



Principal's UPDATE

4th March 2024



Dear Parents and Carers,

As this latest edition of the AGS Principal's Update shows, life at AGS continues to be as broad and exciting as ever and I would like to particularly thank this week, all staff who continue to give so freely of their time to offer experiences beyond the classroom. This week our focus is on Literacy. I would like to draw your particular attention to Mrs Tingle's advice on pages 4 and 5 of this publication, which suggests how you as parents and carers can help promote reading at home.

Linked to broader personal development, you may have seen in the news recently that the Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan, has been promoting new government guidance to prohibit mobile phone use during the school day. From after Easter, we intend to update the AGS mobile device policy - we will adopt an approach which we hope is a pragmatic one. Students will be allowed to bring mobile devices to school, but once inside the outer school gates, they will have to be switched off immediately and then only used in lessons when allowed by a teacher. Students in Years 7-II will therefore not have phone access before school, at break, or at lunchtime. Students in years 12 and 13 will be allowed to use devices in the sixth-form Studio and study areas. Please do look out for further communication from me on GroupCall, containing full details of the new policy - which we hope will encourage even more students to engage with the broad range of extra and supercurricular activities on offer. Students will be informed of the change in rules via assemblies in the coming weeks.

Finally, as Spring approaches, can I also take the opportunity to remind pupils in Years 7-II that black tailored shorts can now be worn as an alternative to trousers/skirts for the summer term. Shorts must be of a 'tailored' fit. They must not have 'combat/cargo' style external pockets. They must be of the same material and colour (black) as the regular school trousers and like the skirt, knee-length.

Best wishes,

Ms Rachel Thorpe
Principal, Alcester Grammar School

This Fortnight at AGS

Youth Speaks: A Debate Competition

We took 3 teams to this year's 'Youth Speaks: A Debate' local heat which took place on the evening of 7th February.

We joined KES, St. Benedicts, Stratford and Alcester Academy at the Grieg hall, along with Alcester & Bidford Rotary Club and a team of expert judges! There were 12 teams in total across the 2 age categories each of whom delivered highly thought provoking and inspiring debates. Our three teams debated the topics below:

- Intermediates: Belle, Maisey and Megan - Violent media should be restricted
- Intermediates: Isobel, Anna and Eden - Artefacts in the British Museum should be returned to their country of origin
- Seniors: Annabelle, Caitlin and Amelie - The arts should be given greater priority in education

The standard was incredibly high and the judges spent much time deliberating. All three of our teams delivered absolutely brilliant performances and received high praise from the judging panel with Anna Begg (Y8) and Caitlin (Y10) being awarded the Intermediate and Senior titles for 'Outstanding Speaker.' On this occasion, we were unsuccessful in progressing to the next round of the competition but the students were truly sensational and we felt so proud for them to be representing AGS with such exemplary public speaking!



This Fortnight at AGS

GCSE Scripted Exam

Year 11 Drama students have been working tirelessly to perfect a complex range of performances for their GCSE scripted exam over the course of the year and this culminated in some exceptional performances this week. Students have dedicated an exceptional amount of extra time to developing these performances and this is no mean feat in a term with so much in regards to assessment and examinations well done all of you.

Ms Swan & Mrs Spencer



Reading at home - A parent's guide

Research tells us that one of the biggest predictors of high academic achievement is a student who reads widely and for pleasure. As parents, therefore, the most impactful support you can offer is taking the time to support your child's reading.

As your child moves into secondary school, reading can be seen by them more as work than fun, and teenagers may stop reading for pleasure or stop reading at all. Here is some advice to support your teenager through these years:

