

Newsletter

A Special Xmas

When so many schools were closed this year, it was wonderful that we were not only open but we were open to almost all of our pupils on a weekly basis. It is difficult to have a celebration without lots of people to do it with but, of course, groups of people being together was not the done thing because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The art department decorated practically every space in the school with Christmas trees, presents, lights and every possible thing you can imagine. It was wonderfully atmospheric and gave everyone a sense of happiness and wonder. I even heard festive songs blaring out on the second floor.

I know that in many schools around the world you cannot put things up around

the school because they get vandalized



but thankfully we haven't got that problem here.

In a way I feel this will be a memorable time for us because the fact that it happened at all was a kind of Christmas miracle. I know we all hope that the New Year brings with it a far more hopeful time for children, families and even nations around the world. Goodwill to all mankind.



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"We must not allow the clock and the calendar to blind us to the fact that each moment of life is a miracle and mystery." H.G. Wells

General Certificate of Education



A Resulting Storm

One of the worst aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic is how it brings daily unpredictability to our current lives. So we can sympathize with the present cohort of students taking important examinations at this time. As parents of these students you can only support them and be optimistic that somehow they will get the opportunities that they deserve.

A buzz word for today's generation of hopefuls is resilience, the ability to overcome all obstacles in whatever form they may appear. Perhaps this virus has created the worst case scenario to prove each teenager's own personal determination. Our students need to build not only academic strength but a positive growth mindset to overcome the psychological pressure as well.

Last Summer, students taking IGCSE, AS and A levels faced a Tsunami of obstacles including a

disruption of schooling in March 2020 followed by national closedowns of everything that they held dear. When they did complete their subject courses in almost impossible circumstances, they were then told that their UK course results were being determined through an arbitrary moderation scheme which left many students not getting into the universities of their choice!

We began a programme of teaching senior students through the 2020 Summer holidays and tried to begin face-to-face classes in September which were later given online due to any possibilities of infection at this critical time. It was a team effort to give students a fighting chance!

Thankfully, our AS and A level students did very well in the November exams and now they are more psychologically and emotionally ready for any challenges in 2021. Better, Stronger, Wiser!

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities.

Working in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is the eighth largest country in the world with a population of 19 million people. It is rich in minerals and its relatively new capital Astana is as impressive as Dubai architecturally.

I was lucky enough to be part of the educational reform team working there from 2012 until 2015. In that time I was promoted to Senior Consultant Trainer for the whole country and travelled around the Republic opening new teacher training centres which were then responsible for preparing staff in the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools for gifted and talented children.

I was given the opportunity to conduct discussion groups at the annual pedagogical conference in Astana as well as giving presentations on academic topics around the country. I was particularly proud to be invited every year to give a talk to graduate teachers in my local district of Pavlodar.

The Learning Mirror

In February 2020, I was asked by the Centre of Excellence in Kazakhstan to write an article on the topic of emotional intelligence (EI) for their national educational magazine, *Pedagogical Dialogue*. This magazine is produced four times a year and it is published in English, Russian and Kazakh.

I was really pleased to be asked but I wasn't sure I had anything really original to say about the topic. During my three years in Kazakhstan I had written several articles for the magazine so readers were familiar with who I was. I began typing, 'The Learning Mirror' based on the way we develop emotional intelligence at Forsan British School.

I outlined eight ways we develop emotional intelligence in our school:

1. Put social and emotional learning into our teaching practices.
2. Engage students in problem-solving.
3. Lead by Example.

4. Develop character education.
5. Encourage students to develop and share opinions.
6. Develop student resiliency.
7. Nurture in students, empathy and a caring behaviour.
8. Happy Learners become Successful Performers.

I concluded by saying if you are emotional intelligent then it is not only an indicator that you are equipped for today's challenges but it can influence your success in life later on. Today employers recognize that emotional intelligence is one of the key soft skills.

I sent off the article around the time everything happened in March 2020 so I forgot about it until I received a PDF copy of the September edition with my article appearing third behind an article on Happiness by the Dalai Lama and another on Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner.

