

Issue 1

October 2022

# DBSEH

HALF-TERMLY JOURNAL



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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Welcome to the first ever edition of our DBSEH Half-Termly Journal. Through this publication we aim to ensure you feel informed of our school priorities, understand the innovation taking place around them in school, and learn what this looks like for your child.

Student Wellbeing underpins all of our priorities this year and can be unpacked through the themes of *Student Agency*, *Opportunity*, *Inclusion*, and *Parental Engagement*. Take a look at the following pages to discover how we have delivered against these in school over the past seven weeks in the hope of providing our students with a strong and confident start to the academic year.

Those of you with a keen eye may have already spotted these key themes if you follow us on social media. If not, please check out our Instagram, Facebook and Twitter pages to see how we are focusing on these areas day to day at Dubai British School Emirates Hills.

Every half term you will hear from our different leaders to find out how the priorities manifest in different pockets of the school. I hope that you find this interesting and join us in celebrating our ongoing achievements. If there is something you would like to hear more about, please do get in touch to let us know.



Sarah Reynolds  
Principal



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Dubai British School



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# WELLBEING

Wellbeing remains the key priority at DBSEH this year and we are committed to ensuring that it is at the heart of all that we do.

We are excited to have launched the year by implementing the Positive Education Enhanced Curriculum across all year groups from FS1 to Year 13. Positive Education is an approach that blends academic learning with the development of character and wellbeing. Through weekly discrete lessons that focus on explicitly teaching life skills and the implicit reinforcement of key messages in lessons, assemblies and daily interactions we are intentionally designing and ensuring opportunities for our students to flourish not only while they are at school but also preparing them for a positive future.



The introduction of *'What Makes Me Special'* Day in FS and Primary, and *'What Makes Me Happy'* Day in Secondary have enabled students (and teachers) to share and gain an insight into others' interests and talents, celebrating diversity and inclusion; supporting the development of creating connections with others and ultimately providing platforms for everyone to shine!

*'My Day Friday'* in Foundation Stage continues again this year and ensures our youngest learners have opportunities to showcase their uniqueness by choosing their outfit for themselves once a week. By exercising the practice of low-stake decision-making in our youngest students, we aim to lay the foundations of positive identity that will continue to reap benefits as our students grow into young adults.



Georgia Lavery  
Head of Primary



# WELLBEING



These explored what commonly gets in the way of young people achieving their best and being their best, and strategies which can be used to overcome these obstacles. It explored the thinking traps which young people often fall into, common emotional regulation issues which hold them back from achieving what they are capable of, and practical mindfulness-based strategies which can be used to treat these mental health barriers.




A key element of our school's mission to promote student wellbeing is acknowledging the importance of mental health. We support the World Health Organisation's efforts to 'make mental health and wellbeing a global priority'. World Mental Health Day 2022 was marked with staff and students wearing green, as well as raising awareness and knowledge about mental health all week for our entire community; students, staff and parents. We were delighted to welcome The Free Spirit Collective who led research-based learning sessions for students across the secondary school.

In addition, parents attended a session exploring young people's mental health on global and local scales, including the impact of Covid-19, the challenges young people currently face, and the common mental health issues seen among adolescents. The discussions considered what parents can practically do at home to support a child and strengthen their mental health, and gave DBSEH parents a chance to ask a practising psychologist their questions about teenage mental health and any concerns.



Sheridan Teasel  
Deputy Head of Secondary

# STUDENT AGENCY



*'Student agency is defined as the capacity (of students) to set a goal, reflect and act responsibly to effect change. It is about acting rather than being acted upon; shaping rather than being shaped; and making responsible decisions and choices rather than accepting those determined by others.'*

OECD, 2019

# STUDENT AGENCY

Student agency is a vital concept permeating every area of education and it carries a plethora of practical implications for schools. A key approach to developing effective and deliberate approaches to student agency is to firstly establish its components, to identify how they currently function and to consider how they might be optimised.

At DBSEH, we consider the key components to be *choice* (the extent to which students can choose how and what they learn or experience), *voice* (the extent to which students can meaningfully express their opinions and perspectives on a range of issues that directly and indirectly affect them) and *leadership* (the opportunities students have to positively influence others and to develop skills and traits that will enable them to do so even more effectively in the future).



Our student leaders have started this school year in earnest. This half-term has seen our Head Girl and Head Boy greeting parents and students at the school gate, skilfully hosting visitors and leading committees tasked with key responsibilities. Our House Captains are developing plans to maximise our post-Covid freedoms to ensure this year is one of fierce yet friendly competition, while our prefects have been raising the profile of their beloved academic subjects among our community. Meanwhile our Peer Mentors have been coordinating a student support network to enhance and personalise our wellbeing provision.

Our newest branch of student leadership, Digital Leaders, is still a work in progress – once established these students will work to ensure students' growing expertise in online safety and digital organisation.

# STUDENT AGENCY

In other areas of school life, more subtle leadership development abounds. Earlier in the term a group of our Year 13 students attended Mental Health First Aid training and are already raising awareness among their peers of the ways in which they can proactively safeguard their own and each other's wellbeing. Our Sports Leaders have already begun to work with younger children to nurture their love of physical activity and to facilitate key sporting events. Our Duke of Edinburgh candidates have started their familiarisation with the award programme and are considering the challenges they will undertake in their service, skill, physical activity and expedition units.

