

2021 Inspection finds Brampton “excellent” in all areas

Brampton's efforts to maintain its outstanding educational provision in the face of the difficulties posed by the pandemic were fully endorsed by a glowing Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) report in December 2021. The ISI gave Brampton top marks for pupils' achievement and personal development, stating that “pupils attain highly and make excellent progress across the school”. They also gave a rating of “excellent” to the governance of the College.

While coronavirus remains a potential threat as we head towards the new September term, at Brampton, fortunately, students have enjoyed a relatively smooth continuity of teaching, and we will be very well prepared if the virus does make a further comeback. The biggest change this year has been the return of public exams - to a cohort of students who have never taken public exams before! The College's combination of highly individualised learning support and regular timed assessments

has been enormously helpful in preparing students to cope. We were proud of the achievements of our upper sixth students last year, who had to tough it out in a long series of A level-style assessments through March, April and May - perhaps even more gruelling than a summer of A levels - to earn their outstanding results - 76% A*/A and 93% A-B grades. The College was also very pleased with the way the younger, GCSE level students coped with the demands of such a disorientating year. Head of Department Sarah Bailey corralled a disparate collection of individuals from very different backgrounds into a mutually supportive group, who saw each other through to success, with 56.4% of students achieving grades 7-9, compared to a national average of 28.5%. Most of last year's cohort has come on board for A level too. As Principal Bernard Canetti comments, “it's a hugely rewarding aspect of teaching at Brampton to see them develop into confident and responsible young people.” ■

College support gives students the edge in fierce university competition

It's been even harder for those aspiring to the most sought-after university places over the last year. Some universities tried to cope with the squeeze on accommodation and staffing by actually paying applicants up to £10,000 to turn down places they had won and go elsewhere, while students who had delayed entry from the previous year because of Covid added to the already fierce competition. So, it's especially gratifying to report that 7 Brampton students gained places for Medicine and 4 for Dentistry, with 2 students going to Oxford (Harry Orwell for Medicine and Leo Shaw for Classics), 4 to Imperial, 8 to UCL and 8 to Warwick.

As the Academic Review goes to press, first year students at Brampton are busy in three days of university application workshops. The universities of Birmingham, Bath, Nottingham and City of London are helping students with different stages of the research and application process, including the vital and challenging composition of a personal statement. Student ambassadors also help our sixth-formers understand the differences between courses and kinds of universities and the reality of student life. A highlight of this is the annual Former Students' Panel. For our current students, there's often something very intriguing, authentic and inspiring about seeing their former schoolmates transformed into impressively independent young adults. It's an exciting, potentially rather scary and certainly unfamiliar process that our lower sixth students are embarking upon, but the College is proud of the way we take it very seriously and give our students all the help we can. ■

Trisha's tenacity makes Medicine dreams come true

From a young age, I had always dreamt of studying Medicine. Unfortunately, due to health issues, I missed many days of school in year 12 and did not get enough academic support from my old school, which resulted in my receiving BCE grade predictions. I was gutted, to say the least, that I had lost my chance of applying to Medicine and so decided to repeat the year to help improve my grades. After a great deal of research, I came across Brampton - and found that they offered everything I was looking for in a sixth form college, a second chance for students to achieve their goals.

When I first joined the College, I had little-to-no confidence in my academic ability. But the constant encouragement and belief I received from day one from the teachers at Brampton helped me to achieve grades of A*A*A! Brampton is a unique college as it offers one-to-one tutorials with teachers and weekly testing, which helped me overcome my exam anxiety. After every test, I was able to consolidate my learning and ensured I filled any gaps in knowledge. This

prevented me from falling behind and helped keep track of my academic progress over the year.

Despite achieving my desired A Level grades, I was unsuccessful in my application to Medicine the first time. But despite my setbacks, I was undeterred from my dream of becoming a doctor and decided to take a gap year and reapply. I would not have had the confidence to do this without the support of all my amazing teachers. I now hold an offer for Medicine at Anglia Ruskin University and would not be in this position today if not for the College. During my gap year, I have spent my time working in a dental clinic and Specsavers, to gain further insight into other healthcare sectors. My time here has allowed me to improve my patient interaction skills and exposed me to the realities of the working world. I am now looking forward to my summer, where I will spend a month travelling around Europe before starting my exciting journey at medical school. ■

By Trisha Viswanath



Art is for everybody

One of the most misguided elements of government education policy for well over a decade now has been the steady undermining of artistic and creative subjects in the form of cuts to funding amid a push towards STEM subjects, regardless of individuals' talents and aspirations. In the artistic professions themselves, the restrictions imposed on venues by Covid took the damage caused

by the cultural vandalism and economic myopia of government policy to a whole new level. At Brampton experience tells us that this crudely utilitarian trend is all a big mistake. In the Art and Photography Department here, creative work is intellectual work - of a kind that stretches students' problem-solving, research and conceptual skills in ways most of them could not imagine

when they started their A level course - building students' confidence, teaching them the vital skills of working with others. Art students work towards higher achievement via open mindedness and self-scrutiny, crucial skills in any walk of life. It also endows them with a strong sense of identity. Here's what some of our final year students have to say about their experience of Art at Brampton.

