

Issue 5

May 2023

DBSEH

HALF-TERMLY JOURNAL

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Welcome to Issue 5 of the *Half-Termly Journal*.

We show no signs of slowing down as the weather warms up, with this issue of the DBSEH Half-Termly Journal shining a special spotlight on much of the activity that has taken place over the past few weeks inspired by Islamic culture.

Our term began in Ramadan, and you'll find many references throughout this edition to share with you how we embrace traditions, and explore Islamic values with our students in school, which perfectly underpin our strategic priorities of Wellbeing, Opportunity and Community.

Additionally, find out how our opportunities programme includes developing students' understanding of, and love for, our local culture, on page 10.

Inclusion is all of our responsibility and, for those of you who missed the face-to-face session last month, our inclusion pages provide helpful tips on accommodating children with autism spectrum disorder, and supporting your family in doing the same.

This edition most certainly ends on a high, as we have just received notification that we have been selected and shortlisted for two highly prestigious awards, celebrating the best that education has to offer across the UAE.

Happy reading!



Sarah Reynolds
Principal



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WELLBEING

WELLBEING

Benevolence: an act of kindness or inclination to be kind.

If ever a time of year called for our community to demonstrate this characteristic at its best, it would be during Ramadan. Acts of kindness make the world a better place for everyone, not just those on the receiving end of a thoughtful gesture, and this is why it's the perfect place to start in this edition of the half-termly journal, reflecting on how charitable acts that have taken place in school have positively impacted the wellbeing of many during the holy month.

Starting At Home

The beginning of Ramadan saw our staff donate funds to enable the purchase of Ramadan gift boxes for our support staff. Heba Regai (Year 5 LA) and Asma Moon (SEND LSA) organised the collection, an initiative they started just last year.



“We started this initiative last Ramadan to bring our community closer together and celebrate the essence of giving during the holy month of Ramadan. This would not have been possible without the support of the wonderful staff at DBSEH and we thank them from our hearts.” - Heba and Asma



Filled with rice, flour, canned goods and oil, the boxes shore up the cupboards of our support staff with the essentials and are a gesture of our gratitude to them for ensuring the smooth running of our school day to day.

All Together Now

Our FS & Primary students took matters into their own hands, quite literally, with every child contributing to a year-group wide piece of artwork, all linking to Arabic themes, which were offered up to silent auction, the takings from which were donated to Breast Friends, an Al Jalila Charity that supports Breast Cancer Awareness.

Additionally, in the few days we had in school during Ramadan this year, two of our student leaders also took the lead with a thoughtful 'Ramadan Calendar', on display in the foyer. Every day students arriving at school could open the doors of the calendar to be presented with a task for the day that sought to encourage goodwill from one person to another. 'Wish someone Ramadan Kareem', 'Smile at everyone you see today' and other random acts of kindness shared at the beginning of the day set the tone for our whole community.



Community Outreach

After the Spring Break our Head of Arabic Subjects, Mrs Rania Reda, took the lead on getting the wider community involved in populating similar food packages which were donated to a Red Crescent Charity initiative. Students, parents and staff donated long-life food items that were sent to families in need across the Emirate.

Each of these acts perfectly demonstrate that the gift of wellbeing can be given with the smallest of gestures.



A young woman with dark hair, wearing a white chef's hat and a blue polo shirt with a grey apron, is smiling warmly. She is leaning on a wooden cutting board. The background is a soft-focus kitchen setting.

AGENCY

"Student agency is about developing and holding onto the sense that one can set achievable goals, persevere, solve problems, overcome obstacles, and find success"

Jacob Bruno

AGENCY

Preparing your own pathway

Life at Dubai British School Emirates Hills is so much more than just producing excellent GCSEs, BTECs and A Level outcomes. Whilst we do produce outstanding results, our ethos is about inspiring and nurturing holistic personal growth and development in all our students, standing them in great stead for life beyond school, whether at university, in the workplace or in their community.

That said, helping every child attain the best results they can in public examinations, given their own individual pathway, will always remain an important part of that journey from school to the next phase of their life.



Great results and sound personal development are completely intertwined; by helping our students gain vital life skills of independence, organisation and time management, and providing opportunities for them to take agency over their choices in their studies and in life in general, they become better prepared for both public examinations and life beyond school.

"The opportunities for leadership and agency at DBSEH allow you to foster strong relationships that serves as great preparation for students' educational journeys and beyond." - Laila, Sixth Form student

The provision offered to Year 11 and Year 13 students from the 15th May, ahead of public examinations, are a great example of how student agency helps with both.

