The Lord Mayor comes to the Academy!

On Friday 17th February, the last day before our one week holiday and as a treat for Year 7, The Lord Mayor of Birmingham came to the Academy. As the Academy Council representative for Year 7, I had the privilege of asking him a question during the assembly and giving him a tour of our fantastic school. He was honestly one of the most inspirational people and he is so in to education.

I enjoyed taking him to the MFL department, because he was really looking forward to going to a French class and he was actually really good at speaking in Ms Attoh’s lesson! We also went to Miss Darwood’s class (Law), and if we had had the time, he would have sat down in the class and listened to the Year 13 students for the whole lesson!

Pajwan Gareb,  
Year 7 Student Journalist

GDA wins the Cities Schools Mock Trials!

On the 18th March, 14 students handpicked from across the year groups went to Birmingham Magistrates Court to compete to be the best law team in Birmingham. GDA being the talented school it is, with talented individuals, won the Mock Trial! We even beat grammar schools! Better yet, we have broken our 5 year streak and now we are champions

We will be moving on to nationals in Nottingham and if we win there, we would proceed to London to compete to be the best in all of England, Scotland and Wales. With Ms Darwood, Mrs Ratcliffe and the sixth formers guiding us, we could become the best in the UK! We will need all the help and support we can get from school, parents and families if we want to grasp the next two titles.

The students were Adam Mohammed (Prosecution Lawyer 1), Adama Jallow (Prosecution Lawyer 2), Cindy Wengebe (Prosecution Witness 1), Kanika Ratui (Prosecution Witness 2), Legal Advisor (Vidusha Edirisinghe), Shelton Mwara Vieira (Defence Lawyer 1), Meron Mekecha (Defence Lawyer 2), Grazia Adusei (Defence Witness 1), Ehtesham Ahmed (Defence Witness 2), Emith Gunasekara (Magistrate 1), Halima Farouk (Magistrate 2), Elham Abdirahman (Magistrate 3), Sadia Ahmadzai (Magistrate 4) and Nickaya Lawrence (Usher).

The Prosecution and Defence lawyers had a lot of work to do as we were giving speeches and questioning different witnesses. We needed to know the statement information and the different times given by the witnesses. We had to make sure the magistrates had no doubts whatsoever and that they were absolutely sure of the defendant’s guilt whereas the defence had to do the exact opposite and make sure that there was at least a little doubt in the magistrates’ mind.

As a magistrate, it was my job with fellow magistrates to decide on the final verdict. To do this we had to watch over the whole process, note down if the witnesses produced any new evidence and if the witnesses were reliable. All six magistrates were led into the retiring room by the lead magistrate after the process had finished. We were then each given a turn to discuss the facts presented by both defence and prosecution. In order to make the final verdict, we had to keep in mind the Turnbull guidelines, which included: the distance, level of darkness and the time. After we discussed all of the facts and voted on our verdict, we returned to the courtroom. The lead magistrate then informed everyone present in the court, the key facts of our discussion and our final verdict.

Sadia Ahmadzai,  
Year 9 Magistrate

Students and staff outside Birmingham Law Courts!

Celebrating their win after the trial!
Penny Mallory motivating staff and students

Penny Mallory visited GDA in January 2017

On Wednesday 4th January 2017, a motivational speaker called Penny Mallory came to the Academy to talk to Year 11 students in the Academy Hall about finding confidence and motivating them to be positive; in preparation for their GCSEs in May.

Penny Mallory was the first woman in the world to compete in a World Rally Car and she talked about finding qualities and skills within you, such as: teamwork, desire/passion, dedication, determination, confidence and many more abilities. She described her journey to the path of self-motivation and positivity, and how she became a speaker. She had family-related issues, and left home aged 14, still in secondary education. She was homeless for 18 months but she remembered a dream she had aged 6 to become a world class rally car racer. This being the only thing in mind, she decided not to give up but fight for this dream to come true.

And so she did and achieved her dream. From absolutely nothing, to everything she could dream of. Penny Mallory truly became the world’s 1st woman rally car team to drive a Ford Focus in a car rally. She shared a simple trick to remain positive as we leave our comfort zones. She gave 3 steps; see it, do it, believe it. When I came out of that speech, I knew exactly how to take these words as a legacy. As an achievement. As part of life. As part of my own, true, positive self. She made Year 11 feel so positive and that challenges can be overcome, if we just believe we can.

Bilal Hussain, Year 11

Academy Visitors

Round Midnight at their Year 10 Extremism workshop

The Academy has received a number of noteworthy visits this term: Continuing our Question Time series, we are proud to have welcomed the Lord Mayor of Birmingham and Mr Carl Rice who addressed Year 7.

Assistant Police & Crime Commissioner speaks to Year 7

On the 28 February 2017, Ashley Bertie, Police Crime Commissioner, came to the academy. It was really interesting and Year 7 were able to ask him questions such as how much money he earns, if he was stuck on a deserted island, which 3 people would he take with him, what’s his favourite song, does he prefer to stay in and watch TV at night or go out etc! We learnt a lot. His job is to solve crime and help others solve crime! Ashley Bertie is only 25 and has been doing his job since 2014. He works with schools to explain and break down barriers for young people and will lead on a Gangs & Violence Commission and create a police cadet scheme. His favourite song is ‘Billy Jean’ by Micheal Jackson. We all really enjoyed his visit to GDA.