Pari Shah took Art as a completely new subject. She says:

Having not taken Art at GCSE, I hadn't initially considered it for A level, however after speaking with a previous student and meeting the Art teachers, I decided to try it out, and have really enjoyed Art at A Level! At first I was apprehensive as I had not learnt any artistic skills at GCSE that many of my peers had, but support from my teachers as well as having the opportunity to experiment with lots of different mediums and styles during the first term allowed me to discover where my strengths were and develop my own style. This then allowed me to have more control and independence when I began my main project since I knew which materials I could work well with and the type of work I wanted to explore in my project, while also receiving help and guidance from my teachers when I needed it, making it an enjoyable process. Taking A level Art has provided me with an opportunity to explore my creativity and try new things such as lino printing and developing photos in the darkroom, that I wouldn't have done otherwise. It has also allowed me to develop different skills, such as more creative thinking from the written part of the course, which has benefitted my other essay-based subjects, as well as being an all-round enjoyable subject, so I would definitely recommend taking it!



Painting by Pari Shah

Lola Harding has relished the chance to develop her creative passion:

The Art department at Brampton has helped me to achieve my creative potential. Throughout my A level course, I have been able to explore so many new techniques using a wide range of materials. I have always been interested in using less traditional media and at Brampton I was able to freely trial these. The teachers are so supportive and encouraged me throughout, both with materials I was already confident in using and ones I wanted to investigate. They also encouraged me to discover new ways of presenting my ideas and exploring different directions in which I could take my project. I loved working alongside other people who share a passion for creativity, and we were able to learn from each other in a really positive environment. I think that if you have a desire to express your ideas in a creative way then you should definitely choose Art as an A Level at Brampton. When I joined the College at the beginning of year 13, I did not know what I wanted to study at university. I was provided with support throughout this decision-making process and inspired to follow a creative pathway, allowing me to go on further and develop my passion for art. ■



Artwork by Lola Harding

Managing perfectionism: healthier attitudes to stress

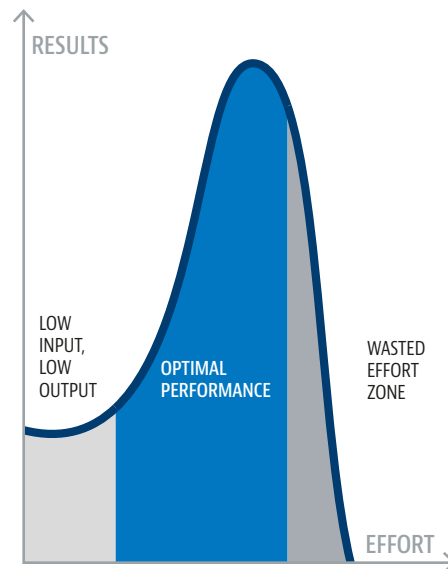
This year the Brampton Charitable Trust has made a generous donation to The Charlie Waller Trust, an organisation whose focus is to provide practical tools and strategies to young people, parents and educators, giving them the confidence to look after their mental health.



Over the past 12 months, many students and staff have benefitted from their resources to learn more about how to support the wellbeing of themselves and others. Awareness of mental health issues has grown considerably; 2+ years of a pandemic and uncertainty over education and exams has led inevitably to heightened anxiety in young people. Although competition for university places and emphasis on grades are not new pressures, keeping a healthy perspective and having realistic goals can be difficult for young people to hold on to. I was fortunate to be able to attend a webinar hosted by Charlie Waller on the topic of 'Perfectionism', a term most of us may be familiar with from having joked about ourselves or others needing to correct minor errors or inconsistencies! However, how many of us have made the link between perfectionism and significant mental health issues? At Brampton we are proud of our students for always striving for excellence and learning from their mistakes, but it is also important to emphasise the importance of the latter without judgement when things don't go as well as planned. With that in mind, Personal Tutors and support staff at the College have always been on hand to talk to students about their motivation for studying, recognising effort and adopting a sustainable study-life balance, over and above achievement. This year, many students have struggled with the balance of

knowing when 'enough is enough' and knowing when to take breaks (versus being too relaxed about their studies!) When we realise students are heading for burnout due to a well-meaning attempt to achieve, we can point to the Zone of Optimum Performance (see graph below), and highlight that it may only take a relatively small increase in stress, workload or hours spent revising to push a person from great performance to complete exhaustion. The greatest achievement I hope for in my students is watching them adapt to 'being comfortable with being uncomfortable', since, in order to make progress, there always needs to be some small amount of challenge, and with that will always come a small amount of (normal, healthy, and productive) stress! ■