Students plan their own revision 'diet' upon commencing study leave. This can include supervised private study sessions in school, both one-to-one and small group, independent study in school, as well as the freedom to do so at home, based on which is best and most suitable for them personally. Whilst there are many views on the optimal balance, it will vary greatly between individuals; only the learner themselves has the complete picture of their skills, knowledge and confidence regarding each topic and sub-topic of every one of their subjects.



This makes the learner the only person on the planet who truly possesses all the nuanced information required to make these choices; learning to use that information wisely requires both support and independent practice.

By prioritising student agency at DBSEH, from a young age and across every year group in the school, we are continually helping our young people prepare for what success looks like for them, both in their public examinations and life beyond school.

We wish all of our students the very best of luck in their upcoming examinations.

Sheridan Teasel
Deputy Head of Secondary





OPPORTUNITY

OPPORTUNITY

The schools trips our students attend serve many purposes. They are typically set in a context that have direct curriculum links and can bring a theme or subject to life, making it more memorable for our students, such as a visit to Green Planet, or Emirates Bio Farm.

Some trips aim to develop students' characters, putting their perseverance and resilience to the test, such as Duke of Edinburgh desert expeditions and week-long ski trips in Switzerland. And some trips aim to help students develop a deep respect for and love of their locality, recognising the cultural differences between their home country and the country we call 'home for now', encouraging them to view these differences fondly.



Across the school we provide students with the opportunity to receive first-hand experience of Arabic and Islamic culture, with specialist visitors, themed days in school, and visits out, and this term we have been busy in this regard!

Year 3 have been getting to know the immediate community that surrounds the school, with observational drawing sessions around the lake, maths visits to Spinneys and, most memorably, a visit to the mosque.

"Understanding how the mosque supports and serves the community was new and important learning for so many of our students, shared by the imam of the mosque himself in a valuable Q&A session with the children."

-Lauren Garratt, Year 3 Leader



Additionally, over 40 students from across the school were proud to take part in the inaugural DBSEH Qur'an Competition. With external adjudicators impressed with our young people's recitation skills, it was difficult to decide our trophy winners. We are excited to see the competition go from strength to strength in the coming years.



Year 6 took a trip aboard the Heritage Express to find out more about Emirati culture. The owners explain, “Heritage Express’ concept revolves around communicating the Emirati culture through genuine and immersive experiences...(our) main objective is to narrate real stories about the local culture. The UAE culture is rich in its traditions and customs and we take pride in highlighting how different and exciting it is in every aspect.”

As part of the tour, students enjoyed hearing more about desert life from a Bedouin, visited a range of significant historical landmarks in old Dubai, and had their fill of Luqaimat and Chibab, as well as learning traditional dining etiquette while they ate.



Towards the end of this month the school is hosting a Heritage Day to highlight and celebrate the many cultural characteristics that make our host country so special. With food, art, music and language at the heart of many creative activities on offer for students on the day we hope that students feel connected to the Arabic culture in a way that remains with them for the rest of their lives.



Sarah Reynolds
Principal







INCLUSION

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April marked Autism Acceptance month, where we aimed to educate our school community further about autism.



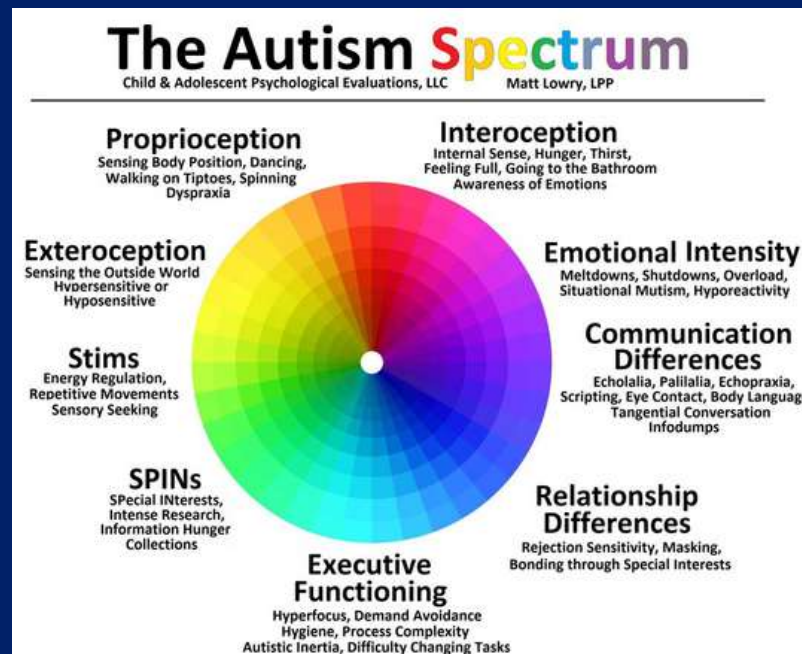
We were delighted to welcome our Governor of Inclusion, Grainne Parish, Director of Insights Psychology, to deliver an informative talk to our parents. In this month's slot we wish to share some of the take aways from Grainne's talk for those who were unable to attend.

