

## Abingdon School in Partnership Review of the Year

As we reach the end of the academic year and summer is upon us, we would like to reflect and share a summary of some of the partnership activities that have taken place. We would also like to give our heartfelt thanks to the numerous members of staff and students who have given their time to make these activities happen.

In a year like no other with frequent disruptions to education and daily life, partnerships with local schools have continued to develop and thrive. With frequent adjustments and backup plans, zoom links and cancellations, there have been many challenges to our partnership programme. However, strong relationships between partner colleagues and flexibility from staff and students have meant that there has been a huge number of successes.

Students have been given the opportunity to take part in partnership leadership roles in the **Academic Coaching** and **Peer Support Lead programmes**. Over 60 students from across the town were involved in the Academic Coaching programme which involved leadership and coaching training before using these skills to provide weekly coaching sessions to younger students. One 6th form coach said 'I'm glad I took part because I think it improved my confidence and maturity.' For further information please see the ISC article [here](#) and the website link [here](#). After a successful interview process, the third townwide PSL cohort of over 60 students was recruited. Initial online training has taken place and we hope to run in-person training with all PSLs in September. Once training in safeguarding, mental health issues, listening skills and creative loitering has been completed, they will be a supportive presence around their schools, using their knowledge and skills to add another element to pastoral support systems. Read more [here](#)

A Partnership Coordinator was appointed in November to support the running of ASiP and develop a **new formal townwide partnership**. Formal, mutually beneficial and sustainable school partnerships are supported and encouraged by the DfE to allow for a collaborative approach to education. Meetings have been held with School leaders from Abingdon, Radley, SHSK, John Mason, Larkmead and Fitzharrys to create a partnership Memorandum of Understanding. The overarching aim of the partnership will be 'To Provide opportunities for students and staff to challenge, inspire and learn from each other.' The key priorities for students, staff and parents within the partnership are Challenge: Provide opportunities for aspiration and challenge through widening horizons for all stakeholders.

Inspire: Use extracurricular activities to develop character, promote cultural engagement and support civic pride.

Support: Support the mental health and wellbeing of students, staff and parents using a whole partnership approach. This partnership will run alongside ASiP and be called OX14 Learning Partnership. We look forward to running a variety of partnership activities within the formal framework and hope to launch in September.

Please read the news update on the website for further information [here](#)

Despite being unable to host their usual clubs and workshops in person, **Abingdon Science Partnership** has continued to play an active role in the partnerships programme. **SCAMPA** - The SCAMPA (Schools Clean Air Monitoring Project in Abingdon) has involved 13 schools and allows students to contribute data to a real research project. With substantial funding from the Royal Society of Chemistry, international collaboration with the University of Chile and local backing from the ATOM Festival, it is a fantastic opportunity for our young scientists. Follow @AbSciPart on Twitter for live data reports. See the article [here](#). **Primary Science Club** - As part of the Primary Science Club, 36 Abingdon School Science Ambassadors devised remote ways of engaging primary school pupils with STEM. Activities in the making include: supporting pupils to enter the international FLUOR Engineering Challenge and a video demo of the burning jelly baby experiment. Check out their work so far [here](#). The success of PSC has been recognised by National STEM Learning by inviting Jeremy and two Senior Science Ambassadors to present at a national workshop for around 120 teachers on how to run a student-led science club. This work has been written about on the ASDAN website [here](#). Remote learning skills have been put to good use by both ASP staff and Science Ambassadors. The Forces and Spaceflight workshop was delivered remotely to Buckland Primary School's Year 5 class with activities. The Primary Science Club Science Ambassadors also developed excellent, online resources to share with primary schools but have also started a Q+A activity where pupils have been emailing them with science questions that they have been researching and answering. These were our favourites: 'How do axolotl regrow missing limbs?' and 'How does time work?'

**Mercers' STEM Funding** - Funding from the Mercers' Company has been used to fund part-time Science Study Support Assistants at John Mason, Larkmead and Fitzharrys to support students who may need further support. Plans are now well underway for a STEM Enrichment week in July where selected students from partner schools will receive small group teaching across the Sciences as well as two days at Abingdon and Witney College.

**Oxfordshire Academy of Broadcast Journalism** Jeremy Taylor and Olly Hogben, Sports Commentator, have successfully launched the OABJ across our partner schools. 48 students signed up to take part in taster sessions to find out more about creating podcasts, writing a blog post and presenting. They have now also taken part in a development session where they were supported to create their own work. The project endeavours to

increase diversity in the world of broadcasting and has been popular among students. Read more [here](#)

### **Colet mentoring/ Easy A maths mentoring app pilot**

Over 30 Maths mentors in sixth forms across the town have been trained to use the Colet mentoring app to support younger students with their Maths homework. Users send a photo of the tricky question to the app and will be coached through the problem by a mentor via the chat function. We hope this will allow students quick and easy homework help at their fingertips. We aim to develop this further in September after reflecting on the initial pilot.

**Primary Partnerships** - Staff and students have enjoyed recording themselves reading stories to share with local primary students. These will be stored as a resource on the website. Read more [here](#). Art sessions have also been run remotely for partner schools and resources provided for lesson planning and home learning. We look forward to the prospect of holding in-person primary events again as soon as we are able.

With the support of a new **Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator**, appointed in November, we have continued to embed wellbeing within our partnership work. This has been particularly relevant in such a challenging year. The school has hosted two webinars, one about supporting mental health within your family with Shahroo Izadi and Natasha Devon MBE. The other was in collaboration with Abingdon's alumni association, Old Abingdonians, *'Managing The Mind In Uncertain Times.'* This included a series of talks by OA panellists on strategies for managing our mental health, including the 5 Ways To Wellbeing, transitioning to university and the workplace, using CBT techniques to manage anxiety and living with depression. Weekly yoga videos have been shared across our partner schools to support wellbeing. Natalie continues to run mental health first aid training sessions and is looking to continue to include partner school staff in this in the future.

There have been numerous other activities including an art competition asking students to demonstrate their experiences of lockdown in an art piece. Beatboxing with Shlomo was our first music partnership event and required audience participation which was enjoyed by all. Abingdon Film Academy continues to work with students in partner schools to develop film production skills.

Several talks have been shared with partner schools including a Maths talk and History lecture. The annual After Abingdon event was held remotely and included partner schools as part of our Higher Education and alternative routes offering.

We are looking forward to some sense of normality next academic year, although we have learnt many lessons from 2020/21. Partnerships in a pandemic have shown us the flexibility and resilience of schools and their staff and students and the power of connections in challenging times. New ways of working have led us to reflect on our processes and future plans. We, of course, look forward to seeing people in person again and allowing students and staff to mix freely but will never forget the enhanced accessibility of a zoom meeting. We hope to continue to raise the profile of partnerships across the town, please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to get involved.