



# FROM THE NEWS DESK

ISSUE 3: APRIL 2022

**LET THE PAST  
TAKE A BOW, THE  
FOREVER IS NOW  
PERFORMING  
ARTS FLOURISHES**

**THE SUPER-CURRICULUM**  
DEEPENING  
KNOWLEDGE  
AND CULTIVATING  
TRANSFERABLE  
SKILLS

**THE LIFE OF PI**  
CELEBRATING  
MATHEMATICAL  
FUNDAMENTALS

# IT'S SHOWTIME







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# MAKING MEMORIES

Catherine Dando | Headteacher, DESS



“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou

**C**ast your mind back to your school days. What are the learning experiences that really stand out in your memory? Most of us are unlikely to be treasuring the precious memory of a particularly exciting Science or Maths lesson, a spelling test or writing a story. It is much more likely that you have held on to the recollection of an experience that made an emotional connection with you; the way it made you feel. It may be the feeling of delivering your lines on stage in your school production, or scoring the winning goal for your school. It may have been your school field trip or a particular leadership role. These are the exceptional experiences that stay with us through life and, I would suggest, make us more rounded human beings.

Thankfully, with restrictions reduced, we have once again been

able to offer these meaningful experiences to our young people and we are certainly making up for lost time. The second half of Term Two was crammed full of Sports Days, School trips, whole school events and the return of School productions with the amazing Year 2 production of the Bee Musical. The buzz is well and truly back at DESS.

Standing in the middle of the field on International Day, surrounded by our DESS community after two years of restrictions, certainly made an emotional connection with me. It felt like an assault on the senses and was, in many ways, overwhelming. From the bright colours of the flags to the competing smells of freshly baked national dishes from each country’s stall and the chatter of the parent helpers to the babble of excitement from the children. We had missed this so much. Typically we had managed to choose the hottest day of the year so far but the joy on the faces of the whole school community was one of those moments that you just want to bottle. A precious memory for our children and what had been so badly missing for the past two years; we are bouncing back.

When we take new parents on tours they often comment about the way the school makes them feel; the vibe that they get. They are impressed to see the children fully engaged, working in groups with high levels of independence. So it is wonderful to see the school environments

returning to allow collaborative and active learning. There is evidence that exposure to opportunities for active learning, as well as the liberty to learn in a social context, appears to positively affect brain growth. They form a valuable part of a learner’s educational journey.

So what will be the lasting memory for our DESS children from Term Two? My profound hope is that any recollection of the restricted learning conditions from the past two years has now been drowned out in their memories by the cacophony of rich and exciting exceptional experiences, described within this edition, that have characterised the second part of Term Two.

Happy Reading!

Warm wishes.

Catherine Dando





# SCARAMOUCHE, WILL YOU DO THE FANDANGO!

Chris Vizzard | Headteacher, DESC



“I want to be surrounded by splendid things.”

Freddie Mercury

It was the first double cast performance, one of the greatest number of students involved to date, and it ran for four nights; significant milestones in the history of DESC Performing Arts, but it was the fact that this was our first performance in over two years that made it really special. The choice of show, the iconic ‘We Will Rock You’, could not have been more apt and proved to be the backdrop and soundtrack to what has been the most memorable (for the right reasons) term for some time.

As Galileo (Beau and Daniel) bellowed out the opening lyrics to, “I Want to Break Free,” we were poignantly reminded of the ease in restrictions that have allowed so much activity and events to take place over the last few weeks. Enter Sofia and Ruby: “I’m OK, I’m alright, I ain’t gonna face no defeat, I just gotta get out of this prison cell,” wow!

Grace and Lily-Rose represented the Killer Queen, a metaphor for the power held by something, or someone, over the planet - but she, and it, will be defeated. For too long, the playing fields, netball courts and swimming pools have been bereft of action, with parents

unable to stand, watch, cheer and admire the action from the side. “I want it all, I want it now,” is how Term Two felt as sport returned with a bang. Sports Day was awash with House colour, panache performances and Mr Randall back on the microphone. We also witnessed an incredible festival of rugby hosted on our very own lush fields once again.

The sight of the entire College, walking around the desert to raise money for a new school in Cambodia, was another highlight and a reminder that we appreciate these experiences more than ever. As the cast sang chorally, “And you’re rushing headlong, you’ve got a new goal. And you’re rushing headlong, out of control,” a reminder that, on the day of the walk, the camels were out of control, not the students.

Brit and Oz (Toby, Aleska, Esther and Ruby) together with Khashoggi (Sam), Aretha (Maisie and Taylah), Buddy (Lara) and Sixx (Ishaani) provided the type of entertainment we have so badly missed. Humour, pathos, reflection and escape; a glimpse into what may well lay ahead of the Seven Seas of Rhye and indeed that thing, the thing we have missed for so long, that “Crazy Little Thing.” The return of so many super-curricular activities, EPQ projects, excursions and trips, the DofE International Award - or simply the ability of a student to recite over 700 digits of Pi - yes DESC, this is what we have missed and now we

really do want it all!

As the whole cast assembled, the Teen Queens, Bots and ensemble, to the beat of the band for a final blast of “We Will Rock You” and “We Are The Champions,” there wasn’t a dry eye in the auditorium - but they were all tears of joy for a change. Is this the real life, is this just fantasy?

It’s Showtime.





# WE WILL ROCK YOU

Sarah Kelly | Director of Performing Arts, DESC

“The show must go on” - a phrase believed to have originated in the 19th century as a motivational cry within the circus fraternity as a means to motivate performers when everything does not go quite as originally planned. This phrase has seemed more appropriate than ever over the past two years as the ongoing change in COVID-19 restrictions challenged the DESC Performing Arts department.



On Saturday, 14th March 2020, the Performing Arts faculty and over 100 students were performing their final dress rehearsal for West Side Story. Unbeknownst to us, when Mr Gibbs arrived that day to deliver the news that the show would need to be postponed, it would in fact be the final time the curtain would go up for our cast. The Performing Arts staff were astounded by the level of maturity with which our DESC students responded to this devastating news, reacting with resilience, and understanding that this is a time to celebrate the wonderful rehearsal process instead of dwelling on the loss of their final



performance. Students were able to recognise the friendships they had made, the skills they had learnt and the treasured memories that were gained from working as a company for so many months.

As the weeks and months of social distancing and remote learning continued, many artists responded

with creativity and ingenuity. The world witnessed images of balcony concerts, Zoom choirs and quarantine karaoke, connecting us to friends, families and strangers from around the world as people started to make music together as a way of sharing messages of hope. Here at DESC, we also embraced the opportunity to be creative during this period of remote learning, establishing our own virtual Jazz band, becoming runners up in the virtual Young Musician of the Gulf vocal competition and winning the virtual BSME Dance Duo competitions. Within online lessons, students had the opportunity to devise TikTok performances, attend virtual conferences with leading practitioners and engage in digital theatre productions not previously available to us in the UAE. So despite these initial





controversial and challenging stimuli material. Performing Arts have always provided opportunities to educate and inspire an audience about a vast range of contemporary issues, and our students approached this challenge with zeal. One Year 13 group devised a piece based on the 'Cambodian Killing Fields' and considered the effects of a brutal dictator making decisions for a whole country. A second group explored the stimuli of 'Journeys' and investigated inspirational individuals who had fought against the odds, including deep sea diver Chris Lemons and mountaineer

audience in attendance. Covid-19 rules were in flux, and so the Performing Arts Faculty considered a number of options whereby we could still rejoice in some Christmas spirit. In the end we were pleased with the outcome, welcoming the opportunity to hold our inaugural Winter Wonderland, our first outside concert performance. The netball courts transformed into our bespoke Wonderland where the audience could picnic on blankets and enjoy novelty reindeer gift bags. The evening was a roaring success with students performing their socially distanced musical and dance



challenges, both students and staff reinvigorated their passion for the Performing Arts and were constantly devising methods that would allow for Dance, Drama and Music to continue.

As we slowly returned to College with a mixed approach of both distance learning and in-person lessons, we were able to acknowledge the benefits of social interaction and appreciate the strong and supportive nature of our DESSC community. Within the Performing Arts, we continued to endeavor to fulfill our mission to instill every student with confidence, self-discipline and the ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with others.

Our GCSE and A Level students returned to the College with a newfound passion to explore

Tsewang Paljor. While the pandemic had provided opportunities for digital experiences related to the performing arts, students demonstrated enthusiasm to return to in-person classes and activities. In-person learning helped inform student insight on the intrinsically personable nature of the performing arts and the subject's ability to tackle social and political issues. Furthermore, students developed increased empathy, using this understanding to develop emotional connections to characters while becoming progressively self-aware about the wider world.

The return to the 'new normal' of College life challenged our previous conventions for concerts and performances, a dynamic that was particularly at play in our annual festive concert, with a 600 strong





numbers to the audience's delight, with our artificial snowstorm bringing everyone to their feet.

In 1991, British rock band Queen released their seminal studio album 'Innuendo,' with the final track "The Show Must Go On". The music would go on to inspire the hit West End show "We Will Rock You;" set 300 years in the future in a globally corporate world where all non-computer-generated music is banned. The show seemed only too fitting for a society which is now more distanced than ever following



Covid-19, with Teams meetings, TikTok sensations and Zoom parties. There was a buzz of excitement when we were finally able to announce that auditions would be commencing in September, with the hope of a musical being staged in March 2022. Students arrived eager to learn the new dance routines and were excited to channel their inner rock stars. Rehearsals started well, with cast and crew alike



enjoying the uplifting anthems and dynamic choreography. By the end of Term One, everyone was feeling confident with Act 1, ready to return in the New Year to 'FLASH' and the capture of Galileo and the rebellious Bohemians. The return to College, however, took an unexpected turn with extra-curricular activities shelved due to rising numbers of positive Covid-19 cases. For five weeks the cast and crew waited patiently for updates, eagerly



learning lines and independently working through choreography. Behind the scenes, the pyramid staging was being installed, boulders painted, and hundreds of costumes were being sewn. Fortunately, half term brought positive news that rehearsals could resume and with time rapidly against us, everyone



collectively went above and beyond to ensure that the show would go on. Students rehearsed intensively during lunchtimes, after school and at weekends to make up for lost time.