Statistics from America CDC 2023 found that roughly 1 in every 36 children has been identified with autism spectrum disorder, with boys being four times more likely to be identified with autism than girls. Masking of needs can be common, however this can distress for the autistic person.

Person with Autism or Autistic Person?

This is heavily reliant upon each individual and their preference, or if they even wish to use this defining terminology, with some preferring to use 'neurodiverse'. So, what exactly is autism? It is a neurodevelopmental difference in the way that our brain operates. The image on the following page highlights some of the traits associated with autism, however as the word 'spectrum' indicates, one person's autism looks very different to another person's, with not all these traits being present.





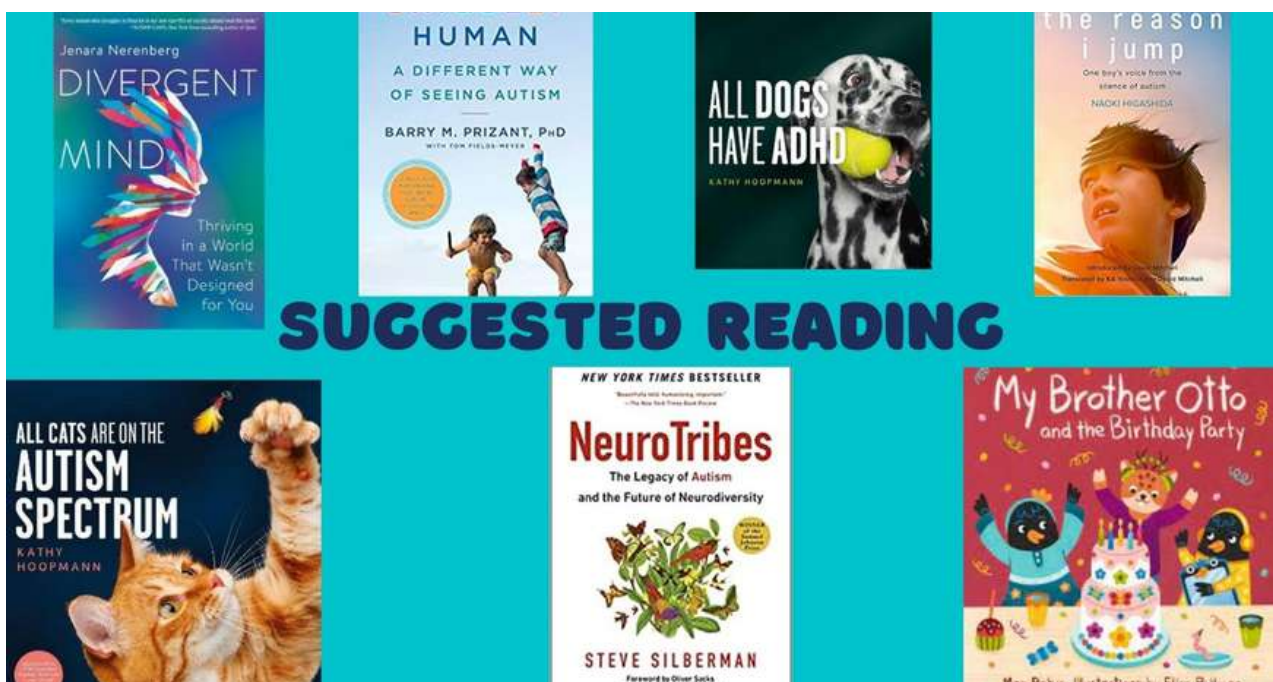
Acceptance for all is something that we strive for in both inside and outside of school, and to do this a better understanding of how to support a person with autism is vital, so the more informed we are, the better equip we are to offer this support and educate our children at home.

Here are some strategies that you can adopt if you are in the company of an autistic person:

- ❖ When people around you/children in our community act in unexpected ways – give them more support and compassion, not less. The previous image highlights what some of those behaviours may look like.
- ❖ Consider the people around you that may be neurodiverse – is there a way that you can change yourself to be more compassionate about their struggle? Think about your own communication, avoiding things like idioms or sarcasm, using a level tone of voice.
- ❖ Consider accommodations for playdates/birthday parties. Sensory overload is common in people with autism, so possibly having a quiet area at the party, some calming toys such as fidget spinners and stress balls are always good tools, or even talking with parent prior to the party to seek their ideas on what works well.
- ❖ Take the time to teach your child about differences – the earlier the better. As adults we are the role models to our children, so acceptance for all needs to start at home.
- ❖ Reach out to other parents in your community that may need support.