By Claire Morley



An intensive one-year A level as a new subject can make all the difference

One of the key ingredients in the success of Brampton's students is ensuring that they are doing the right A levels for them - subjects that really suit their interests and aptitudes. Sometimes this is because students have the wrong idea about what's needed for success in an A level, have perhaps had a bad experience in that subject at GCSE or don't realise they have the aptitude for a new subject. Take a look at Pari Shah's article about Art on page 2 for example. Placing students onto the right programme takes a lot of careful consideration and research when we meet them at interview and observe them in the first few weeks of their life at the College. Far too often, alas, we meet students who have struggled through one or two years at A level in other schools when they have made regrettable A level choices - usually with no opportunity to change track along the way. The effect on a student's motivation and final grades can be devastating.

Fortunately, Brampton can be very flexible about A level choices, and a small but vital element in this flexibility is our ability to offer some A levels over a single year, from scratch. The track record of results from one-year A levels in Politics, Sociology, Classics, Photography, English and even History is truly remarkable, and the ability to gain an A*, A or B grade instead of a lower grade by continuing with a mistaken choice of subject can transform a student's university prospects. Out of 15 students taking Sociology A level from scratch from 2019 to 2021, for example, 14 gained either an A or an A*. Last year an A* in Classical Civilisation over a single year helped Leo Shaw gain a place to read Classics at Oxford, while in 2019, all three students in the Classical Civilisation one-year course gained an A. There has also been an equal level of success in English (see Lily Neil's article on page 4), Politics and Photography. Whether you are thinking of re-taking A levels or starting with a new subject in your second year, a one-year intensive A level is certainly worth considering. ■

Brampton environment allows Ben's enthusiasm to flourish

Ben came to Brampton as a GCSE student and after a highly successful year in his new environment took A levels in Politics, Religious Studies and Photography, gaining top grades in each. After a gap year, he's going to Durham University to read Philosophy in September.

I joined Brampton College after a rough patch at my previous school, where I was at a crucial midpoint of my studies and in desperate need of support. Brampton's environment and ethos, unlike those of any other, in my belief, allowed me to flourish. The combination of a free, open environment along with a certain strictness of individual responsibility when it comes to work, both inside and outside the classroom, sets it apart from other schools.

Small classes, where one addresses one's teacher by their first name, allows the students to feel as if each lesson is going to be an enlightening conversation from an enthusiastic teacher, in which one is free to ask questions. I now leave Brampton College a success, with both a place at one of the country's top universities and a fully planned gap year. If I had not gone to Brampton, I am very sure this would not have been the case. It was the enthusiasm for my studies which Brampton gave me, along with the sense of responsibility I developed through the regular testing and teachers' increasing understanding of my progress. Although the work may be daunting at first, you quickly get used to it and you develop not only a skillset but a mind-set that prepares you for later on in life. I cannot guarantee that everyone who comes to Brampton will have the same experience as me, but I know for sure that Brampton has played an instrumental role in my own development, and I am most grateful to everyone there and will forever remain so. ■

By Ben Arkus



Continuity of teaching talent reassures future students

This year we say goodbye to some wonderful long-serving members of staff - but we're really excited to announce the appointment of three terrifically talented individuals to whom they can hand over the baton.

Lizzie Milton Head of History

"I studied History at St John's College, Oxford, before completing an MA in Art History at the Courtauld Institute of Art, focusing particularly on Victorian art. After a brief stint at Christie's and the National Army Museum, I completed a PGCE at the Institute of Education. I began my teaching career at Highgate School before moving to St Albans School, where I was Head of Department for four years. When not working, I enjoy reading, baking, visiting art galleries, travel and chasing after my two small daughters."



Mary McMahon Head of Geography

"My teaching career has spanned 8 years and has taken in both co-education and single-sex schools, including Habs Girls for 5 years. My specialism is Geography: a continuously changing, fast paced, rigorous subject - one which my energy matches."



