

Spalding Grammar School
Sixth Form Newsletter 7
Leavers' Special
May 2021

Goodbye, Leavers of 2021! Thank you for the wonderful memories.....

Leavers class of 2021, you will always have a special place in my memories, some of you, perhaps, even earned a tiny place in a hidden meander in my heart: you have been, after all, my first A-level cohort to guide and look after during a pandemic...and I hope you will be the last!

Sociopaths amongst you, and there are quite a here, enjoyed it, found it exciting or not strange at all. I personally found it scary at times, boring most of the time and a lot of hard work...don't I feel my 30 years of age, after such a rollercoaster!

For you, a Sixth Form journey like no other and not the end that we all anticipated as from Monday you will go back to your usual routine of playing games and texting friends until 4 am; sleep until 2pm; eat; repeat. It's the holidays! The longest, more carefree holiday of your entire life: make the most of it!

HOWEVER, through tantrums, laughter, tantrums, tears, tantrums, pains, tantrums and tribulations, we made it to the end! You finally leave the cocoon called SGS and enter the real world for which, educationally, you have been preparing for the last 13 years of your life. I trust that you are ready but I am not sure the world is ready for you!

You are now young adults on a new journey, most of you on a chosen destination – University, employment, apprenticeships, and a few of you still unsure. Somebody told me that the future prime minister of England is here with us today. That there are three or four doctors, a philosopher and a vet. That at least two of you will end up in jail....I do not know what the future holds but let's not forget the last two years in this school.

Exams are not the be all and end all in life, but they do open a lot of doors and make the path that much easier. Well done, Year 13's, for working extremely hard through this period of assessments as staff collected evidence to support the judgements of grades and we are grateful to you all for the positivity and determination you have shown.

Some of you were full of "it" when they joined us, but many were very insecure little girls and boys....and look at you now, roaring at life like lions and lionesses, with plans for the future, inner strength, courage and such awareness of your self-worth! Do not let anybody ever make you feel less important than you are. You are the strength on which we are building our future. I have faith in you.

Apart from skills and knowledge and qualifications it's the relationships, it's the friends you've made along the way which will last the longest. Do not forget the importance of respect and kindness for others, as they will return it to you and life is that much sweeter when we are surrounded by people we care for and who care for us.

So, my advice to all of you is to continue to embrace life and learning with the same passion, grit, enthusiasm, courage and spirit as you find your way. Be true to yourself and be the best that you can be.

I am very grateful to your families, and you should be too, as they have supported you through your journey with us, listening and guiding you in times of disappointment, doom and despair, and then times of resurgence and triumph..... repeat! What a year you have had!

I am grateful to your tutors and Mr Simpson, who have looked after you with wisdom, skill and genuine care for the last two years. They have been your rock. Mr Smith, Mr Brooks and Mr Wilkinson have been my rock and together I hope that we made your experience at SGS unique and precious. Heartfelt thanks go to Mr Kilby and Ms Dearing for helping me making the Last Assembly special for you.

Finally, I'd like to thank you personally for making the choice to study at SGS and enrich our teaching experience as we get to change our teaching ways from you too, believe it or not! You have been an interesting bunch!

Ladies and gentlemen, it has been a pleasure and an absolute privilege. Take care of yourselves! *Dr AM Leadbeater*



A kind message from Mr Simpson

I started at SGS when you were in year 10, some I have taught some I have not and some I recognise from the High School. Some of you have made quite an impression on me for variously good and not so good reasons, however by acting in these ways you have and are still forging your identities. What you have done in this respect is perfectly normal and I am proud of you for it. You have been entertaining.....and then there is Sam Chew who spent the entire time making fun of my hairline and then most recently, while driving in front of mine, put his car into reverse to taunt me and wave his lanyard in the rear-view mirror at me.

Your time in school has been a journey of discovery OF both yourselves and others, practising ways to be the person you want to end up being. During the time I have known you, you have grown, matured and expanded your horizons. You will grow, further mature and expand your horizons.

Growing up and moving on is one of the most rewarding series of continuous events. It comes with surprises, twists and turns to come that you need to be prepared for and hopefully we have helped you to be ready for those which matter most. There will be happiness and there will be sadness, let each event grow you as a person.

