

# THIS IS US

## WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

*Vic Walker, Undershaw's Director of Education*

*Nothing says 'home' like the smell of baking*

*The latest in well-being: the arrival of the Undershaw Aquarium*

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## HELLO AUTUMN!

*by Vic Walker  
Director of Education*

We have had a brilliant half term! Our unique curriculum is both broad and bespoke; students develop a love of learning through their study of foundation subjects, complemented by a range of arts specialisms, and the fantastic experience of our forest school.

I have seen students fully immersed in learning, asking curious questions, working collaboratively, and sharing in a genuinely joyful experience. A real highlight for me was seeing year 8 students performing together in a music lesson, trying something new and demonstrating physical skills playing instruments. The way that our students listen to each other and encourage their peers is heart-warming.

In year 11, we have supported some of our students to prepare for Autumn GCSE examinations. They have shown how resilient and positive they are in their approach towards exams; working hard in lessons, sitting mocks, and fully engaging in learning about how to prepare for this time.

# It's a Nature Thing...



'Exploring possibilities, broadening experiences, building capabilities, and embracing the joy of learning'.

These are the words of the highly influential educationalist Tom Sherrington, who famously uses the analogy of a '**Learning Rainforest**' to describe the conditions in which the students at a school thrive. I am delighted and proud to use these exact words to describe the learning experiences and successes of the young people at Undershaw over the last half term.

I was warmly welcomed to Undershaw in September 2021 as Acting Head of Education. My primary focus is on the quality of education that the students receive at the school and my core belief is that every student at the school, regardless of need, will leave Undershaw with the confidence, self-belief and qualifications that will enable them to move on to the next steps in their own journey. We are truly growing our own 'learning rainforest' at Undershaw; establishing the best conditions for learning, developing knowledge and skills, and exploring the possibilities that the world has to offer our young people.

To read more about Vic, and some of the other staff who make Undershaw tick please visit the '[Our People](#)' page of the Undershaw website.

"It has been an absolute joy to see the students thrive this term. Thank you to the school community for giving me the opportunity to come and work with these wonderful young people and the very talented staff who teach, support and care deeply for the students."

I am excited for our future and the possibilities we will explore in our own 'Learning Rainforest' at Undershaw!"

# 'Life is what you bake of it'



## Halloween Baking!

*Discovery Days have been full of spooky fun and yummy treats for our Edible Art group. We started the term by creating magical unicorn cupcakes and built up our skills over the weeks to create Halloween themed sugar cookies and yummy chocolate brownies decorated with marshmallows cobwebs. The students have showcased their incredible artistic skills, piping abilities, and flair for delicious baking!*

*I'm sure it's no coincidence that the staff seem to gravitate towards the kitchen on Friday mornings!*

*Thank you Edible Art Group for making it such good fun. You're all Star Bakers in our eyes!*

Maddy, Pastoral Support Assistant  
(and creator of yummy things!)



## And there's still chocolate in KS2!

*'On the last day of half term, to celebrate the children's hard work during their Chocolate Project , the children invited their parents to a gala Chocolate Bake Off event.*

*The children were in complete control of running the event: from greeting the guests as they arrived, to manning the presentation, giving welcome speeches and serving up treats.*

*Parents and VIP guests were given the opportunity to sample a variety of scrumptious, chocolate-based treats baked by the children. Guests were then asked to judge the delicious dishes and help decide which class would win the coveted Chocolate Bake Off award.'*

Leigh, KS2 Teacher



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# Dear Undershaw, please accept this gift...

The idea for the Aquascape came from reading about all of the mental health benefits it's been proven that planted aquariums can provide.

Couple that with the pleasure and sense of calm E gets from our aquariums it seemed only natural that it would benefit children at the school too.

I teamed up with a fabulous company called NT Labs. They supplied the essential water test kit which I used to make sure the aquarium water is safe for the shrimp and snails. They also supplied friendly bacteria, Fertiliser for the plants and everything needed to keep it running smoothly.

All of the plants have been supplied by friends in the hobby who really wanted to be a part of this project, one in particular is autistic and had learned for himself the benefits these beautiful aquariums can provide.

James, Parent



## 'When Life is loud, find Peace under water'

With the launch of the new school year alongside the new Undershaw brand and website, our Admissions enquiry line has never been busier. We saw an unprecedented number of prospective families coming to meet us.

We had some very positive feedback and they enjoyed their time with us. We look forward to welcoming new children as they begin their transition to our school.

We are so grateful to all our students for their patience and good humour as we opened the doors for our Open Mornings. They were all amazing and we felt so proud of them!