Sameera Khan, Year 7 Student Journalist

Debate Mate – Urban Debate League

Our debate mate teams have competed twice in the urban league with lots of success. Our first team have won all four debates. Naomi, Nawal, Bushra and Aisha have been excellent and we have placed in the top 10 teams in the West Midlands. Both rounds have taken place at Shireland Academy and our students have behaved in an exemplary manner.

During the last competition, we had a prepared motion of “digital technology is damaging to people’s mental health”. It was a difficult topic for this age group but students handled it maturely with detailed speeches prepared. Their rebuttal was outstanding.

Our younger team did well this year, coming close to a win against a much older and experienced team. Adama, Hendrick and Vidusha in year 8, Grace and Solen in year 7 and Adjele in year 9 have grown in confidence and ability.

Our final competition of the year is at Birmingham University in April and both teams are hoping for a win to finish the year. I am incredibly proud of how the students have performed this year, in terms of debate skills and behaviour. Even when other schools showed poor sportsmanship, our teams rose above it and have enjoyed every moment of the competition.

Ms Blakeman

First team members (Naomi, Nawal, Bushra and Aisha) have won all four debates.

Careers Education

Year 12 at Deloitte Offices

Year 10 work experience placements were in December. Visiting staff were proud to hear about excellent attendance and positive attitudes reported by employers. As a result we have many employers offering places for next year. Student evaluations were excellent and showed that they had enjoyed and learned from the experience:

“So… I just want to say that my work experience was awesome!”

GDA students have been offered a life changing experience by Exeter University. ‘Experience Exeter’ involves residential to experience university life followed by mentoring support and careers seminars through to university entry after year 13. Ten year 10 students will attend at Easter and ten year 12 students in the summer; by spring 2018 forty Academy students will be involved in the programme. This is a very exciting opportunity for our students to get involved with this prestigious Russell Group university.

The Academy has developed a new partnership with Deloitte, one of the ‘Big Four’ accountancy firms worldwide. Twelve year 12 students (Selina Akhtar, Zaher Ahmed, Maleeha Nayab, Abdullah Shidane, Muhammad Hussain, Abdullah Mohamed, Hussein Heybe, Amandeep Dhalial, Raheem Javid, Zubeir Jami, Simran Khanna and Sameera Jaudeen) took part in a twelve week programme that focused on employability skills and a business challenge. They were mentored by a professional from Deloitte to propose a cost reduction and income regeneration proposal for GDA which they presented to top professionals from Deloitte including Partner, Dominic Wong. Students received personal careers guidance, certificates and high-street vouchers and a trophy. Five students successfully gained a work placement on the Deloitte Summer Programme in July 2017. Deloitte have confirmed they are keen to develop further opportunities for students in year 11 moving to year 12.

Ms Buckingham

On 4th of March, What Career Live? and What University Live? took place at NEC. This was introduced by Ms Buckingham.

In the programme, there were 35 universities and 61 stalls for different types of professions. We, along with our friends, visited many different stalls to have a better understanding of university life.

Moreover, apart from universities and career pathways, there were also programmes such as STEM challenge, Rate My Apprenticeship Challenge etc.

Samina Jaudeen & Maleeha Nayab, Year 12

Tapestry, a dynamic participatory theatre-in-education tour which worked with Year 8 students to explore the implications and consequences of extremist thinking and action. The tour was developed in partnership with West Midlands Police and Birmingham City Council as part of ‘Prevent’.

Round Midnights provided workshops to Year 10 to understand extremism and radicalisation, the factors that push/pull people into extremism and the power and influence of social media.

The Teenage Cancer Trust delivered sessions to Years 8, 9 and 10 focussing on the work of the charity and providing information to better understand Cancer.

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World Book Day

Thursday 2nd March was World Book Day. We had a book trail / treasure hunt and had to vote who had the best costume out of the teachers. The winner of the treasure hunt was Adam Mohammed in 8.1 who was the first to get all 9 clues from around the academy correct. The students voted Mr Ibbotson in first place, who was dressed as a Spartan warrior, Miss Dewell was second place with Little Miss Sunshine and Miss BI was third as Snow White. Students all got a World Book Day token so they can go to their local books shop to get a free book, this includes books by Jacqueline Wilson, Enid Blyton, David Walliams and even Where’s Wally!

Year 9 Poetry Project with Midland Actors Theatre

Year 9 students took part in a project organised by the Midlands Actors Theatre (MAT) focused on the history of Birmingham’s street robin (poor children) in the early 1900’s. Dr. Carl Chinn MBE and Dave Allen (MAT) were guest speakers throughout the course of the project as the work of our students contributed towards a multi-school theatre performance at the Crescent theatre. The students also participated in workshops at Newman University where they again worked with students from other schools in preparing and delivering presentations on the local history of Birmingham. Students were a credit to the Academy and thoroughly enjoyed themselves, some of the outstanding students were also rewarded with Amazon vouchers for the excellent work they produced by Dr. Carl Chinn and Dave Allen.