Up-and Coming Girl Champions

One of the things that has stopped in the main school is our daily assemblies. Apart from saluting the flag and saying the National Anthem, we looked at interesting topics and gave out certificates and school badges to the pupils. The two types of awards we gave out were for academic achievement (Scholars) and non academic achievement (Champions).

It is part of the Egyptian culture to encourage children to take up extracurricular activities. It follows the idea of 'a healthy body and a healthy mind'. Originally we wanted to have extracurricular activities after school but the head boy and head girl told me that most students already attended their own clubs. This put me into a dilemma but we reached a good compromise by having activities within school time on a Thursday.

So during the pandemic we want any pupil who has done well in any activity or sporting competition to bring in their certificate so we can award them a badge and a school certificate. Those pictured for winning places in a gymnastic competition are:

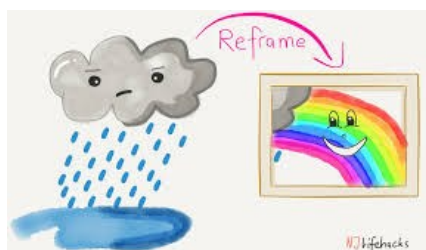
Lina Amr (Year 1)
Bella Hanoun (Year 2)
Lamaj Wael (Year 2)
Aysef Ahmed (Year 2)

Congratulations girls.



Coping Clever

When I have any free time I like to study and I have recently discovered a website called, Coursera which allows you to do this for free! A recent course of mine was 'Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress' led by Dr. Marc Brackett from Yale University.



The unit that most fascinated me on the course was the relationship between our emotions and brain. In the section on thought strategies (which are powerful tools to regulate emotions) we are told when the same neural connections are used then they become strengthened.

"What fires together, wires together"

Right now we are all dealing with this pandemic causing us to have to deal with major uncertainty (ambiguous loss). Research shows during the Covid-19 that when educators used 'positive reframing', they experience less burn-out and have greater job satisfaction.

Learning gives us more self-control!

'Happy Face' House Creative Arts Competition



The 'Happy Face' House Creative Arts Competition was open to all children from Year 1 through to Year 12. There were no limits on what media they used so it could be anything from a drawing to a print. I was looking for originality, materials used, subject matter and how much effort went into it.

Every pupil who entered the competition got five merits for their house. My hope is to display everybody's artwork somewhere around the school. It was impossible to arrive at a first, second and third place so the top three entries all got twenty merits and each winner got a prize.

"The only race you have to run is with yourself."

Dahi Tamara Koch



Shamilla Karriem

Global Perspectives, no matter how it is taught, opens doors with-in young minds that lead to a growth mindset. This is imperative for empowering our 21st century student who has begun the journey towards an unknown future. As the students progress through their Challenges, they acquire skills required in a Real-World situation. These skills include, but are not limited to:

- Research
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Analysis
- Evaluation
- Reflection

Being in the GP (Global Perspectives) Department, the world is our oyster. We tackle real-world problems in the quest to find real-world solutions.

During online sessions our best method of learning is through play. Children learn best through incidental learning, of which Kahoot is my trump card as it is an excellent teaching tool. "Kahoot" is the buzzword for almost all online GP sessions. Kahoots mostly enhance the skills of Communication, Analysis, Evaluation and Reflection. It also tests time management skills as well as general knowledge.

We empower our students with a growth mindset and coping skills to adapt to living and managing an uncertain future that awaits them. Through Global Perspectives, we are nudging our students into a future that has yet to be written, future jobs that have yet to be created... We prepare them for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.



Back to Beginnings



It has been exactly a year since we had morning assembly for the primary and secondary school. I'm glad to say that Miss Dina has been having morning assemblies for the Foundation Stage throughout 2021 and this has provided a sense of normality to staff and children alike.

One of my tasks as principal is to keep the international status of our school intact. We began very well indeed by being short-listed for the Times Educational Supplement's 'International School of 2019' Award. The next year we attended the Indian International Model United Nations Conference in Cairo where one of our students won a medal for

writing the best speech. We also began the Junior Future Leadership Programme in 2019 but Covid-19 spoilt the course halfway through. In fact it ruined our annual overseas trips as well.

This year we plan to try for the British Council's International School Award for 2021-23. The Award is given if we can undertake 6 projects to do with global concerns and partner with three international schools.