As the year progresses we will see these aspects of student agency flourish further as a whole-school movement which benefits our entire community whilst at the same time making our contribution to developing the next generation of leaders.



David Potts  
Head of Secondary



# OPPORTUNITY



Before students returned for the start of term we spoke to all staff and reflected with them to find out which memories from school meant the most to them. As teachers, whilst we'd love to think it is our lessons that are the main reason the students get out of bed in the morning, we shared our own favourite memories and realised it was actually the parts that wove in and around the school day; the additional opportunities, that formed our fondest recollections.



Consequently, as we return to life after the pandemic, we are unpacking what 'opportunities' look like and the most obvious place to start is the ECA Programme. Through our ECAs we aim to inspire, nurture and refine students' interests, skills and talents in a broad range of areas that seek to get our students skipping through the doors in the morning.





# OPPORTUNITY



We were delighted to be able to offer a record-breaking 111 clubs this term, with 665 students taking part. Included in these are student-led ECAs both in primary and secondary which have both broadened our offering, and also provided real-life leadership experience for children as young as 10 years old. Not only does this benefit the student leaders, but students attending the club have the chance to build relationships with older students, nurturing the tight-knit community feel we are so proud to have in our school.



Sarah Reynolds  
Principal

# INCLUSION

For a long time the term 'Inclusion' has been associated exclusively with 'learning difficulty'. At DBSEH 'Inclusion' means that we consider every student's profile of need so they can reach their potential in the day-to-day learning process. Put simply: Inclusion is about everyone.



Additionally, under the umbrella of inclusion are identified and specific learning needs, and through this journal we would like to enhance parents understanding of what these might include. In this issue we are placing a spotlight on Dyslexia, and on the next page you can find out more about how this presents in students.

As the Head of Inclusion, part of my role is to ensure that students are well-supported through strong relationships between home and school. Our Inclusion Team works alongside staff to support them with meeting the diverse needs of all students in our care, as well as collaborating with parents to ensure that we see the whole picture of the child and offer support ideas at home.

We regularly welcome in external experts to provide workshops and sessions that seek to benefit all parents with how to support their child outside of school. Coming soon, the team from Insights Psychology will be delivering a parent workshop on 'Supporting Parents with screen time and well-being', and we have engaged with an external consultant to provide parents with a session on 'Mindful and Conscious Parenting'.

All events are open to all parents, and will be shared the week before they occur on the Principal's Weekly Notices. I look forward to seeing you there.

Jacqueline Baxter  
Head of Inclusion



# INCLUSION

*'We can simplify things. We see the big picture...dyslexic minds have exactly the skills we need for the workforce of tomorrow.'* – Richard Branson

## NEURODIVERGENCE FOCUS: DYSLEXIA

### CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS:

- Difficulty with accurate and fluent word reading and spelling
- Difficulties recognising sounds and how they make up words
- Difficulties with verbal memory i.e. the types of sounds that constitute speech
- Impacted processing speeds which subsequently affects quick recall of information and ability to follow multi-levelled instructions
- Difficulties with sequencing such as alphabet, months of the year, recording stories in order



### FAMOUS PEOPLE WITH DYSLEXIA:

- Orlando Bloom – Actor
- Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock – Astronomer
- Albert Einstein – Scientist
- Jennifer Aniston – Actress

### FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

British Dyslexia Association: [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust: [www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk](http://www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk)

Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity: <https://www.helenarkell.org.uk/about-dyslexia>

# PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

It has been so wonderful to welcome our parent community back onto the school site over the course of the last half term. We have run a range of events since August to bring new and existing parents into the building, starting with our (re)introduction sessions before the term commenced. This enabled students to have a 'soft' start to their term and to view school and home as a partnership right from the start of the year.

Over the past seven weeks, parents of students from Foundation Stage right through to Sixth Form have been invited to attend workshops and information sessions related to meeting the teachers, understanding young children's language milestones, the FS Curriculum, the Positive Education Enhanced Curriculum, Year 6 Residential Camp, UK Study Options, and supporting the mental health of the teenage child. These opportunities seek to provide parents with the chance to deepen their understanding of their child's learning journey and school experience.



To complement this provision, our PTA play the crucial role of providing events that unite students, staff and parents through community events and initiatives. So far this year they have supported our parent body through second-hand uniform sales at the start of term, led the *Drawings by Me* initiative in the primary school, and led the school's fund-raising for Breast Cancer Awareness month. Keep an eye out on our social media and weekly updates to find out about the amazing events planned in the near future.



Lisa Smith  
Deputy Head of Primary

# EXCELLENCE

*“What really matters for success, character, happiness and life-long achievements is a definite set of emotional skills— not just purely cognitive abilities.”*  
— Dr. Daniel Goleman



With Student Wellbeing placed so firmly at the heart of our approach to education, our students are perfectly positioned to achieve academic excellence.

Students at Dubai British School Emirates Hills achieved a stunning set of results in the GCSE and Level 2 BTEC results released in August this year. In this first year of examinations since 2019, almost a quarter of all entries were awarded a Grade 9, the highest possible grade, and 64% of grades were awarded Grades 9 to 7. 82% attained Grades 9 to 6, making these the best ever set of GCSE results for DBSEH.

Our A Level results were equally as impressive, with 82% of students achieving A\* to B grades or equivalent, and an overall 100% pass rate. Both these, and the school's GCSE results, defied the Ofqual prediction that "very few schools or colleges, if any, will get higher results than in 2021".

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