Poetry Competition Winners

This term some of our students in years eight and nine took part in a national poetry competition. As some of the entries were so fabulous we decided to award our own GDA prizes. A prize giving event will happen in the next few weeks when students will get the chance to read their poem aloud for a selected audience.

Congratulations to our winner and runners up!


Year 12 visit the Coco Cola factory

On Tuesday 17th January, a group of Year 12 pupils (Economics & Geography) enjoyed an educational trip to Coca Cola factory in Milton Keynes. The purpose of this visit was to help understand and visualise the manufacturing process of Fast Moving Consumer Goods, lean distribution and the value chain. On arrival they had a strict health and safety briefing followed by a presentation about the history of the factory which produces; Coca Cola, Monster Energy, Capri Sun and other products. The presentation also included a question and answer session to help learn more about this global brand, the marketing mix, economics of scale, efficiency and sustainability. In the picture you will see the group wearing protective equipment and headphones before they went in to see the manufacturing process taking place.

Sixth formers wearing their hairnets before they tour Coca-Cola

There was a horrible smell in the factory and which made some people feel sick so they had to sit out for a couple of minutes!

Overall, the trip was an amazing experience to learn about globalisation and how different companies import and export things all around the world!
SMSC Update

What is SMSC?
SMSC at GDA aims to help students’ understanding of themselves, their behaviour, their health and development. It develops the necessary skills and values for students to take on their future responsibilities as adults in our society.

Students’ spiritual development involves the growth of their sense of self, their unique potential, their understanding of themselves, their society.

Students’ social development involves acquiring an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of being members of families and communities (local, national and global) and an ability to relate to others and to work with others for the common good.

Students’ cultural development involves acquiring an understanding of cultural traditions and ability to appreciate and respond to a variety of aesthetic experiences.

Thought for the Term:

“Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.”

Mother Teresa

Miss Harris

Student Council Update

Year 8 took control of the promotion of Comic Relief this year, making brilliant posters all around the GDA Academy. On Friday 24 March, students paid £1 for non-uniform day as well as a massive cake sale. The Academy raised £1131.94.

Cake Sale under way!

The student councillors try their best to find a way to improve the school, however they are unable to do so if we don’t get any suggestions! We have made it easier for your voices to be heard via the GDA website. Alongside Miss Dowell, the council page has been updated and you can now look at what we have done and make suggestions to improve the Academy, as well as make equipment orders online!

This is your school so make it the best it can be, please visit the student council website at http://bit.ly/GDACouncil, don’t forget to make your suggestions!

Pajwan Garub and Jenecha Mbenga, Student Councillors

SMSC Update

understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and their willingness to achieve.

Students’ moral development involves acquiring an understanding of the difference between right and wrong and of moral conflict, a concern for others and the will to do what is right.

Students’ social development involves acquiring an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of being members of families and communities (local, national and global) and an ability to relate to others and to work with others for the common good.

Students’ cultural development involves acquiring an understanding of cultural traditions and ability to appreciate and respond to a variety of aesthetic experiences.

Artist Joel Penkman talks with Year 8 Art

The students in BG4 art group have been investigating composition and accuracy when drawing and have been researching artists who focus on sweets and brightly coloured packaging. We developed ideas through drawing with a grid and mono printing and decided to ask the artist some questions to help us with our project. Joel Penkman is an illustrator and has worked for big companies to help advertise their products, she kindly agreed to help us with our questions.

Gurkanwalpreet: Have you got a favourite painting technique when you are painting?

Joel: Mostly paint in egg tempera. I have to kind of hatch the paint on (because you can’t over paint wet paint as it will lift the other paint off the board) and it helps bring the painting to life if there are other colours showing through.

Aaliyah: What or who inspired you to become an artist?

Joel: Art is something I’ve always enjoyed and wanted to make and I had supportive parents who didn’t discourage this. When I decided I wanted to try painting for a few months both my husband and my parents encouraged me to have a go at my dream.

Precious: How long does each painting take you to do?

Joel: It depends on the painting. Maybe 2 days for a small painting and 1-3 weeks for a larger painting. Getting the composition and photo reference right can take as long as the painting.

Kevin: Hi Joel. I find painting really hard, when did it start to become easy for you?

Joel: It takes practice, I am still evolving my own style. I think trial and error is important, if I don’t like something I won’t carry on with it. There are lots of different paints you could try (watercolour, acrylic, oil, gouache, tempera), or you could use coloured pencils, pastels, charcoal, or try another art like photography or sculpture. I would experiment with different mediums until you know what you like.

Adelaide: When you think of your new work do you think about it as a drawing or start to paint it straight away?

Joel: I almost never make drawings first. I’ll start with an idea in my head or a very rough sketch. Then I’ll take photos in various positions of what I want to paint. I look at all my photos and I might rearrange things and take some more photos until I have an image I really like.

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