



5th June 2020

Important Dates

June

- 3-8 **Grades 9 & 11 Semester 2 Exams**
- 9 **MS House Challenges and Awards**
- 10 **Virtual ES Assembly, 9:00am**
- 10 **Virtual MS/HS Assembly, 10:00am**
- 10 **EARLY DISMISSAL AT 11:00am – START OF SCHOOL SUMMER HOLIDAY**

August

- 20 **Start of 2020-21 School Year**

PARENTS/STUDENTS: Please remember the daily Notice link at:

<https://sites.google.com/isa247.org.uk/isa-virtual-school/home>

► **From the Head of School**

Dear Parents,

I wrote my first Thistle Talk article 42 weeks ago - a century ago for the changes in the world. It was beyond my wildest thoughts that we would spend the last third of the year working from home. When the following article introduced our plan for a one-to-one programme for 2020-21, I did not expect for a moment that by year's end computers would have become the necessary tool for every lesson for all ISA students.

If this year has taught me anything, it is humility in predicting the future. In August 2019, we did not begin to imagine the school's circumstances and student needs for March 2020 and beyond. How can we know what the world will be like when your children graduate, perhaps in more than 10 years' time?

Circumstances may be fickle, but values endure. In that first article of the year I introduced ISA's guiding statements: its mission, vision and values; the way we measured ourselves and what we are trying to achieve - whatever changes may come. We are ending the year in such a different way to how it began, but this measure is exactly the same, and is worth repeating:

"ISA's mission is to deliver excellence in education through a safe and caring learning environment. Our students are challenged to reach their maximum potential through academic success and personal growth, becoming learners for life and socially responsible, active global citizens."

In the last twelve weeks, as much of the world stood still, ISA students continued to learn and grow, engaging throughout each day in challenging new skills and concepts. They will look back with pride

at the personal qualities they demonstrated and developed to get them through this hard year. Above all they have remained part of a community; physically apart but virtually together. More than ever ISA students have needed initiative and self-reliance: the qualities that will make them 'learners for life'. They have had to think beyond themselves, supporting each other, always 'socially responsible, active global citizens'.

Through all this the ISA values have remained: respect, excellence, diversity, community, integrity and service. We have maintained a sense of who we are, even while adapting and growing.

Many of you are leaving us on Wednesday. You will be missed. I hope though, for your children, that there will be some part of them that will remain ISA. That they will look back in years to come and recognise their experience here was something special.

I would like to add goodbyes and thanks to our leaving academic staff: Andy Field, Jorgelina Ubet, Jenny Warren and Victoria Morrison. I would like to add to Don Newbury's and Gus Carmichael's comments by saying a big thank you for your years of service to ISA.

Lesley Blackstock, ISA's Business Manager, retired last week. Her professionalism, thorough care and commitment to the school over more than a decade will be much missed. Annette Brand, our Middle and High School Secretary, is also retiring at the end of this month. Students, staff and parents have benefited from her warm presence and calm assurance for more than two decades. Annette, you will be missed.

I would also like to say goodbye and acknowledge our departing board members. Patrick de Plaa, Mike Thompson and Karen Boeson have voluntarily given many hours to school governance. I personally am very grateful for their support and advice. You also will be missed; I wish you the best in your next ventures.

Best regards,

Nicholas Little
Head of School

► **From the MS/HS Principal**

Dear Middle/High School Parents,

My Google Chat (the launching point for meeting colleagues and students) has a tendency to open at random classes and past conversations. It was interesting that, with just a few days of the semester remaining, Chat opened with this message that a teacher had posted to their class:

Start of VLE at ISA - 20/03/20

Dear all,

We are commencing our VLE platform on the 20th. Tomorrow (19th) will be a day for teachers, parents and students to prepare.

Try and use this experience positively and keep your minds in a good place!

Let the Virtual Learning Experience BEGIN!

The entry on 18th March feels like a lifetime ago and our Virtual School has evolved considerably in that time. Along with the systemic changes, though, I think our students have been challenged to approach things differently, which has strengthened them as learners. Last week, I covered a Middle School class in which the majority were present and raring to go well ahead of the scheduled start time. As ill prepared as I was with the resources provided, the students took initiative, supported one another, and showed high levels of self direction and time management. I was hugely impressed that learning habits we may expect much later in life were already apparent with this age group.

When PowerSchool reopens and report cards are visible again please take time to go through them with your child. You will also find a reflection form that they should have completed and I think, this semester more than any, looking back over the past few months will be beneficial for the future. Do take time to commend them for their efforts and congratulate them on how they have engaged with Virtual School.

I am grateful to the many parents who have helped out with events at school this year, and to those who have been so supportive in following up on communications from teachers or myself. I appreciate the strong sense of community that exists at ISA. Of course, there will be fresh challenges when we start back in August, and we are presently working closely with government guidelines to ensure we open as safely and productively as possible. I am very much looking forward to seeing the students in person again, though.

