

THE SCHOLARS PROGRAMME VIRTUAL

ROSS HIGH SCHOOL

East Lothian

Lead teacher: Kathryn Archibald

Tutor: Emma Sullivan

Course: Taking Comedy Seriously



HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE SCHOLARS PROGRAMME?

I first heard about The Brilliant Club from a friend who participates with pupils at her school in Edinburgh. When I began to look into it further, I discovered the details of The Scholars Programme and it sounded like exactly what we needed.

WHAT WERE THE SCHOOL'S MOTIVATIONS FOR TAKING PART?

Since coming to Ross High a few months previously I had been taken aback by the number of clearly very intelligent, motivated and ambitious young people. Having previously worked in central Edinburgh and London, I knew there were fewer opportunities for participation in East Lothian with fewer organisations reaching out. I wanted to see if The Scholars Programme could provide our very able students with an experience to boost their learning, their understanding of academic study and their confidence.

HOW DID YOU SELECT THE PUPILS?

I asked faculties to nominate students from S1 and S2. I needed to select 12 students from 70. I chose those who had been nominated by the most subjects and checked with their guidance teachers that the programme would be appropriate for them. I was cautious that if a young person was currently under pressure in another area of their life that this may not be the time to bring in anything else for them. I also had to be sure that enough pupils were in SIMD 1-4, but as this matches the profile of our school there was no issue. After our initial visit, the students were raring to go. They were excited to have been chosen and our tutor, Emma, spoke to them like the mature, engaged young people they are and they were visibly lifted by their sessions with her.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO CONTINUE WITH VIRTUAL TUTORIALS?

When school closures came, we knew that carrying on with The Scholars Programme would be a challenge. However, I wanted to make it work if at all possible because our students had given so much of their time and energy already that it would be a shame to not see their efforts come to fruition in their final assignment. After discussions with Emma and Laura, we decided we would hold a virtual tutorial for all 12 students. When in school we met in groups of 6 but felt we should bring them all together to help promote discussion. As adults we've all found the move to video calls somewhat of a challenge so I can't imagine how it must feel to be 12 and 13 and asked to contribute to an academic discussion using your webcam. However, as they had done before, they all rose to the challenge. I sat in on their first tutorial in case anyone needed support (technologically or emotionally!) but again, they were fully engaged and working independently. The technical side of online tutorials certainly wasn't going to hold teenagers back!

DID THE VIRTUAL TUTORIALS HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PUPILS?

I think the virtual tutorials actually sparked greater debate and discussion. Students did not have one eye on the clock because they had to rush off to a History test next period, or it was break next and they had arranged to meet a friend. They could devote the whole hour/90 minutes to the tutorial. I also think it made them feel very grown-up, which sounds hugely patronising, but a lot of online teaching has taken the form of passively watching videos and reading materials set by teachers. While that is right and proper for the current circumstances, it made these budding academics feel as if they were fully part of the learning that was taking place and their opinion could be truly heard and valued. I would not hesitate to take part in virtual tutorials again. I look forward to working with The Brilliant Club and The Scholars Programme again in the future, in whatever form it may take!

Click [here](#) to enquire about running The Scholars Programme in your school.