

Encouraging entrepreneurship



Nick Dyson, director of creative enterprise at Francis Holland School, Sloane Square, has led by example during the lockdown by bringing together volunteers to create vital resources for families



and Pimlico, as well as charities In-Deep Community Taskforce and Katherine Low Settlement. We have also developed close links with The Hewitt School in New York and Mvumi Secondary School in Tanzania. For the latter, I coordinate an annual Alam Award which encourages our pupils to design and provide practical solutions to issues facing the community in Mvumi.

The director of creative enterprise is an SLT position and I am fortunate to share an office with the deputy head academic, who often comments on how academic results come in the 'slipstream' of our creative, innovative and enterprising co-curricular programme, trips and events. That said, the relationships between subject teachers and our pupils, along with teaching expertise, plays a huge part in our academic success.

Q During lockdown you created a national campaign called Cofight-19 to provide free resources for families; why did you do this and how did you put it together?

Working at a school that prides itself on pastoral care and pulses with creativity (using many of the seven Cs) and energy, it was when the Covid-19 crisis hit us that I realised just how much support might not be immediately available to our families. I spoke with Julie Johnson (experienced parenting expert and therapist) and Gavin Drake (psychologist who runs Mindspan – both of whom have carried out impressive work in schools and were willing to give their time and expertise to a campaign.

Immediately, mentoring company Ludowide jumped in and have been instrumental to the campaign's success. With their energy and ability to think outside the box, company leaders Charis Elphinstone and Joe Alexander donated not only their company mascot to the project (check out the campaign's Messyman), but also brought to the fold many of the values Francis Holland holds dear such as creativity, curiosity, compassion, flexibility, playfulness and, most of all, resilience.

Then, early years companies Boromi and Musical Dots joined the team before Steam Co. and MeeTwo, which offers online peer-to-peer support for 25,000 young people and is recognised by the NHS for its work. After three Zoom calls, we were in a strong position to provide free structured support for families through expert advice for parents, peer-to-peer mentoring for young people, alongside innovative and creative activities.

With the model clear in our minds, we were then able to attract Jos Buttler (England cricketer) and his wife Louise as Pilates teachers and ambassadors, double Olympian Mark Hunter and GB hockey player Sam Ward, who provided Sam's Skills Sessions daily. This was followed by support from the Centre for Mental Health, Dame Kelly Holmes Trust and Youth Sport Trust and Coram Beanstalk.

Q Can you tell us about what your job entails?

We pride ourselves on a shared vision for creativity, enterprise and innovation. Whether through the year 8 Tycoon in Schools programme, our sixth form innovation sprints or design-thinking programmes with leading entrepreneurs and designers, I am the go-to person for pupils wishing to set up businesses whilst still at school. In order to consider setting up their own business, our girls need to be comfortable when thinking creatively and outside the box, and so we make excellent use of a team of entrepreneurs who support our community as mentors.

I am also the school's educational visits coordinator, oversee the co-curricular programme, teach geography and work closely with our head of outreach to support St. Barnabas Primary School, local academies Chelsea

ABOVE: The school is located two minutes' walk from Sloane Square tube station

RIGHT: The school educates girls aged 4–18



Activities included:

- Draw alongs with Emma Winterschladen
- Poetry with World Slam Poet Champion, Harry Baker
- Creative challenges with Young Contemporary Artist of the Year, Millie Syuu Chi
- An illustrator's interpretation of each day, Jess Grant
- Design a restaurant competition by year 5 and 6 pupils at Spire Junior School, Chesterfield
- Coffee art with Francis Holland School, Sloane Square art teacher, David Edes
- A competition to design a course for Richard Browning at Gravity Industries
- Card design with Outthebox Cards to encourage our community to write to friends, family and people in need in their local areas
- A STEAM Co. community lock in (a day to highlight the importance of creativity in schools)
- Cookery with Kitchen Academy chef, Jethro Carr
- Body percussion with Beat Goes On
- Singalong with Peddy and Andy from Andy and the Oddsocks (CBeebies)
- A podcast to help parents get to grips with the challenges facing families in lockdown.

Q What feedback did you get on it?

BBC 5 Live helped us to launch the campaign on 1 April and invited us to contribute to a BBC5Live Drive initiative to provide support for parents. Julie Johnson answered calls from listeners.

Rae Snape, head at Milton Road Primary in Cambridgeshire, said: "Cofight-19 is a brilliant initiative bringing individuals and organisations together to promote good mental health at this very difficult time by inviting everyone to collaborate, to get creative, to get active and to #FightTheFear!"

One parent said: "This is an incredible platform and built so quickly. We appreciate your efforts and look forward to using the site."

Q What was your favourite subject at school?

Geography.

"I am the go-to person for pupils wishing to set up businesses whilst still at school"

Q What is the biggest challenge independent schools are currently facing?

Establishing a way of bringing the warmth of our community back together whilst social distancing is in place.

Q What is one thing Francis Holland does that makes it great?

Cultivates a shared vision for creativity, innovation and enterprise.

Q What are you currently reading?

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez.

Q What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Exploring the South Downs National Park with our black Labrador, Lottie; windsurfing (somewhere deep in the filing cabinet I have an instructor's certificate); gardening; supporting the Sussex Learning Trust as a governor.

Q What issue in education are you most passionate about?

Providing an all-round education for children which enables them to pursue their academic interests and providing space for pupils to develop their soft skills, start their own businesses, play musical instruments, create artwork, read, enjoy trips and expeditions, volunteer and become gamechangers.

Q If you weren't in education, what would you do instead?

Explore opportunities within the charity sector which focus on sustainable development in the least developed African nations. **IB**

Our enterprising initiatives

● In year 7, our pupils work with professional artist Jodie Glenn-Martin to create collaborative artwork.

● In years 8 and 9, pupils have the opportunity to form their own business as part of Peter Jones' Tycoon in Schools competition. Our sixth form oversee the programme, and year 9s run Tycoon 2 and get the chance to mentor year 8 businesses.

● Careers education starts in year 9, when the girls are required to choose their GCSE subjects. Careers education accompanies the girls until their final year, and in some instances beyond as some girls might come into school for further help even after they have left.

● Pupils in year 11 to upper sixth are given the opportunity to secure a mentor to further develop their skills

in entrepreneurship. Our Sixth Form Academic Enrichment Programme offers termly innovation sprints where pupils work closely with one of our link entrepreneurs to take their ideas to prototype stage or beyond.

● We offer creative enterprise scholarships and the Alam Award where all pupils are invited to submit enterprising solutions to real-world problems.

● Through our Sixth Form Volunteering Programme and our work with charities, we provide our pupils with ample opportunity to appreciate the benefits of 'giving back' time, and, in future, profits. Our Annual Fund enables parents to purchase key items for our own community whilst making important donations to local organisations.