging students to consider what had brought them to this point. Student representatives, including Head Boy Aadi Mudhar, gave good speeches with some of their favourite memories from their time in school, and it was a lovely send-off. We wish students well.

Even though examinations were cancelled, school staff made sure that affected students carried on working hard. For Year 11, this meant a focus on the transition to their next steps; for Year 13, it meant a series of activities to prepare them for university, apprenticeships, or the world of work.

In July, we still held our two results days but in a socially-distanced way (pictured above), with students only permitted on-site during their designated timeslot. In the lead-up, there was some confusion regarding exactly how grades would be awarded; it was ultimately decided that students would receive grades based on teacher assessments. We were proud to have conducted a very robust and fair teaching assessment process, so that students would receive a grade befitting both their abilities and their commitment to their studies. We had some brilliant success stories, so we recommend reading the [Year 11](#) and [Year 13](#) articles for more.

As the Summer Term came to an end, we were delighted to receive approval for our £725,000 facilities improvement bid. This work will greatly improve the drama, music and dining facilities at school; it is scheduled to be completed in the second quarter of 2021.

The term ended on 17 July 2020, and it is certainly true to say that this was the most turbulent and difficult year in living memory. Students and staff were tested more than ever before, but we are proud that our school community rose to the challenge and maintained a strong partnership between home and school.

The key aim of Isleworth & Syon School is to be the best for boys - offering 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.





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