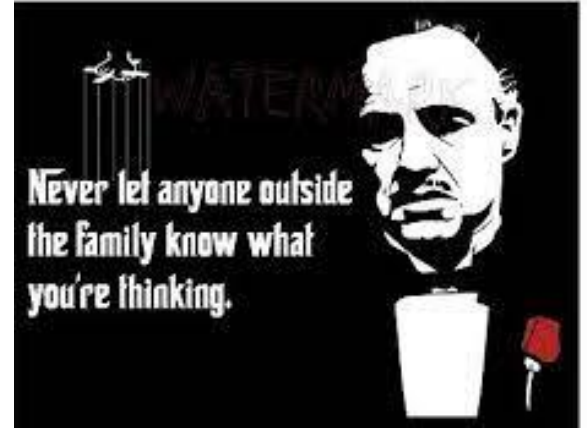
You only live once so:

- Always take the chances, always take the opportunities, don't let others discourage you from doing what makes you happy (within socially and legally acceptable norms obviously).
- A good lesson in life is always to be kind to those around you no matter what, listen to others, care and be the role model because most of you will probably end up being parents. Some of you might even send your children here.

In the film the Godfather, Vito Corleone turns to his son Sonny at one point and tells him 'never let anyone outside the family know what you are thinking'. It was a lesson in understanding that people judge you by your thoughts and actions but only let your actions be seen, thoughts are private. Don't tell people what you are thinking of them if it is not pleasant, be kind and you will be rewarded.

Make your actions count and please make them good. Make the best of everything you do and 'have fun'.

Mr DK Simpson



Goodbye from a tutor

Well, Year 13, you've been through just about everything possible in the last two years. This has been just about the toughest Sixth Form experience I can remember in twenty-five years of teaching. There have been times when you've had to dig really deep and times when it must have felt as if you were wading through stodge. But now you're at the end! You're ready to take a leap into the big wide world and embark on the next stage of your lives.

13CEA, you have been a fantastic tutor group and you've impressed me by how you've tackled the challenges of the last couple of years. I've been particularly impressed over the last few weeks by how you've shown your creativity by making models with plasticine in order to de-stress (even if I did ban you from making anything too anatomically detailed!) You're going to go a long way. It's a privilege to have been your tutor!

You're a very special year group for me, because those of you who have been at SGS since Year Seven started at the school at the same time as I did. I've seen you grow up and make your way through the school and it's been lovely to have shared this journey with you. I want to offer you all some words of wisdom.

Growing up. People think it's about getting a good job, buying a house, setting down and starting a family - and it's not. Well, to some extent it might be, but it's also about much more than that. It's about finding out who you are and becoming comfortable in your own skin. It's about being able to look yourself in the eye and be happy with what you've done. It takes time. And it's a difficult process.

Look after yourselves. Look after the people you love and the people you care about. Work hard. And remember that we are still here to support you, whenever you need it.

Congratulations on reaching the last day of school! And good luck, all of you, with the next stage of your lives.

Dr CE Atherton



Last words from our Head Boy, Jake Barnes

The past year or so have definitely been the strangest of our lives. If someone was to have said to us at the end of year 11 that our 6th form experience would consist mainly of sitting at home every day and occasionally logging on to a lesson whilst cooking breakfast, we would have thought they were insane. Don't get me wrong, we probably would've liked the idea, but there was no way it would ever actually happen, right? Most of us had about 6 months of the "normal" 6th form experience, others had even less. Remember when Town Leave was a thing? This was back when we didn't have to put up with the back-breaking stools of the atrium every other fortnight, when we could actually use the coffee lounge as and when we pleased, and anyone walking around with a mask on had probably just committed a crime.

Of course, there are some things that we have missed out on because of COVID. Obviously, we all missed the last part of Year 12, there was no sitting on the field in the sun with our mates, there wasn't a sponsored walk around Spalding, and probably most saddening of all; we haven't had a "Student A Student B" assembly from Mr Wilkinson in quite some time. However, every coin has two sides, and whilst COVID caused us to miss out on a lot, it also allowed us to do many things which we may not have done before. We clapped the NHS and key workers on a Thursday night, we spent more time with our families, and most of us took up a new hobby, in one way or another.

But in a year where it has been so easy to drown in negative news from across the world, I thought that I'd use my first, and only, real chance of a Head Boy speech to talk about the positives to come out of our time at SGS. Overall, something has gone right for all of us. We all adapted to lockdown learning, we learnt to enjoy it and embrace the change, so much so that for many of us the return to school in March wasn't exactly welcomed well initially. Many of us have learnt to drive, or have a test in the near future, giving us a real taste of freedom and independence.

In all seriousness though, everyone has succeeded over the last two years in their own right; whether that was having the willpower to come into school every day, dealing with the traumatic sound of the teams notification, making new or building on existing friendships which will last beyond when you leave the gates today, or working towards achieving the grades or TAGs which you need to attend your dream university or apprenticeship next year. We have all grown into completely unique young adults with huge, but different, goals for the future, and fully distinct sets of skills, qualities and personalities. And although we may be divided in our overarching interests, hobbies and loyalties, there is no doubt that we came together when COVID prevented us from being together.