And so to show week. The props were preset, hair products sprayed in abundance and sound and lighting cued. There was an atmosphere of anticipation as the audience fervently awaited those opening stomps to the rhythm of the Queen favourite “We Will Rock You.” The shows were of course a resounding



success, everyone revelled in the opportunity to share in an event that brings people together through their love of music, but more so in their need to celebrate positive experiences while collectively showing support for members of the DESC community.

The past two years have been a painful experience for the world. Here at DESC, the Performing Arts fraternity found it difficult to adjust to start with, faced with seemingly insurmountable ongoing challenges. However, we have begun to emerge from this period with a more holistic view of the subject, the benefits that it can bring to our students and the importance of continued belief in that 19th century phrase of old: “The show must go on.”







# INTERNATIONAL DAY AT DESS

## WE LOVE LANGUAGE LEARNING!

**Mikael Jamin** | Head of Modern Foreign Languages, DESS

**D**ESS's International Day on Thursday, 10th March 2022 was a perfect opportunity to celebrate the cultural diversity at our lovely School. For me, as Head of Modern Foreign Languages at DESS, it was all about celebrating Language LEARNING!

Let me give you a sense of how linguistically diverse we are here at DESS: although some 22 countries were represented in the tents for International Day, this does not give the whole picture of where our children originate from. The actual number of tents we should have put up to represent all countries is 51! (DESS has 79!) When you think some countries have three or more official languages, that is a lot of linguistic diversity.

For languages, statistics vary depending on whether you take into account the degree of 'nativeness' and 'officiality', but we can confidently say that more than 6000 languages (Busuu state 6500 on their website) are currently spoken in the world.

Given the importance of English, Arabic, Spanish and French as 'World Languages' (i.e. as languages spoken in several countries or continents or used for international communication) we can safely say that DESS is giving our children a strong head-start as citizens of the



In terms of native speakers, here are the winners; some may surprise you.

### Most spoken languages

English	1,132 million
Mandarin	1,117 million
Hindi	615 million
Spanish	534 million
French	280 million
Arabic	274 million
Bengali	265 million
Russian	258 million
Portuguese	199 million
Indonesian	170 million



This begs the question: how many countries and languages are there in the world today? The former part of the question is easier to answer than the latter. According to Worldometer, there are 195





world. Indeed, some competitor schools in Dubai have made the choice to only teach Arabic, the only real ‘compulsory’ language that schools offer in the UAE. Their rationale is to free curriculum time for other subjects. At DESS, however, we think that learning several languages should be an integral part of the curriculum. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, languages provide students with more opportunities on the job market. According to ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages):

“In the 21st Century knowing a second language is not only beneficial, but necessary for success in life.

The continual globalisation of the world’s economy is bringing diverse cultures and communities into more frequent contact with each other. From the corporate marketplace to the individual consumer, from the pre-schools to universities, from the beach vacationer to the global jet set, the world community has become integrated and interdependent. Institutions of higher learning are scrutinising applicants to identify future world leaders. Employers and businesses are seeking applicants who can navigate the modern global economy. It is through learning another language that students can develop both these skill sets.”



The second reason is that learning several languages transfers to other subjects, as it improves the cognitive and interpretative skills of our children. Among others, research shows that language learning has the following consequences:

- Enhanced Problem Solving Skills
- Improved Verbal and Spatial Abilities
- Improved Memory Function
- Enhanced Creative Thinking Capacity

DESS therefore provides French as well as Arabic from Year 3, while DESS add Spanish from Year 7. Pre-Covid, when we could involve parents in clubs, DESS was also providing Hindi, Chinese and Spanish as part of its extra-curricular activities.

Let us go back to this year’s International Day and why I got excited as MFL leader. Firstly, we extended our provision on that special day in order to make the children’s experience linguistically special. Secondly, to make the visit more language-focused, children were asked to collect as many ways to say ‘thank you’ and ‘hello’ as they could as part of their Global Village visit experience. It was a perfect ice-breaking exercise as children approached each tent. Don’t worry, much tasting of yummy foods was also experienced!



In addition, KS1 children were introduced to French thanks to Mrs Khawaja (herself a polyglot!) Students sang some songs and discovered colours and numbers.





Year 5 and 6 students were also in for a treat. Led by the Head of French at DESC, Mr Delattre, the star linguists of DESC gave them a Spanish taster lesson! We love it when the DESSC family pull out all the stops and come together. It was also a great opportunity for our DESC students to pass on their knowledge and to practise their teaching skills. A huge thank you to Mr Delattre and the DESC students for organising the sessions during their extra-curricular time and at a moment's notice!



What fun we all had! If this hasn't convinced you to learn another language, maybe this will: according to the famous language learning institution The Eton Institute, "for monolingual adults, the mean age for the first signs of dementia is 71.4. For adults who speak two or more languages, the mean age for those first signs is 75.5. Studies considered factors such as education level, income level, gender, and physical health, but the results were consistent." Food for thought...

## References

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Year 3 looked at the origins of languages and dived into the question: why are there so many languages in the world? Mr Jamin wore his old University hat as Dr in Linguistics to help children understand the influence of isolation and exchange to answer the above question. Students then drew on their critical thinking skills to find similarities and differences between different language families in a problem-solving activity.

Year 4 were provided a very different Arabic lesson. Mrs Elham showed students how diverse the Arabic world is and exposed students to the different spoken Arabic dialects. To test their understanding and to make it fun, children participated in a sound quiz!











# WALK FOR CAMBODIA

DESSCares Team

**E**ducation has, and will always be, one of the most influential ways to break the cycle of poverty and empower communities to live a more sustainable life. Sadly, one in six children worldwide are still not able to access the quality education they need to break this cycle (UNESCO, 2020) and as educators, this is something we feel passionate about changing.



This year, the DESSC Community are hoping to raise AED180,000 to build a new school in rural Cambodia. We have teamed up with Dubai Cares and United World Schools (UWS) who will support us in making this goal a reality. UWS are a UK-based charity who hope to improve the education and life opportunities of children in some of the world's poorest and most remote communities. They have changed the lives of over 23,000 children in the 250 schools they have built since their inception, and we are very proud to be supporting their campaign this year. We have hosted a range of fundraising projects since September, however, one of our most notable events was the recent 'Walk for Cambodia'.

## 'Walk for Cambodia at DESS':

With the distance from Dubai to Cambodia being roughly 5,381km, DESS took on the challenge of walking to Cambodia, with each lap of the field representing 1km. During the day, there was a focus on the importance of charity, the challenges children in Cambodia face and the fortunate position children at DESS are in to access a quality education.

Ruth Gibson,  
Deputy Headteacher, DESS



## 'Walk for Cambodia at DESS':

With the beautiful desert in our backyard, it was inevitable that it had to be utilised for DESS's Walk for Cambodia. Having walked through the desert before, this year we decided to test the resilience of the DESS community by increasing the distance from 1.5km to 4km, which involved tackling the large sand dune at the back of the College site. 2,000 hardy souls immersed themselves in the local flora and fauna as they negotiated the wonderfully named 'Broom Bushes' and also enjoyed sharing the environment with a local group of camels who joined in the fun! It was a golden opportunity for DESS to demonstrate respect for others and donate to a worthy cause. We look forward to continuing the strong legacy of building schools around the world.

Patrick McMurren,  
Geography Teacher, DESS







Together, DESSC raised a whopping AED41,547, during the Walk for Cambodia event, which takes us ever closer to our target, which we hope to achieve by the end of this academic year. Thank you to everyone who took part and contributed to a fabulous event.







# DESS SPORT BOUNCES BACK

Max Lohe | Director of Sport, DESS





It's been a hectic term of sport with DESS bouncing back on the sporting pitch and splashing back in the pool after two years without competitive sports events. The number of opportunities for the children at DESS to play fixtures, be involved with tournaments and show their talents at the World School Games has been fantastic to see and we're so proud of all our talented children who have represented the school this term. Thank you to all of you!

In addition to the weekly fixtures which took place for our sporting teams, there have been some major Dubai tournaments hosted by DESS and DESC, along with our athletes taking part in the World School Games for the first time ever.



### BSME NETBALL 2022

On Saturday, 5th March, 14 Under 11 Netball teams from across Dubai competed in the 2022 Netball Tournament. The tournament was hosted by DESS, at DESC.



The tournament began with all teams playing six pool games and then being seeded for semi-finals and play-off matches. Semi-final one saw DESS take on JPS. It was a thrilling game, with JPS just edging DESS 7-6 to go through to the final. Semi-final two saw Kings Dubai A team take on their B team in another great game, with Kings A running out winners.

After a fantastic morning of

netball, the final between JPS and Kings attracted a large crowd to watch Kings Dubai A being crowned 2022 BSME Netball Champions. Spirit of the Tournament went to Arcadia School and English College for outstanding sportsmanship all morning and Player of the Tournament went to Sara from JPS.