THANK YOU!



Most smartphones allow parents and carers to choose which apps and features appear on their child's device and which ones don't – also preventing young people from buying and downloading anything that's unsuitable for their age.

The National Online Safety #WakeUpWednesday guides to parental controls for managing apps on iPhones will help you to reduce the chance of your child using a game or app that might not be appropriate for their age.

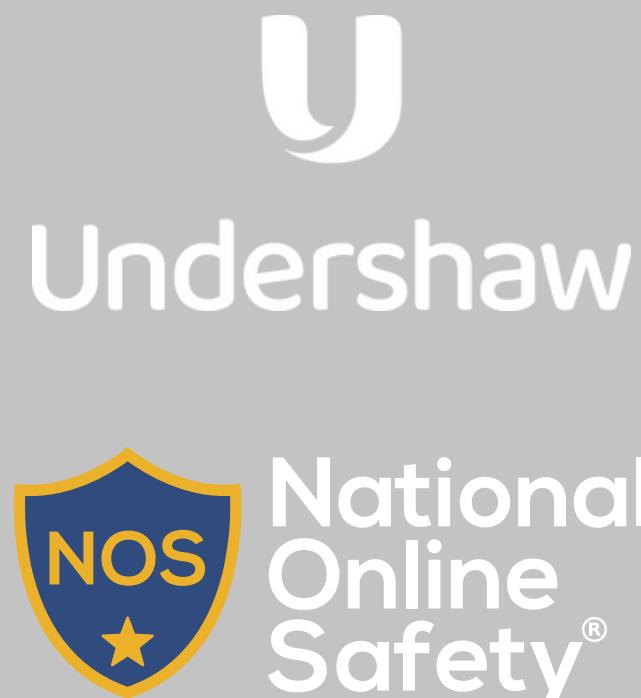
# Online Safety Spotlight:

## Parental Controls

To download the online resources for Android or Apple devices, please click the following links:

[Android Parent Guide](#)

[Apple Parent Guide](#)



# Reverse Parents' Evenings

"THE FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS WAS SO POSITIVE THAT WE HAVE DECIDED TO OFFER A REVERSE PARENTS EVENING ONCE A TERM ALONG SIDE OUR TRADITIONAL ACADEMIC PARENTS' EVENINGS."

EMMA WEST

*As our son is new to the school meeting his teacher and TA was so reassuring so early on in the year. It gave us an opportunity to share current worries and issues and explore strategies. Our son was also able to show his form teacher his new kitten, something we could not have done in person at school!*

The traditional view of parents evenings is that it is an opportunity for parents and carers to listen to a report of progress, aspirations, objectives and pastoral developments from teachers, pastoral assistants, therapists and other specialist staff.

Every healthy relationship has a dynamic communication structure and the relationship between home and school should be no different.

As a result, Undershaw introduced the novel concept of Reverse Parents Evenings in September 2021. It proved so useful that it will be offered each term as a compliment to the traditional Parents Evenings.

The students are central to our ethos at Undershaw but the well-being of our families is just as important. If we can all invest time and energy in maintaining a positive and open relationship by way of a healthy communication platform, then we can't help but succeed.



# Post 16s on tour...

Last week I took a small group of our Post 16 students for a tour around one of our feeder colleges Alton College for an escorted campus tour. The purpose of these visits is to get an idea of what life at college would be like – have a look at the facilities on campus (Starbucks was a particular favourite!) and explore the wide variety of specialist course available.

Once we managed to drag H away from the music studio, we found out about course subjects and levels on offer along with the entry requirements. We also looked at the brilliant additional learning support areas and heard about a typical college timetable.

Alton college was a fantastic host and we are off again in a few days with another group to have a look round. We aim to visit as many college campuses as possible with our Post 16 and year 11 students to get a feel for the further education pathway.

These visits are designed to complement the trips that students and their families do together – you really can't visit too many times! Do keep an eye on the college websites for their upcoming open events.. We would be really keen to get your feedback on any you visit too.

Sharon Setterfield, Transition Coach

## Undershaw Family Support

The last few years have presented difficult circumstances for many families across the UK, and the impacts of the Covid-19 situation are still felt by many.

If you are struggling to provide food or essentials at home, please don't hesitate to reach out for support.

Katherine is in contact with the local food bank and other organisations who will be able to support you.

Please do contact her in confidence on [katherine.bourne@undershaw.education](mailto:katherine.bourne@undershaw.education).

If you are in a position to donate much needed items to your local food bank for families in need, please [click here](#) for the Trussell Trust website where you can search your local food bank and ways to donate either food or monetary donations.

