

ISA AWARDS 2021 CASE STUDY: JUNIOR SCHOOL OF THE YEAR

HEATHCOTE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

SEPTEMBER 2022



INDEPENDENT
SCHOOLS
ASSOCIATION



HEATHCOTE
Preparatory School & Nursery

BACKGROUND TO THE SCHOOL

Heathcote School is a co-educational prep school for 2–11 year olds founded in 1935 to meet the growing need for an independent school in the Danbury area. The original school opened at Heathcote House on Danbury Common and moved to its present location around 1940. The school was managed by a series of headteachers until July 2018 when it was purchased by the Heather Partnership, a company established by Nadine and Mark Solsberg, whose two daughters attended the school, along with Catherine and Matt Ablott, who currently have children at the school. Mrs Samantha Scott is the current Head Teacher and has led the school since January 2020.

Heathcote is a small school that makes use of its house and the local village hall around which it has developed. The house has kept all its original characteristics and has been adapted to support the pupils who attend breakfast club and after school care so that it is truly a home from home experience.

The village hall, having direct access from the school, is utilised for school lunches, indoor sports, performances and exams. Every space on the site is used effectively and creatively, opening up a wide variety of opportunities for all the pupils. Termly topics taught in Pre-Prep use an initial hook to really engage every pupil, for example when the pre-prep playground was being dug up for redevelopment, the opportunity to add mystery and excitement into the term topic was too good to pass up! As the pupils move into the Prep School, they are taught by specialist teachers to enhance the subject content and expertise and some of the specialist rooms have taken on themes developed by pupils. The Pre-Prep library is a mermaid's paradise while the Prep Library takes you into a London scene. Staff are encouraged to be fully engaged with all aspects of school life and most take on the added responsibilities of developing aspects of the school curriculum or grounds.



Samantha Scott Head Teacher



www.heathcoteschool.co.uk



AIMS

- We seek to ensure that excellence is at the heart of all we do, whether academic, creative or sporting.
- We enable pupils to receive a solid academic foundation as the first steps of their educational journey.
- We ensure that we work effectively as a team, fostering a love of lifelong learning.
- We encourage our school community to be curious, appreciative and respectful towards the world around us.
- We ensure our school community showcases a warm, progressive approach and individualised learning for all pupils.
- We aim that every pupil recognises their own self-worth through their school journey and build character, confidence and compassion.
- We enable pupils to learn determination, resilience and endurance.

ACTIONS TAKEN DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

- At the start of the pandemic, when the risk of lockdown became clear, our Management Board set out a strategy and plan for our live, online lessons, providing training for staff before the lockdown started. We ensured that everyone had the technology to access our online provision and where this was not possible, we supplied laptops to those families.
- All staff underwent Microsoft training, becoming certified as Microsoft Innovative Educators. Our IT Leader became an Innovative Educator Expert.
- Our live online programme was embraced by all staff who supported each other – realising the importance of a quality provision for our families who are used to having the fortune of specialist teacher provision similar to a secondary school.
- We resurfaced playgrounds so that when children returned the school was welcoming and exciting. The school house had a facelift.
- 3 Mental Health First Aiders regularly checked in with pupils and parents.
- Our Headteacher called families, constantly attended lessons to monitor, held assemblies and recorded storytelling sessions so that children could have their favourite story read to them whilst they were away from family, and we sent daily wellbeing tasks above the pupils' lessons and learning activities.
- The weekly newsletter continued and celebrated all things wonderful for the Heathcote community.
- Gap analysis continued and individual interventions and 1:1 reading sessions were available as required. Staff volunteered to provide wellbeing sessions for children, and we spent time training the owner's dog to become a dog mentor to support anxious children upon their return.
- To enable us to run interactive virtual open days we employed a photographer to take 360 videos and used this as our school tour.

OUTCOMES

- As the staff learned more about how the Microsoft platform could be used, they expanded the pupils use by marking work and giving live feedback, setting up break-out rooms and using 'immersive reader' for children who needed extra help with reading.
- Children quickly became more adept at using the platform and this in turn enabled them to be more efficient in their learning. Now, they continue to use their skills for homework and have the skills to take them forward without inhibition.
- Parents have been extremely grateful for the efforts of our staff, recognising that the children have continued to make good progress throughout the lockdown.
- We regularly win national awards for our Art and achieve national success in Sport which is amazing considering we are competing against much larger, selective schools.
- This year, alongside our mental health support for families and staff, wellbeing awareness and ensuring progress and attainment continue even when we are off site, we have continued to have our achievements recognised.
- Our IT innovation has been recognised by Microsoft but also a certificate of commendation from the Pearson National awards; additionally receiving a commendation for Heathcote school as a whole.
- Our forward-thinking staff kept the ideas flowing – anything was possible. Although it was a challenging time, we could see the positives and our 68 pupils turned to 105. We continued to advertise and market the school and our efforts were rewarded.



We are so proud of all we achieve...together.

NEXT STEPS

- To enhance STEAM provision to develop cross-curricular skills in these areas of learning for all pupils including whole school enrichment activities.
- To develop and hold a careers week to promote future steps along our learning journeys and share this with the Heathcote community.

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