World Wildlife Day

World Wildlife Day happens on the 3rd of March. The theme for 2021 was "Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet", as a way to highlight the central role of forests, forest species and ecosystems services in sustaining the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people globally. All of this is currently at the crossroads of the multiple planetary crises, from climate change, to biodiversity loss and the health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Foundation Stage, we talked about endangered animals and the importance of saving them. To celebrate this day, the children heard story about some of these animals and why they are important, along with roleplaying exercises related to this topic.



Reading Competition - Year 1

Year 1 GP students took part in a reading competition over the recent school holidays, a huge congratulations to all students who participated and an extra special congratulations to the winners of each class, and our overall super star winner Farouk who read a whopping 148 books. You all did a fantastic job and Mrs. Katie is extremely proud of you. A big thanks to @bake you happy for providing such lovely prizes for the students.

It is also worth mentioning that Mrs Katie James is also a star in the Lower Primary School and has been for the time she has been with us. Last August, she spent time and money transforming her classroom into a show piece for her form group. The door and walls were decorated with marvelous images and posters. In the picture on the right she bought the prizes and created the certificates for the winners. Today her classroom is full of robots that the children are making and Katie is as excited about this as the pupils are.



'Making a Better World' Competition

In February 2021, I created a new competition for all pupils in Years 1—12 called "Making a Better World." We received a number of entries including this lovely coloured crayon drawing by Judy Zahran in 1SM. Of course, this competition was held in the second (or was it third) wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The school had been closed since December 2020 as we went back to online lessons.

One of my hopes was that we could post videos of children at home telling everyone what they would like to see in a perfect society. The videos we did get were very good and surprisingly touching! I appreciated how difficult things were for everybody when I took over teaching a colleague's Global Perspectives online lessons for two weeks. It would be untrue to say that online teaching cannot be effective but it is difficult to have the same interaction with children as you would in the normal classroom setting.

Presently we are back at school but I hope we can continue to find lots of ways for our pupils to express themselves.



A Dream Park by Judy Zahran 1SM

"The more risks you allow your children to make, the better they learn to look after themselves."

Roald Dahl

Online Learning by Sofia Amir 10MS

Following the start of a new decade, our generation has witnessed and lived through drastic changes due to the pandemic. As coronavirus cases are emerging, even after one year, schools have been struggling to maintain a strong and prominent educational system through online schooling.

When newly introduced to online classes via 'Zoom', students in Egypt were joyful about getting a break from going to school and waking up early. However, as the pandemic heaved into a winter surge, students have been floundering academically, socially and emotionally. News reports have showed alarming numbers of students falling behind, failing, sleeping during classes or not showing up at all.

As apparent as it is, online school cannot provide many of the privileges that regular school has, such as the daily social interactions that we, as students, are exposed to on school grounds. On the contrary, Forsan British School is one of the very few schools in Alexandria that has been able to quickly and efficiently come up with a mantra of what to do in terms of assisting students to build their knowledge.

For our school, making an effective list of rules was a necessity. These rules included attending classes all five days of the week, from 8am till 3.15pm, as we normally would

have... Cameras are to be turned on at all times for monitoring us and making sure we are concentrating and, needless to say, sitting in our desks with our uniforms on in order to be presentable. For each year group, a WhatsApp group containing all parents and teachers has been created for daily notifications to parents about their child's attendance and progress.

Furthermore, each class has been provided with high quality, stand-alone cameras. Also, there is a day allocated each week for one specific year group whereby parents can come in and collect their child's classwork and quizzes. We have also been notified with each teacher's office hours if we have any questions or concerns to arrange a one-to-one meeting.

Even given the global circumstances, Forsan British School has managed to sustain what most schools have not, authority and order.

Sofia Amir (Head Girl)



Appreciation!

How nice to attend a Foundation Stage assembly where all the nannies received a 'thank you' certificate with their photograph on it and signed by all the children from one FS class. They also received a lovely apron as a special gift from one of the classes.

The nannies were told they were like second mummies to the children when they are in school and so it was fitting they were honoured like this on Mother's day. The ladies were obviously touched by this kind gesture.



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