A big thank you to all the parents and staff who came to support the event and also DESS's groundstaff for all their help in setting up the event. Congratulations to all the girls who took part in this event and thank you for making it such a special morning!







## WORLD SCHOOL GAMES 2022

### Day One - Opening Ceremony and Athletics

Day One of the World School Games took place at Dubai Sports City with the Opening Ceremony welcoming the teams to Dubai. Following on from this a mix of excitement and nerves gripped the DESS squad with the Athletics competition commencing. The DESS boys were first up on the track with the girls heading to the field events. The afternoon saw the events switch and the 4x100m relays concluded the event after a long hot day. The DESS team performed extremely well against some amazing competitors and produced many personal bests! The superstar of the day was our Year 6 pupil, Kai, who got Gold in high jump, Silver in shot putt and Silver in the 75m sprint final. Special mention must



also go to Year 5 student Indy who got the bronze medal in the girls high jump! Congratulations to all of our amazing squad who performed so well.

### Day Two - Swimming

Day Two at the World School Games saw the DESS Swim Team arrive bright and early at the Hamdan Sports Complex for the Swimming Competition. With many children having never competed at Hamdan, the look on the children's faces when they entered the Olympic standard venue was priceless. Not overawed by competing in such an amazing venue, the DESS swim team went about their business and instantly made an impression in the pool with some fantastic results.

Consistently in the top three in the individual heats throughout the

day, they also produced some great team results in the relays and finals. The highlight of the day was our 200m U11 Girls medley relay team winning gold in their event with an incredible swim. Well done to all our swimmers and all the schools who took part in a fantastic day of competition.

**Special mention to all our DESS medal winners:**

Eva - Bronze (50m Butterfly) / Gold (200m Medley Relay)  
Zaleia - Silver (50m Freestyle) / Gold (200m Medley Relay)  
Lyla - Gold (200m Medley Relay)  
Poppy - Gold (200m Medley Relay)







### Day Three - World School Games Football

The final day of competition at the World School Games saw four DESS football teams in action at the Dubai Rugby 7's ground. With high temperatures and a midday start, the DESS boys' and girls' teams knew they would have to start well in tough conditions.

During the pool games our Red and White teams played some fantastic football against quality opposition, but it was our girls Red team who dominated their matches to proceed to the Cup Finals. With dominant wins in the quarter finals and semi-finals, the girls were now in the final against a strong St Saviours School Ikoyi from Nigeria.

Despite playing strongly in the final, it was a goal against the run of play which meant the girls finished as runners-up. A result they should still be extremely proud of in a 16-team competition.

### Day Three - Gala Dinner and Presentation

The Football Tournament was followed by a Gala dinner celebrating the conclusion of the World School Games. The children enjoyed a BBQ dinner and were presented with their trophies and medals from the four days of sporting competition.

Overall, the DESS team finished in 5th position out of 16 strong teams and exceeded expectations in all areas. A big thank you must go to all the amazing athletes, supportive parents and PE staff for their efforts in making the 2022 World School Games an event the DESS children will never forget.

Final standings for the tournament were:

Boys Red team - 8th Position  
Boys White team - 15th Position  
Girls Red Team - Cup Final Runners-Up  
Girls White Team - 11th Position

## DESSC SPRING RUGBY AND FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT 2022

After not being able to host our annual Spring Tournament for two years, it was great to see the tournament back on the calendar this year. DESSC played host to the tournament this year, which saw 16 girls football teams and 12 boys rugby teams compete in a festival style afternoon of sport. Teams were placed into pools against those of similar ability and had the opportunity to play friendly matches against a variety of different schools. The evening was a fantastic way to finish the term of sport and allow schools to get together one last time this term. Well done to all the teams who took part and also to all of the "Coaches' Players of the Festival" who were recognised for their performances on the day.

### A FINAL THANKS

A big thank you to all the parents, children and staff who made this term such a success! It's been great to see the children back on the sporting field and in the pool. We're looking forward to cricket and rounders fixtures in Term Three and a big year of sport ahead in September 2022.





# DESC BAKES

**Nicola Barber** | Head of Food Preparation and Nutrition, DESC

Wednesday afternoons are a hive of activity in the DESC kitchens, due to the long-awaited return of our very own DESC Bakes ECA. Food and Nutrition is a popular subject at DESC, which hosts students from Key Stage 3 through to GCSE and BTEC. Students of all ages are being challenged to produce a range of sweet and savoury dishes each week.

Students attending the ECA relish the opportunity to create dishes that would not form part of the Cooking and Nutrition curriculum at DESC. Each recipe allows for flair and creativity as elements of the dishes can be changed to suit individual taste. Dishes this term have been chosen by students and include cinnamon buns, where students experienced the fermentation process whilst making an enriched bread dough; shaping, forming the dough, along with paying attention to detail to produce a quality product. The dish went down a storm and students' feedback was 'the cinnamon buns were better than you know who's'.

Other dishes include homemade calzone and pizza, with the focus on twisting and folding the dough



to form a seal whilst maintaining the shape of the dough. Our puff pastry sausage rolls added a savoury element with students sampling a range of fillings from spicy chicken curry to sausage, onion and herb. I believe the savoury pastries are a popular family treat for many and our DESC bakers have made these several times since. Back to the sweet and an all-time family favourite of lemon drizzle has been revamped with the addition of fresh raspberries and lime juice.

Dietary needs are well catered for here at DESC Food and Nutrition and all our recipes are of course Halal and can be easily adapted to suit students with food intolerances or allergies. We have such a diverse community here at DESC and are

keen to share our recipes with the wider DESC community. We also welcome you sharing any family recipes that we could pass on and cook with our students.

DESC Bakes ECA runs weekly throughout the year and is open to all students. Term 3 will see the comeback of 'around the world at DESC' where students will focus on healthier alternative ingredients; along with knife skills and cooking methods whilst working on multiple components within a dish. Savoury cooks such as 'healthier' beef stroganoff, not so 'butter' chicken curry, cottage pie and baked chicken katsu will be on the menu. Places are limited so register your interest through our Schools Buddy system.





# “IT’S THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE DESC SPECIAL”

**Rajeev Moothenmattil Kumaran | Site Technician, DESC**

## Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

My name is Rajeev and I am a qualified electrician from Kerala in India. I have been living and working in Dubai for 14 years. My mother is still at home in India, as well as my wife and 2 children; a boy who is in Year 4 and a girl in Year 1, and I video call them regularly to keep in touch. I am excited as my wife and children are coming out to visit me in Dubai soon. This is the first time they have come from India to visit, and they will be staying with family that we have in Sharjah

## How did you end up working at DESC?

While I was working as an electrician in Kerala, my friend was working for a construction company in Dubai. He contacted me asking if I wanted to come and work here as he could put me in touch with the right people. DESC is the first and only place I have worked since coming to Dubai and I didn't know anyone here when I arrived. At the beginning, when DESC was just growing, I split my time between the College and the School, working three days in each.

## What are your favourite memories of DESC, outside of the normal day-to-day work?

When I started, there were less than 600 students here. It has been good being a part of the College's growth and getting to meet more



children and staff. There are people here from all over the world, with so many different nationalities and cultures. Everyone is nice and polite; they all take time to talk to the site staff.

## What has been your favourite College event and why?

It is hard to pick just one event, as there are many that I like. I enjoy helping the Performing Arts departments with the College productions, working with the students and teachers to get everything ready. I also like to watch the shows when there is time. Sports days have always been a good event, with the students in each House supporting each other. The times that we have held the Sports Day off site have also been enjoyable.

## Throughout your time at DESC, what are the main things you feel you have learned and experienced?

When I started back in 2008, I was one of only four site staff. Now we have 27 site staff, with 24 of us living on the DESC site. It is like having a very close family around you. As new members of the team join, we welcome them to our family, and we have developed real bonds that make for excellent teamwork. We know we can rely on each other.

## What will stick with you in the future when you move on from DESC?

Mostly, it is the memories of all the people I work with at College. Despite knowing that some of the site staff are also from my home region of Kerala, often they will live too far away to meet and keep in contact. When I eventually leave DESC, it will be the people that I miss the most, not just the site staff, but all the staff and students.

## Is there anything else from your time at DESC that you would like to share?

As much as I enjoy living and working at DESC, I look forward to going off site with the rest of the team. In the past, we have enjoyed going to the beaches in Umm Al Quwain for the day. It creates a nice balance of work and relaxation. Other than that, I would like to say that DESC has created a lifetime of memories for me that I will keep forever.





# THE LEADER IN ME

Liz Miller | Deputy Headteacher, DESS

The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow. At DESS our vision is to nurture learners who not only flourish and reach their full potential but are also prepared for an ever-changing world. Through a wide range of leadership roles, we are focusing on the skills our young people might benefit from in the future. As an integral part of lifelong learning, we endeavour to provide as many opportunities as we can for children to both experience leadership and develop leadership skills.

The leadership opportunities available at DESS are wide and varied. Ranging from Eco Warriors, House Leaders and Digital Leaders, to the Year 6 Junior Leadership Team and the Student Council. Comprising of one child from every class from Years 1-6, the Student Council has a vital role in ensuring that our children's voices are heard. Members are responsible for attending regular Student Council meetings, planning, organising and leading class meetings, listening to feedback from their classmates and taking the lead on initiatives to develop and improve our school.



Recently, I was excited to hear England Rugby Union legend, Maggie Alphonsi, speak about leadership and building a culture of success. As is the case with many inspirational leaders, her journey began at school. Speaking about the importance of leaders knowing their 'why?', she encouraged us to ask ourselves the following questions: What is your 'why?' What makes you do what you do?