And it's with that I want to thank everyone at SGS, teachers included, for making my sixth form experience what it was, and to wish you all the best for Uni, work or whatever comes next in your lives. Enjoy the summer as best you can, before the real adulting begins! And finally, in the words of Ms Dearing; "Keep on keeping on."



The Headmaster's final address

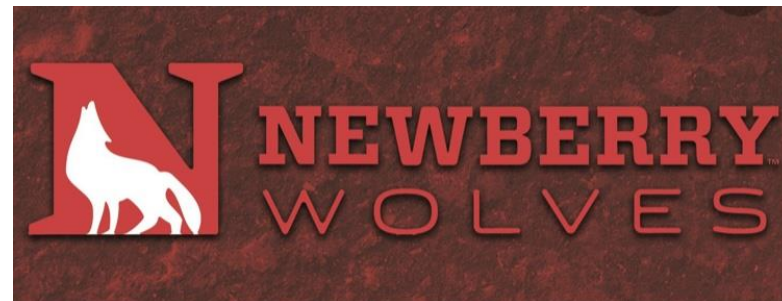
As you reach the end of your time at the School, we all reflect on the fact that your Sixth Form experience is not what any of us would have wanted it to be. Yet, you have coped admirably – dealing with lockdowns, reduced timetables, restricted privileges, and online learning – and without (much) fuss. I am proud of you.

Remember the good times, take those grades that you have worked for – despite the trying circumstances – and undoubtedly deserve, and step forward into whatever comes next in your life; and do it with my best wishes. I know you will do well. Yet, don't step away completely; always keep a place in your hearts and minds for your old alma mater, and keep in touch with us so that we can keep in touch with you.

To (almost) quote the First Doctor: "One day...come back. Yes...come back. Until then, there must be no regrets, no tears, no anxieties; just go forward in all your beliefs, and prove to me that I am not mistaken in mine".

Mr SM Wilkinson

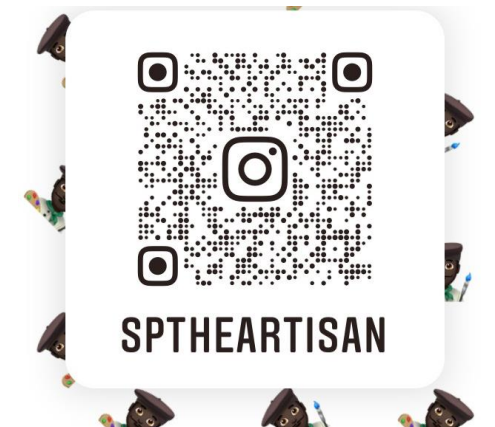
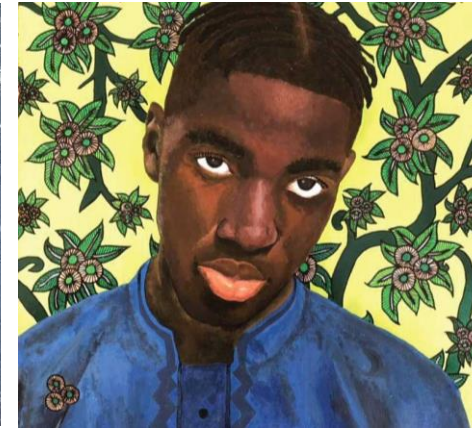




Thomas Hull: My American Dream

- I did not think whacking a golf ball in the garden with my plastic golf clubs at the age of 4 would be the starting point of attracting a Golf Scholarship whilst studying for a Business degree in America. Now on the verge of leaving Spalding Grammar School, it has come to fruition.
- Alongside my education, I have played competitive golf rising through the ranks at club, school, county, national, and international level. I have a strong playing resume and coupled with GCSE results it made the American system an attractive option. In my sport, British Universities do not offer such a developed or prestigious competitive programme as the Collegiate System. I made my teachers aware early that I was focussing on the US education system and they responded with helpful advice and support.
- Attracting American Coaches is not an easy process from across the pond. Catching their eye relies on strong academic results and educational and character references from those that know you well. In my case, the SGS PE team. Taking the American SAT exam is also required; that exam proved challenging as it is a completely different structure to our GCSE equivalent, but I made it.
- Over the last four years I have been in discussions with coaches from Colleges all over America trying to find an academic fit and with a chance to play in a location and conference that will develop my golf skills further and determine if I fit into their Golf Roster.
- At the start of the 2020/21 academic year, in the middle of the pandemic, I received a scholarship offer and a place at Newberry College South Carolina. It has been a turbulent journey when the competitive circuits have been closed and the academic world was upside down. There have been many positives though, the process has enhanced my administrative and personal skill set!
- I leave Spalding Grammar School well prepared to embark on my studies in the US and the hope that I can be a valued member of the Newberry Golf Team.

