

THE SCHOLARS PROGRAMME VIRTUAL

HENRY BOX SCHOOL

Greater Church Green, Witney

Lead Teacher: Claire Wells

Role: School leader for Social
Science Faculty



WHAT MOTIVATED YOUR SCHOOL TO TAKE PART?

This is the fourth year we've run The Scholars Programme. I was motivated to take part as I felt that many of our students lacked the confidence and aspiration to apply to top universities. Although our school is only 20 miles from Oxford, it feels like a world away.

HOW HAVE PUPILS ENGAGED WITH THE VIRTUAL TUTORIALS?

The students have fully engaged with the virtual tutorials. Even the tutorial where we had technical difficulties and could only hear but not see the tutor! Every student has handed in every piece of work. They have fully engaged with working on the VLE and communicating with myself and our tutor. We have had a microphone so the students can come up and speak on the microphone (once they have hand sanitised). This has helped students to feel even more engaged and onnected with the tutor.

WHAT WERE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE COURSE AND THE PHD TUTOR?

The PhD tutor has been outstanding, and I feel much of the success of this programme has been down to her. Initially I thought the topic sounded rather hard and obscure. However, our tutor has made this the most fascinating and relevant topic for our times. Each tutorial was pitched just right; challenging but made totally accessible through our tutor's careful explanations and enthusiasm. Students have read texts that previously they would never have engaged in. Each tutorial built on the ideas of the previous tutorials so the students could make connections between the ideas and see where the programme was leading. They loved the challenge of close reading 'hard stuff'. Many students mentioned to me how good it was to be taught how to write an essay properly. This will be invaluable to them at GCSE and beyond. They have developed their skills in researching, referencing and using sources critically. The feedback from the tutor has been excellent. It is very detailed and specific to each student. They have learnt how to use this feedback to improve on future work. I feel like they have gained huge confidence as the programme has progressed. As a teacher I have also learnt some good strategies for encouraging students to write well.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT PUPIL'S EXPERIENCE?

All our students have had a great experience! This happening during lock down has made it seem extra special as they have been able to connect to a Scholars community. I am glad we decided to get all the students into school for the virtual tutorials – but it also gave us the flexibility for students to access from home if they needed to. One of my students was initially very anxious about the programme. He comes from a disadvantaged background and has autism. He was concerned that none of his friends were on the programme and was worried about it being too hard. Over the weeks however, he has become more and more independent. He has now found his own writing voice and a confidence in his own ability, as well as contributing to the tutorials.