These questions help us find a sense of purpose that motivates and inspires us as leaders as well as those around us. It has been wonderful to see children finding their own sense of purpose through the Student Council.

When I asked what they would like me to write about in this article, their answer was simple, "How Student Council benefits DESS." They clearly understand their 'why?' It is impressive that the children already understand one of the main characteristics of effective leadership: service to others.

So how does The Student Council at DESS serve our DESS community? To answer this question, I will pass over to our Student Councillors:

"I think DESS benefits from Student Council as solutions are found because Student Council is finding out issues and then meeting with other people to try and find solutions. This is the reason that the school can keep improving."

"We helped the library by asking our class what their favourite books were, we told the librarians so that they could buy them. Next, I am asking my class what ECAs they like so that there are ones that my class enjoys."







**“I have to listen to what my friends want to make them happier.”**

If I were to ask you to think of an influential leader in your life, who would you think of? For me, it wouldn't be those who have known all the answers and been focused on tasks. The influential leaders in my life focus on people. They listen, showing care and empathy. They are inspirational and open to being inspired by others, whilst having conviction in their values, beliefs and goals. Leading with a growth mindset, it is the leaders who are constantly learning and reflecting that have taught me the most.

There is no doubt that a leadership role requires us to constantly develop and refine our skills. Skills that are developed within our range of leadership roles here at DESS, and also within the classroom day in, day out. The child that has been chosen to be line leader in Foundation Stage? They are already developing an understanding of responsibility, being a good role model and maybe even resolving conflict!

These skills - often referred to as soft skills - are now widely regarded as enabling a person to flourish in all aspects of their life, increasing their employability in the future. In short, your soft skills enable your hard skills to shine. Whether teacher

or child, within any leadership role there is an opportunity to develop a wide range of skills: communication, teamwork, organisation, empathy, responsibility and collaboration to name just a few.

When I asked the Student Council how being a leader at DESS is benefitting them personally, they talked about the skills and mindset they are developing:

**“When I joined Student Council I became more confident and I started to speak up more in class because of the class meetings. I have also become more confident, punctual and organised.”**

**“I am getting better at being brave, focused, leading and listening. In my class meeting I get better at speaking well and introducing ideas.”**

**“I have learned how to listen to ideas and then choose the most responsible ones. I have learned how to be responsible and how to make sure that everyone in my class can talk in the meetings. I have learnt that you need to be very patient as you work with people. Social skills are important. I feel like these skills will help me in college, it will also help me when I get a job as I am learning how to deal with different ideas. “**

**“In Student Council we have to be independent. We also learn how to be kind as we listen to everyone's ideas. It helps you get better at teamwork so this will help you in the future. I have to be encouraging and supportive to others.”**

At DESS, we have been working on bouncing back and ensuring that all children have a voice. An active student body is vital, not just to the effective day-to-day running of the school, but also in determining future developments. Initiatives such as giving feedback on the curriculum, organising and promoting health and safety leaders, working with the librarians to enhance the range of books available in the library, formulating ideas for ECAs and being involved in sustainability and environmental projects have not only improved our DESS community but also given the children another context in which to flourish and grow.

It is vital that we prepare our children for the road ahead, wherever that road may take them. The better leaders we create today, the better our world will be in the future.



# DESSC ALUMNA-UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

Tara Quborsi | DESSC Alumna

Tara Quborsi is a DESSC Alumna (Class of 2020), who is studying Performing Arts at Royal Holloway. Tara embraced all aspects of Performing Arts during her journey at DESSC. She embraced the challenges presented to her and, in addition to many other successes, was awarded the Top Performing student across the world in her Drama GCSE and was the leading lady in DESSC's 'The Wizard of Oz.' Here is how DESSC helped to create her story . . .

My journey at DESSC completely shaped me into the person I am today. The amount of Performing Arts experiences that I was able to take part in throughout my time at DESSC was just outstanding. I was always in awe at the endless opportunities I was offered within the Drama and Music departments. I feel an immense gratitude for all the extra involvements that I had access to beyond the classroom. All these experiences have already become special memories to me, depicting the valuable and positive impact that DESSC has imprinted on my secondary school recollections. Performing at DESSC helped sculpt my passionate persona where I learnt my true desire for performance and to continue my development in acting.

A major challenge I faced during my school journey was my anxiety. What's impactful about my journey is just how much my involvement

within the Drama department and all the extracurricular opportunities I took part in really helped me to overcome my anxiousness. I remember completing my first ever assessed monologue performance at the start of Year 10, in the black box studio room with the curtains drawn, the warm spotlights shining down centre stage in front of a small audience. But as soon as I started to act, I became the most me. I was able to just be in the moment, be in the room and act. The somewhat intimidating room suddenly became a space where I felt safe. That vivid memory sticks out to me as it encouraged me to pursue more acting opportunities that the department offered, as I was eager to perform more once I knew that I had the confidence and reassurance of my first performance to do so. I also remember when London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA) acting exams were introduced to the College; I started

on grade three and continued all the way up to grade eight. These exams really helped me overcome my anxieties and improved my stage confidence further. Attending LAMDA acting and musical theatre classes every Monday after school was always a highlight of my week, as I was able to creatively work towards a goal of an exam each year and this prepared me for my future GCSE and A level drama performances.

An exceptional experience that I had outside the classroom was my involvement with the DESSC Chamber Choir. I joined the choir in Year 11 (I wish I joined sooner!) and ever since joining I was surrounded by amazing performance opportunities. One of my proudest moments was singing for the BBC Proms alongside the BBC Singers in the Dubai Opera House, a fantastic moment that I will never forget. Another surreal experience I had was the opportunity to sing for





both 'Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban' and 'Gladiator' Live at the Opera House, an experience offered to me through taking part in Chamber Choir. I also had the honour of singing annually at the Remembrance Service at the British Embassy and the Veterans Poppy Ball, being able to represent the College proudly.

Another exceptional experience that I achieved throughout my time at DESSC was playing Dorothy in the production of 'The Wizard of Oz' whilst I was in Year 12. This was my first ever lead role in a musical and I was completely supported and encouraged every step of the way. I enjoyed collaborating across all year groups and I felt it was important to remain an approachable role model to younger peers. A challenge I faced during the production was that I completed the week of performances without knowing I had a slightly fractured foot. The show was able to go on as I had immense support from teachers and peers, and I was able to proudly persevere through with commitment. A key value that I took away from this role was the resilience to keep going and even if you don't always fully believe in yourself, the peer

support around DESC throughout these extracurriculars will really encourage you to think otherwise. Another school production that vividly stands out is my taking part in West Side Story during my last year of school before the pandemic. Even though this didn't get to be performed on stage, the everlasting memories made throughout the rehearsal process and community bond are still valuable to me; the soundtrack is so nostalgic to me now from these lasting moments of my final school year.

I have treasured memories of the extraordinary Performing Arts trips that I was lucky to take part in. The Visual Performing Arts London trip that was offered was just incredible. The opportunity to travel as a drama cohort seeing many amazing plays and musicals, as well as taking part in workshops with West End professionals and esteemed Performing Arts schools, was just unforgettable. I was also lucky enough to attend the Performing Arts Disneyland Paris trip in which I volunteered as a helper for their showcase. I helped during their weekly rehearsals for their show as part of my DofE (Duke of Edinburgh) volunteering where I was given a

glimpse of the theatre industry from a different perspective of teaching. I also enjoyed watching Othello at the Dubai Opera House with my Drama class as well as travelling to Sharjah Performing Arts Academy for engaging theatre workshops. Similarly, the introduction to Arts Ed International throughout my last year was an exciting process to see as a leading arts school helped the amazing Drama department.

Additionally, a standout, treasured memory I have is receiving my IGCSE award for the highest mark in Drama across the UAE. I wouldn't have been able to achieve this honourable award without the brilliant Performing Arts teachers and support I had within the Drama department at DESSC. I really was offered some of the best teaching, making my whole Drama GCSE and A level experiences enjoyable as well as shaping me into the performer I am now. This was a very special achievement for me as it cemented my self-belief in my capabilities in acting.