I have a keen interest in dialogic learning, whereby students are encouraged to become active, articulate learners, taking responsibility for their engagement within class. Alongside this, I encourage students to broaden their career and extracurricular ambitions: this has included producing student magazines, GIS clubs and outreach programmes.

In my personal life, I am mother to two young daughters and together we extend our interests into travelling and exploring the natural world. When chance allows, I engage with podcasts and recommended reads to support my subject. (I can recommend Naomi Klein's No Logo and Peter Frankopan's New Silk Roads.)"

Liza Phillips Head of Careers

"I am delighted to be joining Brampton College as Careers and Higher Education Advisor. My education experience spans 25 years. I have worked in a diverse range of roles, including Geography teaching and examining, and international teaching and university guidance counselling in Kuala Lumpur. Relocating to London is an exciting prospect for my family, given access to the capital's cultural offerings and leisurely mooches around vintage markets."



I am very much looking forward to joining Brampton and to guiding all students to fulfil their future aspirations." ■

Goodbye with gratitude and the best of luck

This year sees the end of a magnificent career in education. **Judi Falk**, esteemed Head of History at Brampton and devoted educator and guide to young people in various distinguished London schools since 1974, including QE Boys, Hasmore and King Solomon High, where Judi served as Assistant Head and whence she came to Brampton in 2005. It's hard to think of any more respected a figure in the College than Judi. Modesty, grace, cheerfulness and an instinctive thoughtfulness for others made such an impression that her scholarship and piercing intellect were often at first disguised. Time spent in her company was, however, always enlightening as well as a pleasure. Students, as they will, readily sensed someone who was serious, with high standards, and in whose company it could only be to one's shame to misbehave, but a teacher who would be fair and, where possible, on their side. We wish her every happiness in her richly deserved retirement.

We're also very sad that **Lucy Wood**, our fantastically successful Head of Geography and pastoral Team

Leader, is moving on this year. Lucy has made a great contribution to the College not only in these roles but also as an interviewer of prospective students and Head of Enrichment, much loved by the students and a supportive colleague to all staff. Lucy has developed an increasing interest in the psychological and emotional challenges faced by young people today, and is moving on from the college to begin specialist training in this area. We know she'll be a terrific success in this field too.

Finally, we say goodbye to **Sarah McWatters**, Head of Careers. Sarah has been an extremely successful and persuasive guide to the university research and application process not only for students but for staff and parents too, bringing a wealth of resources to bear to educate and aid those trying to negotiate this often fraught and challenging process. Brampton's superb record of university entrance over the last few years owes a great deal to Sarah's energy and dedication. ■

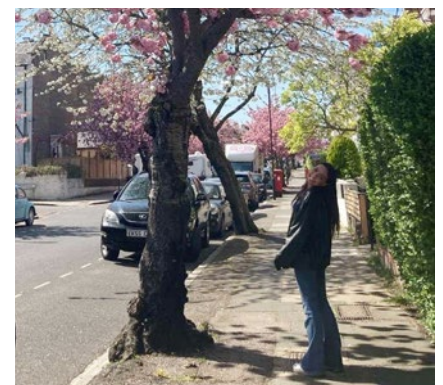
Lily finds fresh confidence at Brampton after serious setback

Lily came to Brampton in 2020 to finish her A levels after a year of very poor health. A talented creative writer, she made her short stories into a brilliant EPQ, took English as a new subject over a year, and completed Mathematics and Chemistry, achieving grades of A*A*A.

The year before I came to Brampton I was in hospital, so ill I was unable to complete my A-Levels. I was scared to start at a new school and scared of resuming the struggle to balance my health and academics. But my fears were unwarranted. I loved Brampton and I am so grateful for the time I was able to spend there.

Despite Covid disrupting my year, I was able to meet some amazing people. The small class sizes meant that I felt that both students and teachers knew me very well and cared about my academic and personal wellbeing. Students were respected enough to be expected to be self-motivated whilst simultaneously being provided with all the support they needed to go as far as they wished. Through the teachers' determined encouragement I gained back all the confidence that my illness had taken away. I was able to finish the year proud, as well as a touch sad, to leave the college. The environment and the people had changed my life so much for the better.

The confidence Brampton has given me was something that I have been able to carry with me to the University of Edinburgh where I am now studying Sociology, Anthropology and Psychology. I love my subjects and Edinburgh is now one of my favourite places in the world. The workload is immense but at Brampton I rediscovered the pleasure of working hard and remembered that it makes me happy. For this reason, this summer I am working as an intern for an ethical fashion consultancy compiling reports on modern slavery in Myanmar.



I am still in touch with lots of friends I made at Brampton College and many of them have come to visit me in Edinburgh. ■

By Lily Neil