Before then, of course, there is the small matter of a well-deserved holiday for our students and staff, and I hope you have a very pleasant break.

Angus Carmichael
MS/HS Principal

► **From the Elementary Principal**

Dear Parents,

*How did it get so late so soon?
It's night before it's afternoon.
December is here before it's June.
My goodness how the time has flown.
How did it get so late so soon?*
Dr Seuss

The passage of time is a puzzling thing. While few will dispute that an hour comprises 60 minutes, the perception of time can vary dramatically from person to person and from one situation to the next. Time can race, or it can drag interminably. On rare occasions, it feels as if it's standing still.

I've always agreed with the popular expression that time goes more quickly as we get older. Usually at the end of a year I ask, "Where has the time gone?" This year, as I write my final Thistle article, I have a different question, "Is it still June?" I ask this, not because I want time to move quickly, but because my perception of virtual schooling and Covid-19 is that it created a time warp (almost a 'Groundhog Day'); one where we seemed to be moving in slow motion. The routines established by the school have been very successful, and learning has progressed through the efforts of outstanding teachers, supportive parents and very capable and adaptable students.

But all these weeks since the middle of March have had a similar routine. Everyone has done an amazing job to create special moments, but they still were just a substitute for in-person activities like: field trips, sports days and all the other school celebrations we usually enjoy at the end of every year. (Many children have complained that they miss teacher hugs.) In this 'time warp' everyone has learned new skills and found amazing ways to communicate, sometimes more frequently than before lockdown. It's not been an unproductive time, but one that created lots of challenges. The most successful children discovered their ability to be resilient and creative individuals; able to find purpose and bring joy every day. Families have had more time together, not typically enjoyed in a world filled with so much scheduled activity and travel. As parents, you will get to read about the accomplishments of each student in the final reports going out next week.

As I looked at photos for my final assembly for 10th June (from 9:00am), I was reminded of the wonderful time our students had before the lockdown. The close relationships teachers formed with their students before March had an enormous impact on student growth after we became separated. To their credit, ISA teachers even created strong relationships with students who joined ISA **after** we went to virtual learning. One such student remarked in his end of year reflection, “...I felt very welcome. I met new friends who were really fun and I enjoyed virtual school so much.”

Sadly, this June, we have more than our usual turnover of students. Transitions away from a familiar and comfortable home can be challenging, especially when the next assignment is new, or there are concerns about travel. It is my hope, however, that all of our families, both returning and leaving, will look back on the 2019-20 school year with many fond memories. As always, it's a pleasure to serve as the Elementary Principal at an ambitious school with happy kids, supportive parents and dedicated teachers. I know from reading each report card that this has been a successful year for student learning. I also sense that for our students it's been a year of strong personal growth, with confidence 'blooming', and the capacity for hard work and independent study strengthening.

All of the teachers will be looking forward to a summer break away from their screens. They have worked so hard for your children and deserve a superb holiday. I want to take this opportunity to thank them for all of their efforts to help make this a successful year. I also wish all of our school families a wonderful summer break. I've appreciated your support all year. Your children have earned all of those special days of holiday ahead of them!

A Few Staff Departures:

10th June symbolises the start of summer, but it is also a time to say goodbye to many friends who will be leaving Aberdeen. At the end of each school year we say goodbye to families, all of whom have meant so much to the life of the school. For those of you who are moving from Aberdeen, we wish you all of the best and hope you take with you many cherished memories of your time in Scotland. Who knows, one day you might be back!

This year in the Elementary School, we also say goodbye to a few staff members. Each of these teachers has made significant contributions to the education of our students and enriched the lives of everyone who worked with them.

Jorgelina Ubet joined ISA 12 years ago. From her first year until the present she has remained one of the most positive and ambitious teachers I've had the pleasure to work with. Her joy as a teacher comes from connecting with students, sharing her passion for the Spanish language and positively impacting upon student lives. Students work hard, laugh a lot and thrive under her care. We will miss Jorgelina, but thank her for her long service to ISA and wish her all the best as she begins a new chapter with her lovely family in The Netherlands.

Jenny Warren has been teaching Spanish at ISA since 2014. Always so encouraging, she's had a positive impact on students from Pre-School through 6th grade. Throughout her teaching time at ISA Jenny has expanded her skills in order to offer her students the most effective opportunities to learn. This year she added IT instruction for the K-2 children as a part of her teaching responsibilities. We thank Jenny for her dedication to ISA, and wish her and her wonderful family all the best on their move to Florida.

Victoria Morrison has worked as a classroom assistant for the past four years. She moved each year with the current third grade. The classroom teachers benefited from her assistance and appreciated her positive nature, as she added so much to both the classroom instruction and overall spirit. We will miss Victoria, but wish her all the best as she pursues her many passions, including gardening.

All of our teaching staff has worked with great commitment to meet the needs of every child.

Whether your family is returning next year or moving on to other adventures, I want to thank you for your contributions to the ISA family this year.