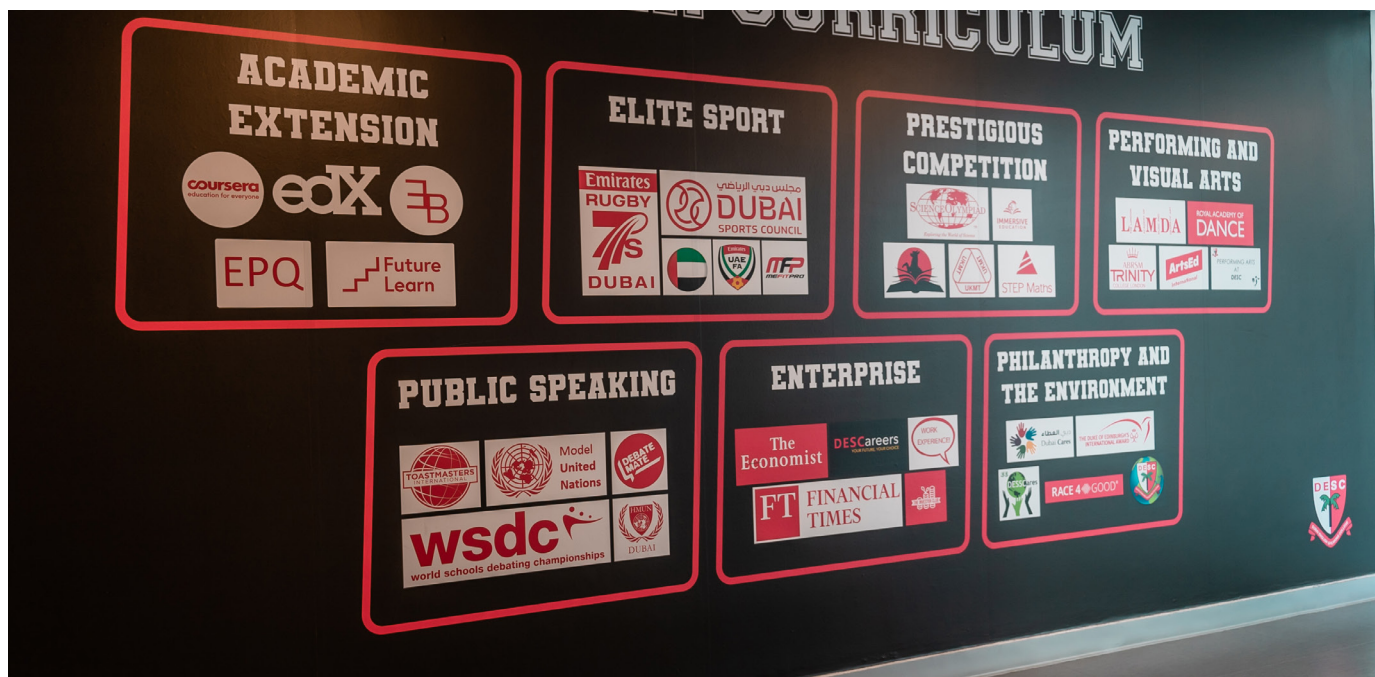
These collective extra experiences from my time at DESSC have benefitted me as a young adult by how much it guided me during my school journey. The resilience and motivation I learnt through my LAMDA exams and choir rehearsals helped influence my perseverance during the past two years at University during the pandemic. The many skills and wider knowledge that I gained through my DESSC experience have helped me grow and, most importantly, find my absolute life passion for performing. There is no possibility that you'd be able to go through a DESSC journey without amazing opportunities around every corner.





# THE SUPER-CURRICULUM

Peter Flynn | Academic Enrichment Manager, DESC



**“Super-curriculum”** - I still remember being puzzled when I first heard the word a decade ago. I was at a workshop designed to help students enter elite universities and was hoping to pick up some valuable tips on how best to gain entry to these elusive colleges. The super-curriculum, I soon learnt, differs from the extra-curriculum in one key respect: whereas the latter concerns those activities outside your chosen topic, and unrelated to your studies, super-curricular activities take the subjects you study further. In short, they deepen knowledge and cultivate key transferable skills that are so valued by universities.

Throughout the pandemic, the super-curriculum in the Sixth Form has continued unabated. In fact, participation has actually increased in spite of the face masks and logistical challenges.

Firstly, in 2021 a record 65 students completed the Extended Project Qualification or EPQ. Many of these students overcame the challenge of delivering their presentations online and working almost entirely independently to complete their 5,000 word dissertation or artefact,

achieving record results with over 70 percent attaining A\*/A. And the trend continues this year, with 75 students currently making the final changes to their EPQ projects. In particular, we are delighted by the number of students who have chosen to be innovative by completing an



**Muhammad Azim:**  
Computer build artefact



artefact project. In this cohort alone, we have play scripts, short films, novel extracts and art pieces, as well as a home-made computer, water leak detection system and even an experimental rocket with an onboard camera.

Thus, the EPQ lies at the centre of our super-curriculum and helps to generate many of the ideas that filter into the student body. Alongside this, our subject societies have been thriving. It is impossible to find a lunchtime when there is not some activity going on, whether it be a discussion in the Philosophy and Politics Society, a workshop in the Engineering Society or a lecture in the Business and Economics Society. These student-driven groups are crucial in terms of allowing our students to broaden their knowledge of a subject and to experiment with ideas that may not be part of the official curriculum. Transferable skills are also a key part of the process, with students learning to present, to edit newsletters, to organise events and cultivate leadership skills.

However, looking beyond the idea of education as merely being the acquisition of skills and knowledge, the societies do something which, in my opinion, is far more valuable - they foster a culture of learning and show that education has an intrinsic value that goes beyond university choices, employment prospects and market value. There can be no more satisfying sight for an educationalist than to see students deeply engaged in debates and scholarship on a purely voluntary basis, speaking to their peers about ideas that challenge and extend them. This is the super-curriculum at its best and we are fortunate that, in the College, this is part of our culture.

A further development is the emergence of high-quality newsletters that not only introduce students to new topics but also



**Dimash Askarov:**  
**Rocket "Zvezda" artefact**

gives them the opportunity to express themselves in the written form. The Medical Society and the Business Society have long been powerhouses in this regard but, this year, the Philosophy and Politics, Law and Psychology Societies have all produced outstanding publications, which explore topical issues and help to crystallise some of the ideas that have been discussed within the societies.

Finally, we were delighted to host our first ever Model United Nations Event on Sunday, 13th March. This club has been thriving at all levels, with over 80 members from Key Stages 3-5 in regular attendance. Under the supervision of Head of History, Ms Byrne, student leaders have been extremely proactive making all the resources for the conference themselves and organising the logistics of this

complex event. We hope that this is the beginning of many such events and, in the future, we hope to invite other schools.

In conclusion, this newsletter has only been able to touch upon the many super-curricular activities that have occurred during the course of the year. The College continues to be a place in which students can extend themselves far beyond the confines of the curriculum. In addition to achieving superb results, any world class Sixth Form also must seek to foster curiosity, independence and leadership in the student body; we feel that this is precisely what the super-curriculum is achieving.



**Kasia-Alexei Delpeche:**  
**Water detection system artefact**



# HOUSE PROUD

Holly Hadri & Ben Hantonne | House Leaders, DESS



“House” within DESS means more than just the colour of your PE kit. It’s an opportunity; an opportunity to belong, to support, to encourage and to lead. Whether Jaguar, Leopard, Lynx or Panther; the excitement and fun of being part of a ‘family’ is a truly wonderful experience for all children involved. It is here that our children can show their passion and enthusiasm, as well as developing their pride and compassion for the wider community.



Fostering an ethos of teamwork and community spirit has always been the rationale behind such a system; and never has this rationale been

more important than over the last couple of years. Like everything and everyone else, the way House operates had to be reevaluated and ultimately altered to fit the new world in which we currently find ourselves. Even so, what has become abundantly apparent is that the pride and passion House instills in the children and staff is still as strong if not stronger than ever before.

Our House Leaders have been tremendous this year and have committed themselves fully to developing House across the school by delivering competitions and events throughout the community. We asked these children a series of questions and below is a summary of what they had to say.

## Do you feel proud to be a House Leader and why?

Yes, we all feel proud to be House Leaders because we can help create fun ideas and events for everybody to join in with. It also made us proud to be selected and trusted by our classmates to be honest when collecting and delivering points.

Grace & Elsa





## What is your favourite aspect of being a House Leader?

I love the responsibility of collecting awarded points every week and making sure they tallied up with the rest of the school. It is also fun meeting with all the House Leaders to discuss new ideas and creating House spirit with our classes, we made lots of posters to cheer on our House during Sports Day.

**Jack & Jacob**



## How do you think being a House Leader could help you in the future?

I think this role will help me in the future because it has taught me to always think of new and interesting ideas for others. It has also helped me to be responsible for different tasks and I know that my class rely on me to deliver important messages. In the future, I think this role will help me to always offer my help to others.

**Sophie & Lara**

There have been so many wonderful moments already this year, where the House Leaders have risen to the challenge of supporting and encouraging their fellow team mates. Just to see the posters on



display during the Sports Days made it very obvious how passionate our House Leaders are.

One of the highlights so far this year has been the 4-Square tournament, which was open to all of Key Stage 2. An idea that stemmed from suggestions during our half termly House meetings, it was brought to fruition in February. The tournament offered House Leaders the opportunity to assist in

organising, as well as refereeing the games taking place. Seeing House Leaders take on such responsibility and leading with such calm and mature attitudes was truly inspiring and was a shining example of how leadership roles within DESS create and help to nurture the future leaders of tomorrow.

Forever House Proud!





# LEADERS: THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE HOUSE A HOME

Emma Fletcher | Deputy Head of Earth House, DESC



Miss Fletcher, Deputy Head of Earth House met with the Senior House Leaders to find out a little more about how their experiences at DESC have helped shape them into aspiring leaders. Here's what they had to say:

Student Leadership is something I have always pursued and, from Years 7-9, I was privileged to be Sports Leader. However, during Years 10-12, I was unsuccessful when applying for Junior House Leader and Prefect positions. I did not let that stop me and put all my effort into ensuring I became Deputy House Leader and then, this year, I was incredibly proud to be given the role of Senior House Leader. A piece of advice I would like to give to people is to keep being persistent, keep putting in the effort, because a good leader never gives up.

From a young age, I have always loved sports. DESC has given me so many opportunities such as taking part in Swimming, Rugby and

Netball. They have helped me channel my emotions in a healthy way and get to know new people and make many friends. I believe the most popular activity for students to take part in are sports events/competitions due to the incredible facilities here at DESC. They encourage participation and competition between friends. One of the best things about DESC, and probably one of the things I will miss the most, are the people. With 79 different nationalities in our College, events like International Day stand out as a highlight in my memory. The friends I have made at DESC are from all over the world and learning more

about each of their cultures is so enthralling. Being a House Leader has challenged me to do things I could have never imagined doing, for example, preparing a virtual Assembly for KS3 and KS4, taking part in the leadership program and public speaking. The opportunities I've had being a House Leader have helped boost my confidence and will push me to try new things.