Sepiso Irotuhme: Art can change your life



Art is something that I have always enjoyed and, I am told, I have a natural talent for. I thankfully took my family's advice to study Art at GCSE and then at A-level too.

Over the last 18 months, I feel that my skills and understanding of the subject have grown exponentially. There is a big jump from GCSE to A-level in terms of workload and content to learn; however, my teachers structured and facilitated a positive transition for me. They pushed me to paint because it was something I had never done before and I was, therefore, able to produce work in a medium that has potential of getting me the top grades at A-level.

My first ever painting is a self-portrait in the style of WPAP, which gave me a deeper insight into colours, contrasts and the skill of mixing paints. I am proud of my self-portrait as a big personal achievement and as the step in my artistic development that encouraged me to push myself further by painting in what is, certainly for me, a more difficult style. The result is my second self-portrait, which always gains compliments and praise from my family, peers and teachers alike.

I love the process of painting and how I am in complete control of what the outcome will be; for me, this is extremely therapeutic and provides a balance to the challenges of my other A-levels.

This year, despite the extended lockdown or, perhaps, because of it, I have been enjoying my Art more than ever before. Many people around me that had seen my artwork asked whether I was open to the idea of custom painting portraits for people. I saw this as a sign to start my own small business and I produced my first commission painting over February half-term doing a home delivery to London myself! Being able to have a source of income my art is extremely rewarding. I have a price list on my Instagram page (@Sptheartisan) and the QR scan code that you can use to find the page too. This will allow me to continue pure Art after A-levels.

Exploring careers where I could use my artistic ability and strongly supported by my Mother and Grandmother, I decided to become an architect. Feeling generally drawn to this career, as time passed, I came to realise that my reasons for choosing it were deeper than the "liking" of the courses.

Studying Architecture will...(should!) obviously provide me with economic independence throughout my entire life, as there is an ever-constant need for building projects such as housing. More and more importantly for me, though, it will allow me to have, hopefully, a good impact on our society, an added value and significance to the life that I will have lived. Architecture will also allow me to use my best traits to the fullest, like my creativity, good task productivity and positive attitude. I want to be able to provide buildings and structures that are important to different societal groups and will strengthen and build those societal groups. I feel every societal group should be entitled to an environment that reflects them and makes them feel comfortable.





Amelia Billimore: learning to learn in order to gain offers to study Veterinary Medicine at Uni!

If someone had told me two years ago that I would have finished all my exams and hopefully be waiting to study Veterinary Medicine at the University of Liverpool by mid-May, I don't think I would have believed them. I started Year 12 not knowing many people as I was at a new school and felt quite overwhelmed by the unfamiliar surroundings and teachers. I struggled quite a lot with the step up to A-level from GCSE, as there was a lot more content and it was significantly more challenging. I found it hard to see my peers understanding the work and achieving the grades that I had hoped to be getting. With the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, we were thrown into a national lockdown. Whilst most people found it hard to continue working, it gave me the time and opportunity to fully get to grips with my A level subjects, Biology, Chemistry and Maths. I had particularly struggled with Chemistry, so I worked a lot on specific topics that were shown as my weaker areas from the Year 12 Mock Examinations. I quickly realised that unlike at GCSE, I couldn't rely on the textbooks and had to find other resources such as practice questions from various exam boards, flashcards, mind-maps and very good notes!

I knew I needed to get some more work experience if I was to stand a chance of getting a Vet Med offer, however I found it difficult due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 crisis. Through sheer perseverance and a pinch of luck, I was able to find some and spent a week at a kennel and cattery in my village. This was an amazing opportunity as I had a hands-on experience compared to a more clinical approach that I had previously put under my belt in another veterinary practice.

Although I had a positive experience in the first lockdown, I struggled a little in November and December after I had applied to universities. The stress of waiting to hear back combined with Year 13 Mock Examinations and preparing for interviews got on top of me and I felt slightly out of my element. The third lockdown allowed me to catch up on my studies and I started to receive offers. Although I was fairly upset about exams being cancelled, the replacement of these with tests in school made me realise I still had a chance to prove myself. I now feel so much more confident in myself and feel I've developed a lot as a person. I can't thank my teachers enough for being so supportive and keeping me motivated in lockdown, as I don't think I'd be where I am now. Reflecting on my short time at Spalding Grammar School, I have thoroughly enjoyed it and made some friends for life.

Amelia Billimore