Best regards,

Don Newbury,
Elementary Principal

▶ **From the Fine Arts Department**

Congratulations ISA Middle School artists, actors and musicians! The Middle School Arts Afternoon was outstanding! You warmed our hearts, made us laugh, tickled our ears and shown what great things you can achieve! Bravo to each of you for your hard work and energy!

To all of the ISA artists, actors and musicians,

You have done tremendous work in this crazy time. We are all very proud of you and what you have achieved! Keep the Arts alive in your hearts and souls forever. If you are leaving ISA, go directly to the arts department in your new school. You are already part of the school family as soon as you walk through the door. If you are returning to ISA, we'll see you next year and strive to make things even greater at ISA!!

Have a lovely summer!

Miss Lee, Dr Nicol, Ms Rea, Mr Chiaraluce & Mr Walter

▶ **Personal Message from Fiona McCracken (Pre-School)**

After 5 years of study, I found out this week that I will graduate with a BA in Childhood Practice at the end of this month. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the Pre-School parents and children (past and present), colleagues, especially my 'Team Pre-School' for their constant support and encouragement throughout this period. I have been so fortunate to have had ISA as a school and family, invest in my professional development and although at times it was hard to juggle the work/home/study balance, I have developed so much as a practitioner. I believe that the Pre-School children have benefited from seeing that, as adults, we work hard to improve and learn or develop the skills we possess. We continue to learn and the journey is one where mistakes can be made, lessons can be learned and that we can all learn from each other.

Sadly, due to current circumstances, my graduation has been delayed but I look forward to celebrating (hopefully) later in the year. This summer marks the end of my study but my learning journey continues.

Thank you all so much!!

Fiona McCracken

Thistle Talk is a great way to find out what is going on in the school, but you can get a lot more from our social media sites. Log into us at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/international-school-aberdeen> and <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalSchoolAberdeen/> and get the stories behind the stories.

CFINE Food Drive

Hello parents, we are a group of 11th grade students and earlier in the school year we ran a food drive for our CAS project. The food drive was for CFINE (Community Foods Initiatives North East) a charity that helps those in need by raising money and donating food items. Our group consisted of 5 eleventh graders: Uyi, Irmak, Prabh, Juhee and Toni.



There was a lot of planning put into this project. From discussions with school teachers to presenting in front of other students, we were able to prepare our project so that this food drive could be carried out. The food drive ran at school during the final week of November, and collected 34 kilos of food.



The food that we collected consisted of cans of soup, beans, pasta, and other canned and non-perishable items. We were also able to collect other items like toiletries and clothes. The donations that we collected were donated to the charity CFINE which is a local food bank that delivers food parcels for people who need them in the North East of Scotland, mainly Aberdeen. To extend our project beyond the reaches of school, we volunteered at CFINE where we helped create food packages, sort food coming from donations, and filling out paperwork. The people there were really friendly, they offered us treats and drinks during the time we worked there. This made the experience even better.



The charity had a lot of work that needed to be done, and it was an interesting experience working there. We were glad to be given this opportunity to help out our local charities. We would like to say a big thank you to all the parents and teachers who allowed their children and students to participate in this and we could not have been able to collect this amount without all of you.

NEWS FROM YOUR PTO

JUNE 05
2020



ISA Parent Teacher
Organisation



pto@isa.aberdeen.sch.uk

SCHOOL'S OUT FOR SUMMER!

With lockdown slowly easing, we are about to enter the school holidays. It's been very challenging at times, but the ISA community has been incredibly strong in overcoming these mandatory restrictions and finding new ways to stay connected and keep learning. For grade 12 students, who are graduating, there will be a time to celebrate in August. Well deserved, guys!



PTO MEETINGS 2020-2021

Meetings are scheduled to take place:

- September 7th, 2020
- October 26th, 2020
- November 23rd, 2020
- January 11th, 2021
- February 1st, 2021
- March 8th, 2021
- April 19th, 2021
- May 10th, 2021
- June 7th, 2021

Formats of the meeting might be virtual.

PTO EVENTS 2020-2021

Together with the school, we have agreed to the following dates for the PTO events:

- 29 Aug 2020: PTO Back to School social
- 6 Feb 2021: PTO Winter Social
- 20 March 2021: PTO Adult Ceilidh
- 25 March 2021: Teacher appreciation

Looking forward to making these events a huge success with your support!



NEXT PTO MEETING

Thursday
Sept 7
9.30 AM

*Format of the
meeting TBC*

PTO ROLES - APPLICATION FORM

Please use the link on the right of this block to send in your application for any of the PTO roles or the CEC roles. If you have any questions about the roles and responsibilities of the ISA parent teacher organisation, please reach out via pto@isa.aberdeen.sch.uk. For more information about the PTO; please check the ISA website; About > People > PTO > Download > PTO Handbook for Families. Looking forward to seeing you next school year! Have a lovely Summer break.