**Maryam - Desert House**

Having been at DESC since the age of 12, I have been lucky enough to experience so many of the opportunities available, whether through extra-curricular activities or leadership roles over the years, to the incredible teaching staff providing outstanding academic opportunities. One such experience was during an A-Level Photography workshop, where we got to throw eggs at a clear sheet of acrylic, trying to understand shutter speed!

My journey over the past three years to becoming Senior House Leader has equipped me with many tools for future life. One of those being the opportunity to experience an interview process. This gave





me knowledge and confidence going into my first interview for a part-time position with a large company. Throughout my time I have experienced many memorable moments including joining sports teams and witnessing the incredible sense of community on the playing-field.

A standout moment was receiving the call congratulating me on becoming Senior House Leader and being informed that the previous leader had recommended me. Alongside the amazing experiences of the classroom, it's all the extra things that has made growing up at DESC a magical experience. I am excited about my future embarking on a Bachelor of Fine Art degree, as well as using my interview experience to get another swim teaching job in England.

**Alannah - Earth House**

Being Sky House Leader has benefited me significantly and has taught me what it means to be a great leader. The role itself has made me more sociable and confident in speaking to new people, helping me make new connections and relationships with teachers and students alike. This will certainly help me in the future in the workplace and beyond as it has taught me the importance of communicating effectively, building strong relationships and working as a team. A memory that stands out the most to me during my time at DESC would have to be when we had to help organise the Festive Gifts for the site staff; it involved



a lot of collaboration and teamwork in making sure that everyone would receive gifts that would bring smiles to their faces over the holidays.

Ultimately, it was a gratifying experience for us to give back to the people that make this College outstanding and a joy to be in. An experience that I had at DESC that taught me a lot about working with a team was taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award. This involved me being in a group with three of my friends, navigating our way through an unfamiliar area and setting up camp for a night. Personally, it was something I had never done before and taught me a lot about patience and communication. It was an experience that I will never forget as it not only taught me about survival but I had fun and made some great memories.

**Lauren - Sky House**

Since I started at DESC in Year 12, I have only experienced life as a member of the Sixth Form. Despite this, I have been given a lot of

opportunities which have helped me become more confident and social as a new student in a school full of familiar faces and friendships since Year 7. Through my experience as Coast House Leader, I am aware of the extra activities offered during breaks and lunchtimes for students across the College. For those who love sport there are varying events, which are always hugely popular. In contrast, to those who are more academic, the lunchtime activities allow students to interact and compete against each other through games such as chess and charades; there really is something for everyone!

Something else that stands out for me at DESC is how we are treated as young adults and are encouraged to take ownership of our learning and time management. For example, during my free periods, I have been able to attend the gym and netball training; this helps me refocus when I feel I need to relax and recharge!

During my time at DESC, I have created lifelong bonds, which has made it a positive experience as a new student, allowing me to quickly adapt to a new environment. I am super excited for my next chapter of going to university and I know the skills I have adopted and learnt from being a House Leader will certainly put me in good stead for all of my future endeavours.

**Teo - Coast House**





# “BEING SURROUNDED BY FAMILY AT DESS,”

**Siva Manickam** | Site Technician, DESS



## **Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?**

My name is Siva, and I grew up in Tamil Nadu in India. I came to the United Arab Emirates 14 years ago and my first job, which lasted for nine years, was for a company in Sharjah working as a fabricator. Back home I have my father and mother, as well as my wife and a four year old daughter called Vaishali.

## **Why did you move to Dubai?**

I want to be able to provide a better life for my family, and now also my child. There is more opportunity to do this away from my home. This year, I have been able to build my own home in India for my family to live in. I am very proud of this. I use video calls to stay in contact with my family at home.

## **How did you end up working at DESS?**

When I was working in Sharjah, I was able to meet with some staff from DESS and they told me about working here. In the site staff team, there are people from the same region in India which makes it nice working at DESS. When one of us travels home for a holiday, we sometimes take gifts or messages back to the other families, and we try to meet up with them if they are nearby.

## **What are favourite memories of DESS, outside of the normal day-to-day work?**

Every day, I enjoy the early morning when the children are in school, always with lots of smiles. I particularly like this with the FS1 children as they remind me of my daughter, Vaishali. Also, every two months or so, all the site staff have a cricket tournament on the field. We make up two teams, the DESS Super Kings vs the DESS Super Stars. This is a very competitive but fun event that everyone takes part in, including Mr Rycroft. Afterwards, we all enjoy a celebration and dinner together. Other than that, I like having time to relax or watch movies.

## **What has been your favourite school event and why?**

My favourite event at school is the

International Day celebration. I like the music and the atmosphere, with everyone happy and having a good time. There is always a good stall for India which helps make it feel like having a little bit of home here at DESS.

## **Throughout your time at DESS, what are the main things you feel you have learned and experienced?**

Everybody works together and helps each other. Everybody smiles all the time and is polite with saying please and thank you. This is another thing I have enjoyed, learning different cultures and how people talk to each other. It is a little different from what I knew growing up in India. People take time to be polite and talk nicely all the time.

## **What will stick with you in the future when you move on from DESS?**

I don't want to leave DESS for a very long time. When I do, I will always remember the smiles of the children. I love to see them so happy all the time and this makes my day more enjoyable. Also, working with good people who I feel like they are my family. I have been in the UAE for a long time, most of my adult life, and the team of site staff feel like my brothers, always looking after each other.



# THE LIFE OF PI

**Sharon Davies** | Director of Mathematics, DESSC

We regularly see reported increases in the uptake of sporting activities following high-profile sporting events on the world stage. The recent gold medal achieved at the Winter Olympics by Team GB in the curling has drawn a new generation to the sport and spawned several articles about the increase in its popularity in the UK press. The extra-curricular activities we run at the College don't receive the same media coverage, but they can still have the same impact, cultivating the curiosity of a new generation of mathematicians.

Mathematics plays a fundamental part in human thought and logic; it plays an important role in the understanding of subjects such as Science, Geography, Business and Economics. We are dedicated to harbouring a love of mathematics not only in what we do within the classroom but also in what we do beyond. While the Covid-19 pandemic has indeed impacted many of the competitions we have run, we have still managed to maintain two of our most popular events, which grow in number and size each year.

The first is the UKMT (United Kingdom Mathematics Trust), a UK-based trust whose aim is to provide enrichment activities 'to open young people's minds to the breadth and depth of mathematics'.

With over 700,000 entries each year it is the UK's most popular school mathematical challenge. We enter approximately 120 students for each of the lower school competitions each year - Junior (Years 7 and 8) and Intermediate (Years 9, 10 and 11), with 60 students taking part in the Senior (Years 11, 12 and 13) event. Of note, we have been proud to observe students qualifying for the Kangaroo rounds following the initial challenge, which is reserved for only the highest scoring students.

The second is Pi Day, celebrated on 14th March each year - coincidentally, this is also the birthday of the very famous mathematician and physicist, Albert Einstein. 'Probably no symbol in mathematics has evoked as much mystery, romanticism, misconception and human interest as the number Pi,' (William L. Schaaf, *Nature and History of Pi*, 1967). Pi Day is an opportunity for us to celebrate the mathematical constant Pi, the symbol,  $\pi$ , many of you will remember from your school days. The main event on the day itself is the Pi recital competition. The world record for reciting Pi is held by Rajveer Meena, who recited 70,000 digits in nine hours and seven minutes.

The atmosphere this year during the Pi Day celebrations was electric, with students reciting Pi all over

the College campus. The day was rounded off with the Pi Day run, 3.14 miles around the campus at 3:14pm. We saw the previous school record of 519 digits of Pi (held by Sarah Al-Hajj for several years) smashed by Jeff Sunil in Year 9. Jeff recited an incredible 727 digits of Pi and, just like the Olympic sporting heroes mentioned earlier, he has inspired many students across the College to attempt to break his record during Pi Day 2023!







# SPORTS DAY 2022

Michael Randall | Director of Sport, DESC



In the spring of 2007, Josie Duffy; a bright Year 7 student of the newly formed Dubai English Speaking College, stepped up to the freshly painted line to compete in the Javelin throw. At the time, there was no House System as we know it now. Students competed as year groups and the four Houses of Stallions, Scorpions, Falcons and Vipers did not have the same acclaim. Josie was competing for the joy and pleasure of taking part in Sports Day. Little did she know that she was about to set a new College record that would stand for over 15 years; one that still stands today.



This year saw the addition of a Fitness Challenge, Rugby, Volleyball, Football, Waterpolo, Netball, Handball and Table Tennis, whilst still honoring the traditional track and field events. The focus of the day was participation and fun, and this was certainly the case, with over 1,300 students enthusiastically taking part in sport over the two days. Students also explored the different opportunities that sport can create, Sports Media being one of these. Photographers and Videographers from A Level Photography and A



We have come a long way since 2007, moving from a traditional Sports Day that showcased track and field athletics, to an all-encompassing celebration of sport. DESC uplifts and motivates all students to benefit from sport at varying levels, from high performance competitive sport to recreational play for fun. We encourage a multi-sport approach, where students should avoid specialising too early. In fact, they should try as many different sports and activities as possible before their late teen years. Through this multi-sport approach, they develop better physical literacy, creativity and athleticism. We have tried to reflect this in the structure of our newly fashioned Sports Day.



Level Media documented the day, whilst over 100 Sixth Form students volunteered as referees, officials and coaches for the day, without whom the day would not have been a success.