There is a wealth of literature out there to help us all learn more, from podcasts, television documentaries to a large range of books, there is something for everyone no matter the age category. If you wish to learn more, here are some useful resources.

- ❖ Christine McGuinness: Unmasking my Autism, available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001k31t/christine-mcguinness-unmasking-my-autism>
- ❖ There are lots of good Facebook groups for parents internationally too, Autistic not Weird is a practical option to support parents: <https://www.facebook.com/autisticnotweird>
- ❖ Follow accounts on Twitter using #actuallyautistic
- ❖ TikTok Accounts: #actuallyautistic
- ❖ Instagram Accounts: @the.autisticats; @theautisticlife; @neurodifferent; @neurowild
- ❖ YouTube: Yo Sammy Sam



Jacqueline Baxter
Head of Inclusion





COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY

A highlight of the term for us, and the whole school year in fact, was the DBS Emirates Hills Community Iftar, which took place right back at the beginning of the summer term.

With the tennis court converted into a dining space to seat over 400 attendees, banners designed for us by our marketing team, table decorations created by our ASDAN students, performances shared with us by our Islamic students, lighting purchases to create a magical atmosphere at sunset by the school, and meals brought to be shared by our hundreds of staff, students and parents, it was a truly community event.



In previous years the Iftar has enjoyed a smaller more intimate setting, but with a few new faces around the leadership table this year it was a good time to try something new. An Iftar working party met weekly on the approach to Ramadan, bringing together skills and expertise from across the school to ensure that the views and preferences of many were considered and accommodated.

The performance element was led by our students; Deputy Head Boy Abdulrahman delivered the address in both Arabic and English, before Yassin, Year 11 shared a poignant recitation from the Qur'an. Younger student leaders shared their own prepared presentations on what Ramadan is like in their home countries, and Year 4 and Year 6 Islamic students had the audience clapping along to their brilliantly performed, and very upbeat, songs.

Although the night did not run perfectly to plan – the queues for the food will be addressed next year (!) – the main purpose of the event was achieved; to bring our community together, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to break fast and develop our understanding of, and respect for, Islamic tradition.





EXCELLENCE

EXCELLENCE



Incredible Outcomes

This term we have received several accolades that confirm DBS Emirates Hills' reputation stands firm as a centre of excellence:

- ❖ 1 of only 7 UK Curriculum 3-18 schools in Dubai to have been rated 'Outstanding' by the KHDA in the annual school inspection evaluations
- ❖ Received the highest possible rating for Wellbeing as part of the new evaluation process for schools' wellbeing provision
- ❖ Shortlisted for 'Best British Curriculum School in the UAE' by Top Schools Award 2023
- ❖ Shortlisted for 'Best Sixth Form in the UAE' by Top Schools Award 2023



And, although those whole-school headlines pack a punch, it's the pockets of brilliance around the school that help to get us there. Also this half term, we are proud to share:

- ❖ Incredible singer songwriter duo Venice and Belle (Year 9) AKA Seaside Feels are finalists for the International Songwriter Competition run by songacademy.co.uk
- ❖ Year 5 students returned victorious from the interschools Arabic Enrichment competition as winners in their category
- ❖ The DBSEH Primary Choir were highly commended at the Taaleem Extravaganza Choir Showcase involving choirs from across the UAE
- ❖ University offers from prestigious universities continue to come flooding in for our Year 13 students, including University College London, Imperial College London and Durham University for a range of undergraduate courses including Nuclear Science, Medicine and Pharmacology, and Media and Communication





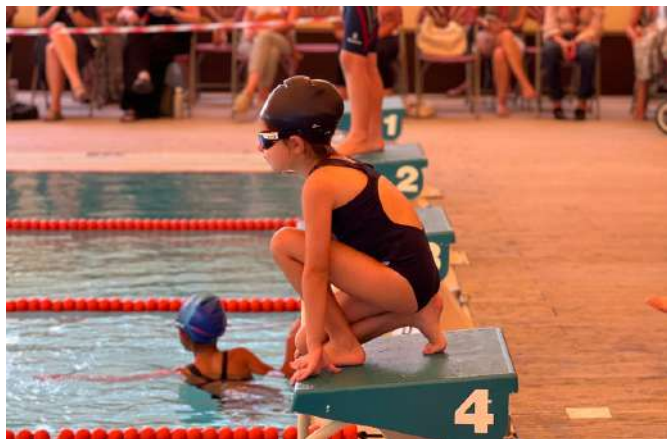
Year 13 Leavers Day



King's Coronation



Year 6 Graduates Class of 2023



Primary Swim Gala



KHDA Wellbeing Provision Rating "Very High"



Careers Event by Year 12 BTEC students



Taaleem Extravaganza



Year 11 Leavers Day



Year 3 Trip to Spinneys

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