- **Talk about vocabulary and the meanings of words.** Pick up on challenging words you come across or use during family conversation or activities. Model looking up meanings of words. Try to work out together what words mean in context: by looking at the surrounding words, by connecting to the topic, the place (eg is it a cafe menu or news article?), the writer.
- **Model reading at home,** where your teenager can see you. Engage in conversation about reading - this may not always be met with enthusiasm, so don't push for information - but you can express your own interest and enjoyment and talk about what you are reading. Always take a book with you when you go to the beach or waiting in a long queue. Demonstrate to your teenager that reading is a pleasure and not a chore.
- **Young Adult (YA) novels** tackle the edgy issues teenagers struggle with, from romantic longing to peer pressure to grief and trouble at home or school. Teenagers will gravitate toward relatable subject matter whether they are personally grappling with these issues.
- **Merge movies with books.** Hollywood is turning to teen literature for ideas more than ever. Offer your teenager the print version to read before or after a big film comes out and discuss with them the similarities and the differences between the two. Which was better? The book or movie? Why?
- **Graphic novels,** once dismissed as comic books, are now recognised as literature. These books may be the key to getting some teenagers hooked on books and are available in a wide range of genres, from adventure and fantasy to historical fiction, memoir, and biography, so certainly, there is a graphic novel out there to suit your teenager's taste.
- **Encourage your teenager with appropriate adult-level books.** Find non-fiction titles on subjects your teen is curious about, such as climate change, race, political corruption, or true crime. Check adult non-fiction bestseller lists to see what is going viral.
- **Try some poetry.** Novels in verse and performance poetry are an increasingly popular trend. Poems are easy to read as they have all that white space on the page. The spare and lyrical approach to poetry can pack a punch.
- **Let your teenager get an audiobook** to listen to on the way to school or on long drives. They can download audiobooks to their smartphones to not risk looking uncool because they will be under headphones or have their earbuds in.
- **Keep reading material around.** Children who grow up with heaps of books around them tend to read more. Fill the bathroom, car, dining table (wherever there is a captive audience) with comic books, graphic novels, and magazines geared to their interests. There is nothing wrong with "micro-reading."
- **Hand your teenager a gift card** to your local or online bookshop. They may discover the treasure-hunt fun of looking for a brilliant book
- **Keep the big picture in mind.** For all sorts of reasons, some teenagers go through periods without showing much interest in reading. Don't panic! Time, and a few tips from this brochure, may help rekindle their interest.

Reading at home - A parent's guide

READING LISTS:

You can start with our [AGS Reading Challenge](#) - all Y7 & Y8 students have been introduced to this through their Life lessons on a Friday morning. Here you will find recommended reading lists to cover every interest.

You might also like to look at the recommendations below. Please be mindful that books recommended for older age groups may contain content unsuitable for younger readers.

<https://schoolreadinglist.co.uk/category/secondary-ks3-ks4-reading-lists/>



We do have a selection of fiction texts in the Do2 Library (available Monday and Thursday lunchtimes). You might like to look at membership of your [local library](#) and/or e-library as well. Interested in the research? You might like to read this article from the [National Literacy Trust](#).

Happy reading!

Helena Tingle



What's on?

Monday 4th March	Tuesday 5th March	Wednesday 6th March	Thursday 7th March	Friday 8th March
<p>Lunchtime author visit 12:50, Do2</p> <p>Alcester fantasy author Jamie Glenn Bring your questions and your thoughts about fantasy writing!</p> <p>Anyone welcome!</p> 	 <p>Lunchtime Live reading and open mic 12:50, En4 Competition winners and entrants are invited to read their work aloud. If you didn't enter but want to take part, come along anyway!</p> <p>Anyone welcome!</p>	<p>Creative Writing Club Special Edition 12:50, En1 Take part in exciting creative writing activities with sixth form students and teachers.</p> <p>Y7-Y9 students</p> 	 <p>Tutor time: World Book Day Quiz</p> <p>English lessons: Book Club: <i>Windrush Child</i>, by Benjamin Zephaniah A shared reading experience for everyone.</p> <p>Student Newspaper Special Edition 12:40, GG4 Anyone welcome!</p>	<p>Y9 Life session: careers in writing and publishing</p>  <p>The Big Book Quiz 12:40, English corridor</p> <p>Y10-Y13 students</p> <p>LitSoc Special Edition 12:50, Do2 Y12/13 students</p>

Year 9 Ski Trip - Masella, Spain

Half term really would not be the same without taking over 90 year 9s to ski trips. Staff and students thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The students had a wonderful 5 x 5 hours of ski lessons with some excellent instructors. The snow was man made but very skiable for the most part of the trip. The evening entertainments included bowling, pizza night, bum boarding, and the amazing house karaoke in which other schools in the hotel also participated.