So, let's go back to Josie Duffy and the opportunities she would have if she was at DESC today. Let's ponder for a moment and wonder how many activities she would have signed up for and which House she may have been representing, enjoying the time with her friends and making the most of the day.





# HANNAH AL ALI

DESSC Alumna and Trustee

I am Dr Hannah Al Ali and I am the Dean of the School of Mathematics and Data Science at Emirates Aviation University. I recently completed my PhD in Mathematics at Coventry University. I also hold a Master of Research from Coventry University and BSc (Honours) in Mathematics from Brunel University, London. My research interests are in Applied Mathematics, Data Science and Mathematical Modelling of diseases, with a particular focus on diabetes modelling.

**What challenges did you face during your journey at DESSC? How did your experiences help you overcome them?**

Some of the challenges I faced in my journey at DESSC were struggling to balance studying for exams with after school activities, having been a keen netball player. After being

extremely overwhelmed, not doing as well as I would have liked in my first AS exams, I was forced to figure out what I needed to do in order to be successful. Thanks to the caring teachers at DESSC, they made me feel extremely supported and showed me how to manage pressures and stress in a productive way and in turn this allowed me to achieve the A level grades I wanted.

**Tell us about your experiences outside the classroom at DESSC. What are your most treasured memories?**

Some of the most treasured memories I have at DESSC are from the two sports tours I took part in. In Year 6, we participated in the BSME games for netball in Bahrain. This was an exciting experience and was the first time flying without my parents. Spending time with

my friends/fellow netball team players is definitely something I will always remember. In Year 13, we got to go on another netball tour to Singapore and Malaysia. This was a great trip and was a nice way to end our school journey before heading off to university.

**What skills, knowledge or values have you taken with you from your DESSC 'extra' experiences? How have they benefitted you as an adult?**

The skills I learnt were to be more responsible, independent, patient and flexible and also to understand other people and their cultures. These skills help me every day in my life as a Dean of a department, with many different nationalities working with me.



# LET'S DEBATE

Kate Rickson | Second in Charge of English, DESC



What do the strawman, splitting hairs and ad hominem have in common? Our DESC Debaters could tell you! The origins of debating can be traced back to Ancient Greece, but what relevance does the art of debating have today? In the world of cancel culture, internet trolls, blocking and muting, it is essential that we encourage our students not only to question, but also to listen and appreciate the opinions of others. In the words of Joseph Joubert, "It is better to debate a question without settling it, than to settle a question without debating it".

Debating teaches students the power of their own voice and, with that being said, let us hear from them.

We interviewed a range of students about their experience of debate. Myra Kirmani is the President of the DESC Debate Society, while Ayana Mulla and Elisabeth Freeman are the society's KS4 leaders. Hannah Mackie fronts the KS3 division, and all four students are passionate and committed members of the society.

**If you are interested in joining the fun, why not attend our Debate ECA, every Monday, 3.15pm - 4.15pm in Sky block. We have over 100 representatives across Years 7-13 and all debating abilities are welcome.**

**Describe, in your own words, what debating means to you and why you enjoy it...**

**Hannah:** Debating is a way of expressing myself, a way of voicing an opinion and a way in which I can learn to create cohesive arguments. I enjoy debate as it allows me to widen my own knowledge and form





critical opinions which ultimately help me, not only in my schoolwork, but in life.

**Myra:** Debating is my biggest passion and I devote more than five hours a week to it. From the adrenaline rush before a debate to the “Aha!” moment when you finally come up with your final, ‘quirky’ argument during prep time, working with your team and sharing witty, clever responses with each other is always a highlight. My favourite aspect,

public speaking, which benefits me greatly as, with every debate, my confidence grows.

**Elisabeth:** Debate has taught me to become more perceptive in my approach to answering questions. My listening skills have improved as I must be constantly alert, sometimes for over an hour, so that I can follow and ultimately break down the opposing team’s case. The patience that comes with paying methodic and meticulous attention to detail

the feeling of excitement when you find holes in your opposition’s case and, most exhilarating of all, the moment when you find out you have won the debate through gruelling and painstaking teamwork. The relationships you build with your team are singular; they’ve seen you at your most delirious, passionately declaring why the house should win after 12 hours of exhausting debate!



however, is the actual speech. Being able to passionately express yourself is something you can only achieve through debate.

**Elisabeth:** For me, debating can only be described as an expansion of my intellectual horizons; it has allowed me not only to delve into deeper studies of current and past politics, but also question things that I had never thought twice about. It has taught me to analyse and evaluate arguments, so that I may dismantle and rebut them.

### What important skills does debating develop and why are these skills so valuable?

**Hannah:** Debating develops the ability to craft carefully constructed arguments which force us to be highly critical and perceptive. Debate also develops

in constructing and deconstructing arguments has also taught me how to support and win my arguments, a skill that has been massively important to my essay subjects like History and English Literature.

**Ayana:** Learning to debate at DESC has enabled me to elucidate my perspective on controversial topics through utilising rhetorical eloquence. Debate is a valuable experience that I believe every student deserves to have, as it not only encourages lateral thinking, but has instilled a poise and candour in me that will certainly help in possible future jobs, such as politics and management.

### What is a debate competition like?

**Elisabeth:** The atmosphere is truly amazing; the adrenaline you feel right before you present your speech,

### What is your favourite memory since you joined the Debate Society?

**Hannah:** My favourite memory since joining the Debate Society has been meeting so many new people, especially those in the year above who I had not previously spoken to. This, alongside debating, has been a continuous confidence boost, which has ultimately given me the confidence to apply for a Senior Student Leadership role this academic year.

**Myra:** Working with new debaters and guiding them through the wonderful world of debating. The DESC Debate Society adopts a student-led approach and we are working towards a greater focus on international competitions, to further DESC’s strive for excellence in all areas. Hence, the Debate Senior Leaders have been having





regular meetings to plan for the future, which is very exciting!

**Elisabeth:** My favourite memory is of the prestigious Gulf Debates Competition; we were overjoyed to win the Bowl finals!

### What are your favourite topics or issues to debate and why?

**Hannah:** I enjoy debating contentious issues as this encourages us to be highly critical and impartial in our own beliefs. To debate these issues with passion and believability, you must be able to put aside your own opinions to focus on the motion, even if you don't agree with the stance you are taking. Ultimately, this is a very important life lesson as it teaches impartiality, judgement and reasoning.

**Elisabeth:** I enjoy debates about political situations around the world as it gives me an interesting scope of knowledge on present-day global issues.

### Can anyone debate?

**Myra:** Of course! Debate is for everyone and the DESC Debate Society embodies that. Our Society is the largest in College and boasts participation from students with a myriad of interests: we have STEM students, artists, politicians and

sportsmen, all working towards improving as debaters, as well as team players. The best way to get better at debate is to debate often and build one's knowledge bank. It is important to debate in front of an experienced judge or senior debater, who can tell you where to improve. Additionally, I highly recommend watching WSDC debates on YouTube to get a hang of the format and learn how the best of the best debate.

**W**

**Elisabeth:** I believe anyone can debate; I had never tried debate before this year and I've grown into a confident and able orator. It's important you say yes to every opportunity to debate, because you will get better with practice.

**Hannah:** Anyone can most certainly debate as debate requires no experience to begin with, only the desire to try something different. When I began debating, I was incredibly timid and didn't know where to start. Even the idea of speaking to two or three people scared me but now, thanks to the DESC Debate Society, my confidence has grown exponentially. Never give up! Over time your confidence will grow and you will bond with your fellow team mates, who aid and support you so that you feel confident when debating.

**Ayana:** Being a beginner debater, I have learned that debating is not something you need to be naturally talented at, but rather an indispensable skill that you acquire with consistent practice.

We hope you have enjoyed hearing first-hand what DESC Debate means to our students. If you are interested in joining the fun, why not attend our Debate ECA, every Monday, 3.15pm - 4.15pm in Sky block. We have over 100 representatives across Years 7-13 and all debating abilities are welcome.







# LET THE PAST TAKE A BOW, THE FOREVER IS NOW

Sarah O'Hare | Performing Arts Leader, DESS

The past two years have presented many challenging situations for the Performing Arts Department, as well as the wider school community at DESS. Being innovative and, in short, keeping the show on the road, has resulted in the Department now having many new strings to its bow. Following the recent easing of restrictions, the children are back entertaining once again. Here is a synopsis of the musical enrichment activities taking place.



Tuesday Tunes, Desstive Day and International Day

Every Tuesday morning at 7.40am, our talented musicians gather to show off to parents and friends, by performing inside the front gates of the school. Whether singing a favorite song, rocking on the drums, or finding the right keys on the piano, the sounds of Tuesday Tunes always manages to bring a smile to even the grumpiest of morning faces.



A unique and fun-filled event: DESStive day has become an important date on the school calendar. This year, parents and staff worked extremely hard to ensure the day was a success, transforming the school into a winter wonderland for the children to explore.

Displaying great determination and a can-do attitude, the Rock Band, Choir, String Quartet, Year 6 Dance group and individual soloists, performed proudly to the DESS community.

Having DESS mums and dads back on the school campus as a live audience, and seeing the children rise to the occasion created a much needed positive spirit at the end of Term One.

A multicoloured array of outfits brightened up the school grounds on International Day as the DESS community came together to celebrate. Talented musicians from across KS2 with the help of

some dancing mums, ensured that the atmosphere at International Day Picnic was electric. Rock Band, String Group and individual performers entertained the audience, showcasing their talent to the younger fans who eagerly supported their big brothers and sisters.

## Choir and Dance

According to a 2016 study at the University of Southern California's Brain and Creativity Institute; musical experiences in childhood can actually accelerate brain development. The study found that music ignites all areas of child development, including intellectual, social-emotional, motor, language, and overall literacy. Dancing to music helps children build motor skills while allowing them to practice self-expression.

With over 120 children attending Dance groups and Choir each week at DESS, the positive impact music





has on the wellbeing of our children is clear to see. Whether singing with passion in Choir or expressing themselves creatively in Dance, these children are always eager to participate fully. Apart from having an opportunity to sing and dance with friends, creating friendships and strengthening social skills is part and parcel of the Choir and Dance experience at DESS.

### ECAs and Peripatetic Lessons

The extra-curricular Performing Arts programme at DESS provides children with an opportunity to flourish in a variety of musical experiences. With beginner tuition groups on offer in woodwind, brass and strings, the children can gain an understanding of the aptitude needed for learning an instrument before deciding whether to enroll in instrumental lessons. This year, there are over 100 children taking instrumental tuition each week at DESS. Children of all ages with smiling faces, carrying drumsticks, violin cases, guitars and piano books are accompanied by music teachers travelling to and from lessons every 30 minutes. The correlation between learning a musical instrument and increased confidence, connection to others and discipline, is evident to see.

### ICT in PA

The expansion of technology within society is a defining feature of the twenty-first century,

revolutionising how people work, learn, communicate and spend their leisure time. This is particularly true in the domain of music, where technology has become a presence, in musical creation and production. The Performing Arts Department is very pleased to have new iMacs in the Music room this term. With the latest software applications installed, the children have access to a professional recording studio here on the school campus. Students in KS2 can create and arrange music in digital format, without needing an in-depth knowledge of music theory. We look forward to hearing the melodic creations from the music 'techies' next term.

### Year Two - The Bee Musical

The Performing Arts Department at DESS are thrilled to welcome the return of live shows in our school this year. In Term 2 the 'bee team' in Year 2 have taken to the stage in the Latifa Hall to remind us how important the role of bees is for our

environment. Singing songs which encourage the audience to 'bee there' and 'think things through', the children put on a fantastic show in their return to the stage. We thoroughly enjoyed hearing the buzz from the beehive in Year 2.

### Year 6 - Mary Poppins the Musical

In Term Three, the children in Year 6 will showcase their talents. This time, the straight-talking, no-nonsense Mary Poppins takes to the stage, encouraging children to be resilient, grateful and, above all, to see the positive in situations.

Having completed auditions, the Year 6 children have started the 'adventure' and are quickly becoming aware of the expectations this extraordinary nanny has. The advanced choreography and up-beat songs are a 'practically perfect' example of the adventures which lie ahead when walking with Mary Poppins. Her 'today or never' attitude makes this musical the ideal show for the Year 6 students to perform at the end of the year.

We wish them every success when their time comes to take the stage.

The children who take part in Performing Arts are resilient, determined and very creative. They will always strive to ensure the show continues at DESS. May they continue to flourish.





# MAKING MEMORIES THROUGH MEANINGFUL ADVENTURES

**Victoria Atkinson** | Assistant Headteacher, DESS

The pandemic has impacted many aspects of education, with residential trips being top of the list. But after all, are school trips not a bit of a jolly? More the 'icing on the cake' than an essential part of the school experience. In short,



Take a moment, close your eyes and think: I can almost guarantee you will be able to recall a school trip from your childhood. Do you know why? It is because these are the experiences a child remembers. Different scenery, new relationships, pushing boundaries and conquering fears; all catalysts



for self-development and change. This academic year, we have successfully taken both our Years 5 and 6 children to The Adventure Centre, Hatta, to experience a two-night, three-day residential. The most recent trip saw our Year 5 children heading for the escape of the Hajar mountains and to say the excitement was palpable, was an understatement. As the coach pulled away from school gate and children were tucking avidly into their first packet of sweets, we

and as their life experiences grow, so does their perspective on themselves and the world in which we live. Experiencing this heightened level of independence in a safe and positive environment has undoubtedly boosted the confidence of our Year 5 and 6 children, as well as allowing the children to make lifelong memories.

From raft building to abseiling, archery to survival skills, the children lived and breathed the

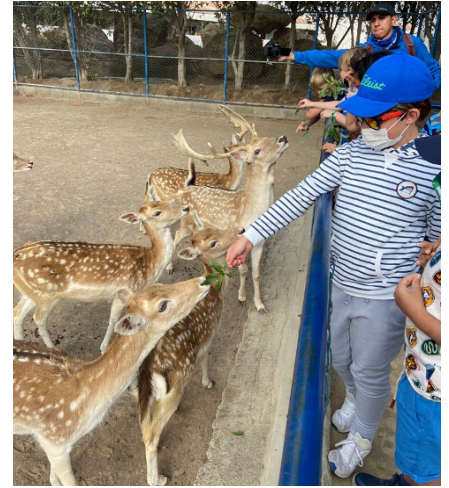


were humbly reminded that, for most of our children, this two-night trip was their first real taste of independence.

With every school trip, each child ventures into undiscovered territory

outdoors from the moment they arrived. For both our Year 5 and 6 groups, embracing all the activity the programme had to offer saw children pushing themselves outside of their comfort zone in a bid to develop resilience and





perseverance. Whilst activities like the blindfolded maze were designed to promote teamwork and collaboration skills, some sessions such as 'Human Bowling' and 'Movie Under the Stars' were purely for enjoyment and memory making. A jam-packed itinerary resulted in minimal opportunities for longing for home.

For each group, The Adventure Centre also awards the 'Tom Crean Award' as a recognition of personal achievement during the residential. Throughout the week, the children are encouraged not only to think about themselves, but to thrive



children, has never been more apparent. Experiences that take our DESS children outside of their comfort zone are essential for personal growth and developing an appetite for trying new things.

It was a privilege and a joy to be able to attend both residential trips; an opportunity to observe children flourish in a way in which the four walls of a classroom do not allow. So, to any parents reading this article, if it is your child's turn to embrace the unknown of a residential trip next year, I champion this opportunity with every bone in my body!



and excel in their support for others. Character strengths such as humility, compassion and courage are valued and celebrated as an essential part of the experience.

For a nine or ten-year-old, it would be remiss of me not to mention the challenges of looking after oneself, knowing when to shower, to change into fresh clothes, or knowing when you need to reap the benefits of good night's sleep! However, every experience is a valuable experience, and one which we embrace, and will continue to embrace, with open arms here at DESS.

As we look ahead to next academic year, my mind is already considering how we can further extend these experiences into KS2. The need to explore and embrace the outdoors, especially amongst our young





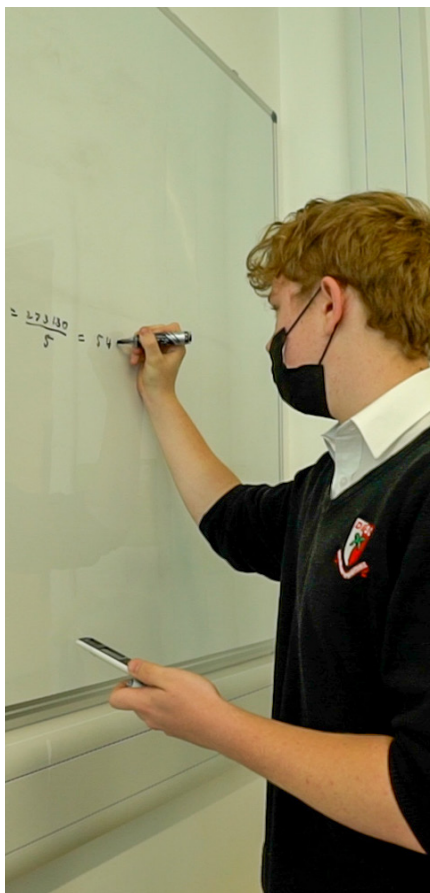
# PINEAPPLE WEEK

Teaching and Learning Team | DESC

The Teaching and Learning Team at DESC have been experimenting with a personalised approach to professional development. We wanted to give our staff body the opportunity, as teachers, to collaborate, observe, ask and reflect. At DESC, we have some of the very best Professional Development available to us under our own roof, and we wanted to give everyone the opportunity to get into each other's classrooms to learn from one another, and this led us to Pineapple Week...

During Pineapple Week @DESC we wanted to encourage an open-door policy where staff were encouraged to pop in and visit another teacher; this could have been a teacher down the corridor, from another department or in another House block. Teachers did not necessarily stay for the whole lesson; it might have been a five minute visit.

After they had visited another classroom, teachers were encouraged to celebrate and appreciate the learning that takes



represents warm welcomes, celebrations and hospitality? And, did you know that years ago pineapples were hung on doorways as a symbol of warmth; they would be hung outside doors as a way of welcoming guests into their homes.

place on a daily basis by giving the teacher a 'Shout Out'; these were collated in our 'Pineapple Picks of the Day'. As a result of this, we noticed tools and strategies spreading through the College. After reading a 'Pineapple Pick' about students completing a retrieval wheel activity and using the tables as whiteboards, a teacher decided to go and see this technique in action and then utilised it themselves. The variety of techniques, strategies and tips that teachers picked up across the week were endless.

Pineapple Week @DESC has given teachers the opportunity to informally observe their colleagues, and we believe that some of the best Professional Development available to teachers lives inside the walls of DESC. If we watch each other teach more, we all have the chance to grow exponentially. As a result of Pineapple Week, we believe that informal observations and an open-door policy will become part of the College's culture.







WISHING  
ALL OF  
OUR  
FAMILIES  
EID  
MUBARAK



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