With only 1 hospital visit and the majority of behaviour absolutely impeccable including clean quiet coaches we think the trip was highly successful 😊

Mrs O'Mahony



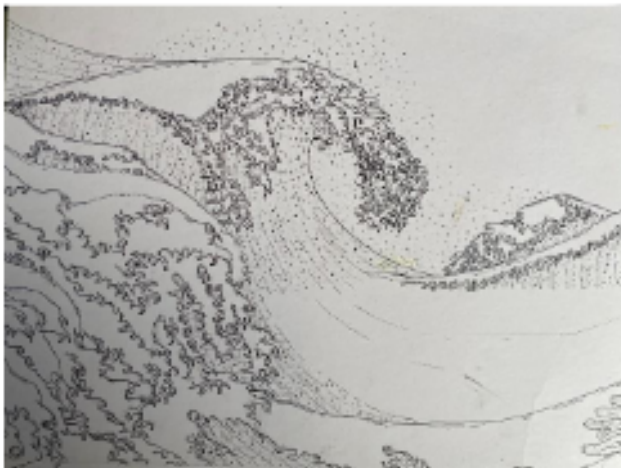
Art Update

Fantastic Year 7 have been creating self-portrait paintings using tonal contrast and complementary colours.



Art Update

Year 9 have just completed their first GCSE style Art project. The starting point 'Water' was taken in a number of directions to create a personal response, A3 size.



News and Notices



AGS Signs of Spring!

The Royal Society of Biology are running a nationwide Signs of Spring survey and the AGS Science department are getting involved!

The Signs of Spring survey encourages us to look out locally for the changing seasons. [Click here](#) to be taken to the Signs of Spring RSB page for more information and to submit your findings. Signs to look out for include bluebells, bumblebees and daffodils!

In school, there will be a Signs of Spring photoboard in the Science/Maths quad - we'd love to receive your pictures to celebrate the changing seasons - please email all photos to a.richardson@alcestergs.com, make sure to include your name and form.

Message from Ms Blud Jones

Please see message on SMHW with details on the Anthea Bell Young Translator's Competition and send any entries to Ms Blud Jones by Wednesday 20th March 2024.

Fair Education Alliance Youth Steering Group

Out of 80 applicants S Loosmore was one of 18 people successful in their application to join the Fair Education Alliance Youth Steering Group. On Saturday 24th February S attended a training day in London where they took part in networking workshops and creating content for social media. They also contributed to a new campaign about improving SEND education in schools. They will continue to attend monthly meetings about this.

Soon S will have the opportunity to go to Manchester for a free thinking assessment conference.

Well done for getting involved with such a worthwhile organisation and campaign S!



News and Notices

Charity Update

Thank you so much for your generosity on the 'non-uniform day' at the end of half term. A car full of food donations was taken to Redditch Food Bank and a further load to Coventry Food Bank. In addition £984.35 was raised in cash and sent to Redditch Food Bank. This will be invaluable in supporting local families who are struggling in the current financial climate.



Mrs Dolphin and Mrs Moss with volunteers at Redditch Food Bank

UKMT Intermediate Maths Challenge.

On Wednesday 31st January, 55 students in Years 9 - 11 took part in the UKMT Intermediate Maths Challenge. All students performed exceptionally well with 13 Gold Awards, 19 Silver Awards and 15 Bronze Awards achieved. Special mentions go to Sukhveer Singh and Anton Larsen in Year 9 who have qualified for the Cayley Olympiad. Additionally Jamie Hanna, Robert Magson, Jan Micheli, Ulysses Crawford, Lewis Webb, Max Wilkinson, Josh Williams, Daniel Garstang, Dawid Harasimowicz, Daniel Li, Bryn Patel Stephens, Sebastian Gogate and Lucas Long have all qualified for the follow on Kangaroo challenge.

Many congratulations to all students who took part!



News and Notices

Exams Update

Well done to our year 11's and year 13's for completing their last set of mocks before the summer exams.

Summer exam timetables are now available for years 11 to year 13 on your child's AGS portal. You should use this timetable as this is specific to your child.

JCQ have designated the afternoons of Thursday 6 June and Thursday 13 June and the morning and afternoon of Wednesday 26 June as contingency sessions for examinations. All pupils must be available on these dates so that if exams cannot take place due to widespread, sustained national or local disruption in the UK they can be rescheduled.

Pupils will need to know their candidate number. On the AGS portal this is exam no and can be found in the top right hand corner of the student's timetable.

[Here's](#) a link to all of the JCQ regulations.

Any queries please get in touch via exams@alcestergs.com

Mrs Silcox
Exams Officer

PTFA Update

The PTFA met on Wednesday 28th February - please click [here](#) to view the minutes.

The next meeting will be on Monday 11 March at 6.30pm. This will be a planning meeting for providing refreshments at school events.

Moving forward, we welcome members to support AGS Friends in any way they can and any level of help provided is hugely appreciated. Please join us if you can! You can contact AGS Friends by using this email address: ags-friends@alcestergs.com

